Unisa – Master’s and doctoral research focus areas

College of Human Sciences

School of Social Sciences:

Department of Development Studies
Department of Health Studies
Department of Political Sciences
Department of Psychology
Department of Social Work
Department of Sociology

Application for admission: www.unisa.ac.za/applyMD
Qualifications: www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsMD
College of Human Sciences: www.unisa.ac.za/CHS
Focus areas in the Department of Development Studies

What is on offer?

Master of Arts and Doctoral in Development Studies

Research focus areas/niches:

- DEVELOPMENT DEBATES AND ISSUES, including: Global political economy and development, Land reform, Climate change, Post-development, Value chain analysis
- GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT including: Poverty and gender, Women's work, Gender equality, women empowerment and the millennium development goals, Gender mainstreaming in development
- GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT including: Key actors in governance- the case of civil society institutions, Tools for good governance, Development aid and governance, Governance issues within global lending institutions
- SUSTAINABILITY, DEVELOPMENT POLICY, PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT including: Water crisis in the world, Genetically modified products, Sustainable development in China, Indigenous knowledge
- HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT including Food security, Economic security, Environmental security, Political security, Health security

Research projects in which M and D candidates can participate:
None

Focused M and D programmes:
None

Individual research interests/fields of expertise of academics/supervisors:

Prof Linda Cornwell
- Gender and development
- Education and development
- Community development

Prof Frik De Beer
- Community development
- Communities and environmental conservation
- Affordable housing
- Community-based Participatory Research

Prof Gretchen du Plessis
- Population and development beyond ICPD and the post 2015 development agenda
- Africa's so-called demographic dividend
- Development and demographic ageing
• Human rights in achieving equitable, universal and sustainable access to sexual and reproductive health information and services
• Health, morbidity, mortality and development
• Women’s empowerment beyond the millennium development goals
• Gender mainstreaming in development
• Demographic change and development policy post 2015
• Demographic and epidemiological dynamics in human security and development
• Methodology: quantitative demography, qualitative studies and ethnography, mixed methods

Dr Naas Du Plessis
• Governance
• Human Rights

Ms Aneesah Khan
• Migration and development
• Gender and development
• Urban development
• Local knowledge and sustainable development

Dr Derica Kotze
• Aid
• Food security
• Trade
• Community development
• Gender and development

Ms Beatrice Maphosa
• Climate change adaptation
• Gender issues
• Rural development

Dr Sibonginkosi Mazibuko
• Tourism
• Livelihoods
• Land reform
• Civil society
• Development planning

Ms Monene Mogoshoa
• Land reform in Southern Africa
• Rural and Urban Development
• Human Geography
• Land reform and the environment
• Community development

Mr Modise Moseki
• Land and Agrarian Reform
• Rural Development
• Governance
• Community Development

Dr Morgan Ndlovu
• Culture, Identity and Development
• Tourism and Development
• African Political Economy
• Post-Development
• Local Economic Development

Dr Lejone Ntema
• Housing policy
• Local government and provision of basic services
• Public participation
• Local Economic Development (LED)

Mr Seleka Plaatjie
• Development Theory
• Critical discourse of development
• Postcolonial theory and Local Economic Development

Dr Moipone Rakolojane
• Gender and development
• Rural development and agrarian reform
• Sustainable development and livelihoods
• Development theories, issues and problems

Prof Peter Stewart
• Developmental state
• Global political economy and development
• Complexity and development
• Ideology and development

Dr Stephan Treurnicht
• Sustainable development
• Indigenous knowledge
• Participatory rural appraisal
• Environmental impact assessment
• Ethno botany and development

Numbers of M and D candidates that can be accommodated in the above:
15 Masters

Models of supervision:
Single supervisor per student; limited co-supervision or mentoring.

Opportunities regarding external supervision:
This is possible but requires substantial logistical and administrative support; can optimally provide supervision to a maximum of 12 candidates.

Departmental contact details:
Development Studies, Room 4-26, T van Wijk Building.
Telephone: (012)429-6813/ 4035

How to participate:

Minimum (generic) requirements:
A bachelor honours degree in Development Studies (or related discipline), or a 480 credit bachelor’s degree with a minimum of 96 credits at NQF level 8 in Development Studies with an average of 60%. Either qualification must include a module in research methodology of at least 24 credits. Proof from SAQA must be submitted of equivalence of qualifications from foreign universities.
In addition applicants are expected to study the relevant UNISA website to obtain information, select a topic in line with the list of themes provided (and related to areas of specialisation of staff members); compile a research outline (concept document) as explained in 1.1.2.4 below; attach an academic transcript of earlier qualifications; and provide an abstract of an honours (SAQA level 8) research paper.

**College/School/Department/Institute specific additional requirements/criteria:**
See above

**Supporting documentation required:**
Proof from SAQA must be submitted of equivalence of qualifications from foreign universities.

International students must meet the English language requirement as provided for in paragraph 2.1 of the Procedures for Studies for Master’s and Doctoral Degrees.

**Concept document of proposed research with reference to how it fits into the type 1 information:**
Applications must be accompanied by a draft research outline of 3 – 4 pages which should include:

1. Title
2. Problem statement and motivation
3. Research question
4. Main objective
5. Theoretical framework
6. Basic methodology/ies to be followed

Only a limited number of applicants will be admitted

The topic of the proposed research must relate to one of the following themes:

- DEVELOPMENT DEBATES AND ISSUES, including: Global political economy and development, Land reform, Climate change, Post-development, Value chain analysis
- GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT including: Poverty and gender, Women’s work, Gender equality, women empowerment and the millennium development goals, Gender mainstreaming in development
- GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT including: Key actors in governance- the case of civil society institutions, Tools for good governance, Development aid and governance, Governance issues within global lending institutions
- SUSTAINABILITY, DEVELOPMENT POLICY, PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT including: Water crisis in the world, Genetically modified products, Sustainable development in China, Indigenous knowledge
- HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT including: Food security, Economic security, Environmental security, Political security, Health security

**Procedure by which selection of candidates will be made, for example, as batches or individual:** As batches.
Focus areas in the Department of Health Studies

Departmental Niche areas

- Scholarship development in nursing
- Scholarship of teaching and learning
- Youth and adolescent health
- HIV and AIDS
- Preventive and promotive healthcare
- Healthcare for diverse populations
- Public health

Individual research interests/fields of expertise of academics/supervisors:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC PERSON</th>
<th>FIELD OF INTEREST AND RESEARCH</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prof ADH Botha, D Cur</td>
<td>Preventive and promotive health care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr ME Chauke, MA in Health Studies</td>
<td>Scholarship of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Dr BL Dolamo, D Cur</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS and Preventive and promotive health care</td>
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<td>Ms HS du Toit, M Cur</td>
<td>Scholarship of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Prof. R Ganga-Limando, PHD</td>
<td>Preventive and promotive health care</td>
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<td>Ms DSK Habedi, Public health</td>
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<td>Pros SP Human, D Cur</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr ES Janse van Rensburg, D Cur</td>
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<td>Dr. TG Lumadi, MPH</td>
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<td>DR KA Maboe, MA in Health Studies</td>
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<td>Prof ON Makhubela-Nkondo,</td>
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<td>Ms MG Makua, MA Cur</td>
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<td>Mr TP Makua, M Tech</td>
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<td>Dr TE Masango, PhD</td>
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<td>Dr MC Matlakala, D Litt et Phil</td>
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<td>Ms FH Mfidi, M Cur</td>
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<td>Dr A Mavhandu-Mudzusi, HIV AND AIDS</td>
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<td>Prof TR Mavundla</td>
<td>Health care for diverse populations</td>
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<td>Dr LM Modiba</td>
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<td>Prof DM van der Wal</td>
<td>D Litt et Phil</td>
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<td>Prof GH van Rensburg</td>
<td>D Litt et Phil</td>
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<td>Prof LI Zungu</td>
<td>PhD</td>
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Focus areas in the Department of Political Science

Areas of specialisation within the department

You will find a list of areas of specialisations offered by the department indicated below. Your chosen topic must be aligned to the areas of specialisation. Should your topic lie outside the parameters of the department's areas of specialisation, you will be advised to either refocus your topic to suit these offerings or apply to a university with the relevant expertise to accommodate your particular research interest.

African Politics

- African constitutions and constitutionalism
- Selected African electoral systems and elections
- Selected African governing and opposition political parties
- Selected African political economy issues
- African political, regional and economic institutions
- African political thought
- African politics in comparative perspective - selected countries
- African state building, political leadership and environmental politics

Politics

- Black consciousness
- Civil society
- Constitutional law and politics
- Democracy, democratisation and governance
- Elections, electoral studies and electoral systems
- Environmental politics
- Epistemology and methodological issues
- Human rights issues
- Human security and security issues
- Nationalism and separatism
- Political conflict resolution: theories, transitions and constitutional negotiations
- Political parties and party systems
- South African politics
- Sovereignty
- Sports and politics
- Transitional justice
- Separation of powers

International Politics

- Foreign policy
- Foreign policy of African states
- Foreign policy decision-making
- Diplomacy
- International organisations
- International political economy
- International relations theory
- Military coups
- Nuclear energy
Focus areas in the Department of Psychology

Please note that this information is subject to change.

Academics in the department engage in a wide range of research projects, most of which relate to three broad themes:

- **Psychology in society** (reflecting on psychology as a discipline and a profession in the context of current Southern African and global realities)
- **Psychological science** (cognitive and neuropsychological research)
- **Therapeutic psychology** (approaches to health, well-being and developmental psychology, and to psychotherapy)

To address these themes, we currently have 9 focus areas in the department:

- Focus area 1 Scholarly development of students in psychology
- Focus area 2 Social justice and inclusion
- Focus area 3 Hidden histories of psychology
- Focus area 4 Neuroscience and neuropsychology
- Focus area 5 Therapeutic contexts and lived experiences
- Focus area 6 African psychologies and epistemologies
- Focus area 7 Health, wellbeing and developmental psychology
- Focus area 8 Forensic psychology
- Focus area 9 Cognitive and experimental psychology
Focus area 1 - Scholarly development of students in psychology

Initiative 1.1 Perceptions of the teaching and learning of psychological research

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:
Angelo Fynn, Eduard Fourie, Catherine Govender, Helena Erasmus and Fana Simelane

The aims of this study are (1) to describe the curriculum themes across South African university programmes in research psychology, and (2) to explore the perceptions of programme leaders, students and lecturers toward research as a subject area in terms of training, the discipline and the needs of the market. We also want to critically assess the changes that have occurred in South African research psychology curricula over the past decade.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. A survey of students’ attitudes towards and perceptions of undergraduate and postgraduate research training.
2. A critical comparison of course work Master’s programmes in research psychology.
3. Work integrated learning in research training: A case study.

Initiative 1.2 Exploring the value of discussion forums: Students’ perspectives

Discussion forums are increasingly utilised by most universities in delivery of their courses, especially within the Open Distance Learning (ODL) context. Advances in ODL field has resulted in greater developments in the delivery of higher education as it has permitted greater flexibility for students and enables them to study anywhere, at any time. Discussion forums position the student as an expert/facilitator at the centre of the learning process and the lecturer as an overseer of the dialogue. The model is an innovative approach to learning that draw students into online learning processes by encouraging them to take a more active and central role in their learning. The study aims to look at, and explore the introduction of discussion forums as a student centred, and peer e-learning environment at a distance learning institution in South Africa.

Furthermore, we intend to explore the students’ perspectives on the usefulness of online discussion forums as a tool used in student online learning. Using qualitative research approach, we hope to have a sample of students registered for the ‘Being a Professional Teacher’ (BPT) module at a university in South Africa. The first 50 students who respond will be taken as participants. Purposive sampling will be used as the study is focusing on a specific module and form of contact/subject. We hope that the study will assist us in our exploration of how using online discussion forums contribute to the value of studying the BPT module.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Exploring the perceptions of E-Learning amongst students within an ODL context.
2. Exploring trends and developments within Distance/open learning
3. Relationships between Students’ Preferences and Performance within Online and Offline Assessments
4. Maintaining Interest when Learning Online: Exploring the relationship between Potential Motivation and Performance benefits
5. Exploring the impact of using E-learning tools within an ODL context.
6. Exploring lecturers’ experiences/perceptions of teaching within the ODL context.
Initiative 1.3  Students as knowledge producers: The Southern African Students’ Psychology Conference & New Voices in Psychology

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:
Eduard Fourie, Puleng Segalo, Angelo Fynn, Nikki Themistocleous, Catherine Govender, Khonzi Mbatha, Martin Terre Blanche, Khumo Modutla, Caryl Ochse, Christine Laidlaw, Janice Moodley, Vhuhwavo Nekhavhambe and Masefako Gumani

The Department of Psychology has established a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of students in generating academic knowledge, rather than being purely consumers of knowledge. These include facilitating the publication of aspects of theses and dissertations in the form of journal articles, the biannual Southern African Students’ Psychology Conference (http://www.studentsconference.co.za/), and the journal New Voices in Psychology (http://www.newvoicesinpsychology.co.za), which is aimed at providing publication opportunities for senior students and young academics. We have published a number of articles and book chapters on this process and are keen for M and D students to do further research on the topic.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Thematic content analysis of papers presented at the 2009, 2011 and 2013 students’ psychology conferences.
2. A comparative analysis of student presentation opportunities in psychology and other disciplines.
3. Student experiences of the academic review process.
5. My first publication: A phenomenological analysis.
7. Old voices and new voices: The process of becoming part of re-imaging psychology.

Initiative 1.5  The development of training opportunities for psychological counsellors

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:
Elsje Cronje, Maria Papaikonomou, Juan Nel and Keit Shirinda-Mthombeni

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. An historical perspective on the development of the BPsych Equivalence Programme at Unisa and the career paths of registered counsellors
2. Experiences of registered counsellors: The relevance of the internship, training and supervision in becoming a registered counsellor
3. Registered counsellors: Their relevance and future in South Africa
Focus area 2 - Social justice and inclusion

Initiative 2.1 Hate Crimes

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**
Juan A. Nel, Hanlie van Wyk, Khonzi Mbatha and Iole Matthews

This is a large, externally funded community engagement project of the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG) of which the Department of Psychology is a founder member. Its objective is to contribute to the full enactment of the Hate Crimes Act once legislated. The project aims to ensure the roll out and utilisation of the revised Hate and Bias Crime Monitoring Tool to provide a baseline record for a five year longitudinal study and to initiate the development of the tool into an online system to track real time events.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Strengthening interventions aimed at minimising the psychosocial impact of hate crimes in South Africa.
2. Understanding the psychological factors contributing to hate crimes in South Africa.

Initiative 2.2 Inside-out Outside-in prison experiences and communities

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**
Martin Terre Blanche, Eduard Fourie, Khonzi Mbatha, Melusi Mbatcha, Bongi Mdakane, Janeen Prinsloo, Helena Erasmus and Masefako Gumani

This community engagement initiative (www.insideoutoutsidein.co.za) seeks to apply community psychology approaches and perspectives to the diverse communities that exist in and around correctional systems. We are particularly focused on initiatives that cross the boundaries between the inside and outside of prisons. Examples are the development of tertiary education opportunities for prisoners, issues of social reintegration and recidivism after release, issues relating to the families and relatives of prisoners, and the collaborative generation and dissemination of knowledge about prison experiences and circumstances.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. A thematic analysis of South African and international social integration programmes for former prisoners
2. An auto-ethnographic account of prison life and life after release
3. An auto-ethnographic accounts of life as a prison official
4. A psych biographical study of ... [a public figure who was in prison or under house arrest]
5. A discourse analysis of how ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are constructed in newspaper reports about correctional services

Initiative 2.3 The Psychology of Sexuality and Gender in Africa

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**
Juan A. Nel, Niel Victor, Ingrid Lynch, Khonzi Mbatha and Carien Lubbe-De Beer

Psychology professionals in South Africa, individually, are making a significant contribution in several contexts where sexuality- and gender-related concerns are pertinent. Whether the discipline of psychology, per se, is, however, currently doing enough to optimise its contribution to healing of our traumatised society and, for instance, responding to the endemic nature of gender-based and sexual violent crime, is another
matter. Although merely a beginning, it should come as good news that the Unisa Department of Psychology is leading a process aimed at the establishment of a Sexuality and Gender Division of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA). One of the first initiatives of this new Division will be the development of a PsySSA Unisa post-graduate psychological course in African perspectives on sexuality and gender to be piloted in 2015. The focus of the envisioned course will be on sexuality and gender, in general, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)-affirmative perspectives, and with a specific focus on the various roles of psychology within the field of sexology.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Towards the inclusion of sexology in the Unisa MA Clinical Psychology curriculum.
2. Developing a curriculum for an African postgraduate course in the psychology of sexuality and gender.

**Initiative 2.4 LGBTI-affirmative psychological practice**

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**
Juan A. Nel, Niel Victor, Khonzi Mbatha, Ingrid Lynch and Carien Lubbe-De Beer

In South Africa, psychology as a profession has made great strides in promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)-affirmative practices as well as in using its voice as an instrument to promote good governance and legislation based on scientifically grounded, evidence-based knowledge. The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) in its quest to develop the discipline of psychology nationally and internationally as a means of enhancing the human well-being of all, has, for instance, since 2007 been a member of the International Network on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns and Transgender Issues in Psychology (INET), housed at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Concerns Office of the American Psychological Association (APA). As the sole member in Africa, PsySSA, however, has the responsibility to lead in the work of INET on the continent and began to commit itself to this leadership role since 2008. The Arcus Foundation is the primary funder since 2012 of a project to enhance collaboration between INET and PsySSA, towards PsySSA becoming a stronger regional organisation, a model ‘regional hub’ so to speak, to promote capacity and membership of other psychological associations throughout Africa in the work of INET. In accordance with the objectives set out in the detailed work plan of the project, the idea behind the so-called ‘PsySSA African LGBTI Human Rights project’ is to foster active and vocal participation from the perspective of psychology in current and anticipated debates globally about LGBTI issues and concerns. Another objective of the PsySSA African LGBTI Human Rights project is the development of African Psychological Guidelines for LGBTI-Affirmative Practice. As a precursor to the Guidelines, a working group, led by the Unisa Department of Psychology, is currently developing an affirmative position statement on sexuality and gender diversity for psychology professionals in South Africa, under the auspices of PsySSA. The aim of the position statement is to outline a clear affirmative stance regarding particularly LGBTI concerns in psychology and discuss specific themes for consideration in such an affirmative stance.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

2. Enhancing scientifically grounded, evidence-based knowledge to inform (South) African Psychological Guidelines for LGBTI-Affirmative Practice.
Initiative 2.5  Towards LGBTI Health and Well-Being in Tshwane, Gauteng, and South Africa

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Juan A. Nel, Vasi van Deventer, Sean Hagen, Eduard Fourie, Angelo Fynn, Azwihangwisi Mavhandu-Mudzusi, Leon Roets and Schalk Naude

Community-based civil society service organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in enhancing the well-being and psychological sense of ‘community’ among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. There has been significant collaboration since 1998 between a CSO, OUT LGBT Well-being (OUT), and UNISA resulting in the development of comprehensive programmes for a much marginalised societal group (that is, LGBTI persons and communities) and the alignment of several academic and scientific outputs to the needs of this group. Examples include the first quantitative research studies on the experiences of LGBT persons in three provinces of South Africa (2002 – 2006); successful completion at UNISA of at least four related theses/dissertations (2005 – 2012); being at the forefront of securing the right to same-sex marriage (2006); and using a UNISA Strategic Projects Fund and South African Netherlands Project on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) research process and related findings to establish LGBTI services in the North-West province (2010/1). The general aim of this project is to consolidate this long-standing relationship between OUT and UNISA in the interest of high quality LGBTI research, and related teaching and learning, towards the advancement of LGBTI health and well-being through evidence informed and sustainable community-based services, developing a body of knowledge and policy reforms.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Heterosexual attitudes toward same-sex marriage and lesbian/gay parenting’, as part of a cross-national study by the University of Liège (Belgium), Alliant International University (San Francisco, USA) and Unisa (South Africa)
2. Surveillance of use of OUT STI/HIV Clinic towards up-scaling of related OUT services
3. Good Practice models in Community Engagement addressing the needs of LGBTI South Africans

Initiative 2.6  Gender and feminism

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Puleng Segalo, Christine Laidlaw and Catherine Govender

Several Psychology Department staff members have an active interest in feminist issues. This is an open-ended project and students are encouraged to do research in this field after discussion with team members.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Exploring South African women’s perceptions of intimate partner violence
2. Exploring students’ constructions of female sexuality presented in the media
3. Health beliefs amongst Indian women

Initiative 2.7  Community Psychology and Resilience

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Keit Shirinda-Mthombeni
The aim of this qualitative research project is to identify personal and interpersonal factors that contribute to resilience of girls at risk.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Exploring Resilience among girls at risk in foster care in Tshwane (Project).
2. Gaining entry into communities
3. Not-knowing position of therapist within the community context
4. Ensuring viable structural coupling with a community by gaining entry from a respectful position of informed not-knowing
5. Ecological perspective of community psychology

**Focus area 3 - Hidden histories of psychology**

**Initiative 3.1  People behind the Papers**

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Khonzi Mbatha, Martin Terre Blanche, Eduard Fourie, Puleng Segalo, Angelo Fynn and Melusi Mbatha

The People behind the Papers project (http://www.peoplebehindthepapers.co.za) aims to interview a wide cross-section of South African psychologists to explore the human element in research and publication. The purpose is to demystify the professional and personal processes that go into the production of academic knowledge. Students and others are often intimidated by the ‘finished’ quality of journal articles and textbooks, and struggle to imagine the larger processes that inform these texts. The project moves beyond the theoretical confines of methodology textbooks, to help define, discover and represent the uniquely South African and African traditions in social science research.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Women researchers in psychology: A narrative analysis
2. The ‘back story’ of doing research and getting published: Common themes and unique experiences
3. ‘People behind the dissertations’: Lived experiences of M and D graduates

**Initiative 3.2  Mapping psychology in South Africa**

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Eduard Fourie, Joshua Nyamande and Martin Terre Blanche

This project entails the quantitative and qualitative ‘mapping’ of past and current psychological research and practise in South Africa. We work with existing datasets such as lists of current M and D topics in the Department, the Unisa database of completed theses and dissertations, and the websites of Southern African Departments of Psychology to provide an overview of methodologies, topics and controversies in the discipline. The project aims to map the terrain of research and practise, allowing students, academics and practitioners to locate themselves within a larger context. It aims to identify areas currently considered important in South African psychology, but also to highlight gaps and silences.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

2. A quantitative content analysis of completed M & D dissertations and theses in South Africa.
Focus area 4 - Neuroscience and neuropsychology

Initiative 4.1  Neuroscience development

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:
Catherine Govender, Franco Visser, Louise Henderson and Angelo Fynn

A number of initiatives have been created to encourage African researchers to contribute their skills and knowledge to the neurosciences. Training opportunities offered by institutions such as the Southern African Neuroscience Association (SONA) and the International Brain Organisation (IBRO) are quickly being absorbed by eager African researchers. However, training must be supplemented by access to facilities in order for South Africa to benefit from the momentum building in the neurosciences. One of the platforms for translational neuroscience research is psychophysiology, which examines the interaction between psychological and physiological variables in well-being and disease, using various techniques. We believe that it is important to invest in systems for measuring bio signals, specifically EEG and autonomic functioning. With such a focus, Unisa will be in the unique position of being able to engage researchers from Gauteng, around the country and even neighbouring countries in multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary neuroscience research. This is likely to flourish into engagements in other forms of research, which could only benefit Unisa’s reputation, training and research output. Such research naturally lends itself to engagement at community level as well. Specified therapeutic communities and illness populations could be educated in a practical manner with their own results. This would be one way in which health literacy of patients could be uplifted.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Migraine without aura: Psychological and genetic aspects (students must have at least an undergraduate human biology / physiology / genetics background)
2. Pain sequelae of traumatic brain injury
3. Autonomic functioning and temperament in adolescents born at extremely low birth weight
4. Developmental neuropsychology
5. Trauma and the brain

Focus area 5 - Therapeutic contexts and lived experiences

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:
DJ (Johan) Kruger

A very active area of enquiry in the Department of Psychology concerns therapeutic interventions and lived experiences. This is mostly conducted by MA (Clinical Psychology) students and their supervisors, but others in the department also on occasion engage in this type of research.

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Understanding language as a potential barrier in psychotherapy: Experiences of training clinical psychologists
2. Lived experiences of family members of dementia patients
3. Autoethnographic, ethnographic, narrative and other types of qualitative inquiry. [DJ (Johan) Kruger]
Focus area 6 - African psychologies and epistemologies

Several Department of Psychology staff members are involved in theoretical and empirical work relating to African Psychology and the role of Psychology in Africa.

Examples of possible M & D topics

- Constructions of psychotherapy in South African context (Melusi Mbatha)

Focus area 7 - Health, wellbeing and developmental psychology

Initiative 7.1 Psychological perspectives on and approaches to HIV and Aids

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Alta van Dyk, Helena Erasmus, Keith Shirinda-Mthombeni, Fana Simelane and Louise Henderson

Examples of possible M & D topics

The Department of Psychology has a considerable track record of research and publications in the field of HIV and Aids. Any related projects with a psychological focus will be considered.

Initiative 7.2 Violence, injury prevention and coping with trauma caused by violent crime

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Masefako Gumani, DJ (Johan) Kruger, Helena Erasmus and Vhuhwavho Nekhavhambe

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Causes of violence
2. Violence prevention programmes
3. Electronic media technology and youth violence
4. Emotional intelligence as an intervention against crime and violence

Initiative 7.3 Developmental psychology

Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:

Ilse Ferns and Petro van der Merwe

Examples of possible M & D topics

1. Childhood and adolescence
2. Adulthood
3. Parenting
4. Emotional intelligence
Initiative 7.4  Body, mind and spirit

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

DJ (Johan) Kruger, Janice Moodley, Keit Shirinda-Mthombeni and Ilse Ferns

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Exploring Resilience among girls at risk in foster care in Tshwane
2. Spiritual Intelligence
3. Any topic related to researching and facilitating positive mental and physical health will be considered
4. Health psychology within the developing country context
5. Sport psychology

Initiative 7.5  Social, racial and gender issues

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Janice Moodley

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. Critical health psychology at the intersection of poverty, race, gender and class
2. The use of critical discourse analysis in exploring the political context of health inequality and injustice within a developing country context

Initiative 7.6  Relationships

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Masefako Gumani and Ilse Ferns

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1. The social construction of marriage, including polygamous and commuter marriages
2. The role of social media in marriage
3. Loneliness

Focus area 8 Forensic psychology

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Elmarie Visser, Franco Visser and Nikki Themistocleous

Forensic psychology is an exciting and developing area of special expertise in the Department of Psychology that, in its present form, is a module within the MA (Clinical Psychology) programme with associated community outreach services rendered to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. In principal the sub-speciality registration category of ‘Forensic Psychology’ has been agreed to by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), although the registration category is currently not active.

The Department of Psychology has as its members both national and international experts in the field of Forensic psychology. Current research relating to the field of Forensic psychology being conducted include Conflict Management in Post-Divorce Disputes, Towards Psychological Risk-Profiling in Serial and Fatal
Interpersonal Violent Crime in South Africa, and Forensic Psychology Assessments in Primary Residency and Contact Disputes. It is recommended that any research in the field of Forensic psychology is focussed and conducted within the South African context, as little scientific research data exists that are focussed on, and original to South Africa.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

1) The role of the Forensic Psychologist in a South African Context  
2) Challenges facing Forensic Psychology in South Africa  
3) Cultural Sensitivity and Forensic Psychology in South Africa  
4) High-risk Offending Demographics in South Africa  
5) Psychology Scope of Practice and Forensic Psychology in South Africa

**Focus area 9 Cognitive and experimental psychology**

**Lecturers and Associates interested or working in the field:**

Chris Janeke, Piet Kruger and Louise Henderson

Students interested in doing either a theoretical or empirical (quantitative or qualitative) research project on an aspect of cognitive or experimental psychology are invited to submit their research topics for consideration. Although this is a very broad research area, research proposals on most topics in cognitive psychology or cognitive science will be considered, provided that a viable research methodology for investigating the research question(s) is described in the proposal.

**Examples of possible M & D topics**

The themes that fall in this domain include the following:

- Reasoning and decision making; Logical and practical reasoning  
- General intelligence  
- The use of heuristics in practical reasoning  
- Problem solving  
- Expert knowledge; Investigating the development of expertise (e.g. in chess or physics)  
- Creativity  
- Psychology and art; the neuropsychological aspects of art creation  
- Philosophy of mind  
- The role of embodiment and social systems in cognitive processing  
- Formal models of mind (e.g. computational modelling, neural nets and information processing)  
- Memory systems; narrative memory  
- Emotion and cognition; emotional intelligence  
- Social cognition  
- The link between perceptual and motor skills  
- Analysing thinking skills in education or the business sector
Focus areas in the Department of Social Work

The Department of Social Work strives to promote the ideals of democracy, social transformation and social justice. We aim to practically apply the fundamental principle of the University of South Africa’s mission, namely to be “in service of humanity”. Our teaching strives towards academic excellence and relevance congruent with the ethos of the profession of Social Work and within the parameters of the Act on Social Service Professions (Act 110 of 1978 as amended). Our training is student-centred, supportive and empowering in nature.

Departmental research focus areas/niches:

• Vulnerable, marginalised groups or populations at risk: (e.g. children, youth, women, older persons, gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgendered, persons with disabilities, people living with and affected by HIV & AIDS; foreigners, asylum seekers, migrants, children working and living on the streets; the unemployed and men-on-the-side-of-the-road; car guards).

• Social issues/problems (e.g. unemployment, poverty and poverty alleviation, chemical abuse and addiction disorders, HIV and AIDS, gender and diversity issues; polygamy, child headed households, home-based care; dating and domestic violence, sexual trauma, sexual abuse, sex trafficking and child sex trafficking, sex offenders and rehabilitation; depression, self-death; teenage pregnancy; child-on-child sexual abuse, rape, bullying; children in conflict with the law).

• Social development (e.g. women empowerment, cooperatives, rural development).

• The Social Work profession (e.g. ethics and professional conduct in social work practice; CPD; safety in Social Work; research related service professionals’ perceptions around the SACSSP; social workers’ experiences about supervision in the Department of Social Development; models and modes for social service professional collaborations).

• Social Work education and training in the ODL-context (e.g. the students’ social and personal contacts; views on service delivery within the ODL context; Social Work supervision/field instruction within the ODL context – supervisors’/field instructors’ and supervisees’ experiences; assessment of practica in the ODL-context; life-skills amongst tertiary students; career guidance; the employability of Social Work graduates).

• Specific/Specialised methods of Social Work intervention: (e.g. marriage guidance and counselling, divorce guidance, person centred individual counselling; family therapy (systems theory); social group work; community development; laughter therapy; play, music, art and storytelling as tools for Social Work intervention; trauma management and debriefing; foster care; adoption; child centred play therapy; effective parenting (filial therapy); family reunification services).

• Specialised fields of Social Work: (e.g. employee health and wellness; occupational Social Work; Social Work management; Social Work in health care; mental health; probation work; school Social Work; rural Social Work, cross-cultural social work).

• Research approaches and specialised research methods: (e.g. Social Work research methods; qualitative and quantitative research; intervention design and development research; programme evaluation; social indicator studies – development of methodology and systems of indicators; Impact studies, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of Social Work service delivery).

Department specific additional requirements/criteria

The applicant must be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. Foreign students must provide proof of registration with their respective Professional Councils in their countries of origin.
Focus areas in the Department of Sociology

Individual research interests/fields of expertise of academics/supervisors:

**Dr JF de Sousa**
Relational economic sociology and cultural approaches to network analysis; sociology of African Entrepreneurship; African Pentecostalism; ethnographic grounded-theory studies

**Prof D Gelderblom**
Social Theory, Social Capital and Migration

**Dr Z L Jansen**
Political Media and Globalisation Studies, Political Theory, Media, Culture and Democratisation

**Ms N Jobodwana**
Identities and Disabilities

**Mr I Lesufi**
Labour Processes, Globalisation, Marx’s Social Theory, Class Analysis

**Ms N Mazibuko**
Gender-based Violence

**Ms M Matee**
Student Support

**Dr LM Mathebe**
Sociology of Autobiography and Biography, Representation and Leadership Studies

**Dr MK Mendelsohn**
Sociolinguistics, Social Theory, Social Identity and Sociology of Education

**Mr P Nhlanhla**
Social Behavioural Aspects of HIV/AIDS, Medical Sociology

**Prof ME Rabe**
Intergenerational studies, Gender Constructions within Families

**Mr L Roets**
Social behaviour studies in HIV/AIDS and health

**Dr CG Thomas**
Social and Economic Rights; Industrial Restructuring; Sociology of Developing Countries; Economic Sociology

**Ms Sintechè van der Merwe**
Gender Studies; Work-life Balance