
Call for Applications: 2026/2027 HERI Africa Foundational Numeracy Scholarships for Master's and PhD Students

1. Introduction

The HERI Africa Research Chair in Mathematics Education, in collaboration with the University of Embu, invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for the **2026/2027 HERI Africa Foundational Numeracy Scholarships** to pursue Master's and PhD programs at the University of Embu. The scholarships shall commence on 31 August 2026. The scholarships will support up to thirteen Master's and five PhD students undertaking research in foundational numeracy (mathematics education). The scholarships are intended to strengthen research capacity and generate high-quality evidence to inform policy and practice aimed at improving foundational numeracy outcomes in Kenya and across Africa. The scholarships will provide support toward approved university fees, a monthly subsistence stipend, approved conference participation, and selected research-related expenses. The level of support will be specified in the individual Scholarship Award Letter.

2. Scope

Applicants should demonstrate how their proposed research aligns with one or more of the following thematic areas. The sub-themes provided under each thematic area are illustrative and not exhaustive. Proposals addressing other relevant topics within the thematic area are also encouraged:

- a) **Pedagogy and Instruction in Numeracy:** Instructional Approaches; Play-based Learning; Classroom Discourse and Practices; Formative Assessment; Teacher Knowledge and Professional Learning; and Learner Engagement.
- b) **Numeracy Learning and Development:** Number Sense; Counting and Cardinality; Place Value Development; Mathematical Thinking and Reasoning; Problem Solving; Misconceptions and Learning Difficulties; Learning Trajectories and Progressions; Socio-emotional Dimensions of Numeracy Learning.
- c) **Teaching and Learning Resources:** Manipulatives; Textbooks; Digital Technologies; and Educational Games.
- d) **Teacher Professional Development:** Teacher Knowledge; Pedagogical Content Knowledge; Coaching; Mentoring; Professional Learning Communities; and Pre-service Teacher Education.
- e) **Parental and Community Engagement:** Home Learning Environments; Parental Empowerment; Community-Based Support; and School-Home Partnerships for Numeracy Learning.
- f) **Cross-Cutting and Interdisciplinary Research in Foundational Numeracy:** Language and Numeracy; Inclusive Education and Learners with Disabilities; Technology-Enhanced

Learning; Learning Analytics; Artificial Intelligence in Education; Gender and Equity; and Education Policy and System-Level Factors.

3. General Guidelines for Scholarship Applications

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must satisfy the following requirements:

a) Master's Applicants

Applicants must:

- (i) Hold a Bachelor's degree with at least Second Class Honors (Upper Division), or its equivalent, from an institution recognized by the Senate of the University of Embu.
- (ii) Have been admitted to, or meet the admission requirements for, a Master's program at the University of Embu.

b) PhD Applicants

Applicants must:

- (i) Hold a Master's degree from an institution recognized by the Senate of the University of Embu.
- (ii) Have been admitted to, or meet the admission requirements for, a PhD program at the University of Embu.

Preference will be given to women and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Applications from candidates in diverse academic disciplines are encouraged, provided the proposed research makes a clear and substantial contribution to advancing foundational numeracy.

3.2 Application Documents

All applicants shall submit the following:

- Completed application form, downloaded from [HERI_Africa_Postgraduate_Scholarships_Application_Form-1.pdf](#)
- Copy of national ID/Passport.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- Copies of academic certificates and transcripts.
- One signed recommendation letter from an academic referee familiar with the applicant's academic work, commenting on the applicant's academic ability, research potential, and suitability for the proposed program of study.

In addition:

Master's applicants shall submit:

- A concept note (maximum of 2 pages, excluding references and appendices prepared in Times New Roman, font size 12, with 1.5-line spacing) outlining the intended area of research, the problem to be investigated, preliminary research objectives, and how the proposed study aligns with the objectives and thematic areas of this call.

PhD applicants shall submit:

- A research proposal (maximum 10 pages, excluding references and appendices, prepared in Times New Roman, font size 12, with 1.5-line spacing) that aligns with the objectives and at least one of the thematic areas of this call.

The proposal should contain the following sections:

- (i) Title of the Study
- (ii) Background and Problem Statement
- (iii) Research Objectives (and Research Questions where applicable).

- (iv) Brief Literature Review
- (v) Methodology
- (vi) Expected Outcomes and Contribution to Foundational Numeracy
- (vii) Work Plan and Timeline
- (viii) Budget and Budget Justification
- (ix) Ethical Considerations as applicable
- (x) References

3.3 Administration of Funds

Scholarship funds shall be administered through the University of Embu in accordance with University financial regulations. The student's lead supervisor shall provide oversight of the research activities and expenditure of scholarship funds.

4. Multiple Funding Sources

Applicants whose projects are receiving funding from other sources must clearly disclose such support and justify the need for additional funding under this scholarship scheme.

5. Number of Applications

Each applicant shall be eligible to submit only one application under this call.

6. Application Timeline

Application Stage	Date
Issuance of Call	22 July 2026
Webinar on the Scholarship	29 July 2026 at 3 p.m. EAT (https://zoom.us/j/94975039771?pwd=ZzllQBPNibkYJZmbxmOV4TeINLT5ra.1) Webinar ID: 949 7503 9771 Passcode: 127717
Deadline for Applications	8 August 2026
Notification of Results	14 August 2026
Program Commencement	31 August 2026

Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.

7. Evaluation of Concept Notes and Proposals

7.1 Master's Concept Notes

a) Preliminary Screening

All applications received on or before the deadline will undergo preliminary screening to verify eligibility, completeness of the application documents, and compliance with the requirements of this call. Concept notes will also be subjected to plagiarism checking in accordance with University policy. Applications that do not meet the eligibility

requirements, are incomplete, or are found to contain evidence of plagiarism, as determined through similarity checking and expert review, shall not proceed to technical evaluation.

b) Technical Evaluation

Eligible concept notes will be reviewed by an independent panel using the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation Criterion	Weight (%)
Alignment with the thematic area(s) and priorities of the call	25
Clarity and significance of the research problem	25
Academic potential of the applicant	20
Feasibility of the proposed study	15
Innovation and originality of the proposed research	15
Total	100

7.2 PhD Proposals

a) Preliminary Screening

All proposals received on or before the deadline will undergo eligibility screening and plagiarism checking in accordance with University policy. Proposals with evidence of plagiarism, as determined through similarity checking and expert review, will be disqualified.

b) Technical Evaluation

Eligible proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel comprising experts in mathematics education, relevant disciplines/fields, research methodology, and grant management. Eligible proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Evaluation Criterion	Weight (%)
Relevance to the thematic areas and priorities of the call	20
Significance and originality of the study	20
Alignment between research objectives and methodology	25
Feasibility and quality of research	15
Attainability of research objectives within program study period	10
Potential contribution to foundational numeracy research, policy, and practice	10
Total	100

The HERI Africa Research Chair encourages applications from talented and motivated researchers committed to advancing foundational numeracy through high-quality, policy-relevant research.

8. Enquiries and Submission of Applications

For enquiries, clarifications, and submission of applications, please contact:

Directorate of Research and Extension, University of Embu
P.O. Box 6–60100, Embu, Kenya
Email: dre@embuni.ac.ke