

# Economics @ Unisa

A guide to preparing for  
career opportunities



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***The information in this publication is correct as of 30 November 2025. Visit the Unisa Counselling and Career Development [downloads page](#) to check for updates.***

*Please check the Unisa qualifications webpage (<http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications>) regularly for updates related to available qualifications and the admission requirements to study.*

## How will this brochure help you?

- It will provide you with some insight into what studying economics involves.
- It will help you gain more information about the skills needed in the field of economics.
- It will help you to think about the career opportunities you are hoping to prepare for and how you will prepare.
- It will assist you in finding qualifications in the field of economics offered by Unisa.

## What problems do you want to solve

“Don’t ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems they want to solve. This changes the conversation from who do I want to work for, to what do I need to learn to be able to do that.”

*Jaime Casap, Google Global Education Evangelist*

One way to think about your career is by focusing on the **problems you care about**, not only on job titles. This shifts the question from “*What do I want to become?*” to “*What do I want to contribute?*”

### Activity

1. Write down some problems or challenges you care about — in your family, community, South Africa, Africa, or the world.
2. Think about how you might contribute to solving them.
3. Ask: *What skills or knowledge would I need to prepare myself for that role?*

**Example:** You may want to address the problem of rising food prices and economic inequality in local communities. Consider the different individuals who can contribute to solving this issue: economists, policy analysts, business owners, government officials, data scientists, community organisers, and financial advisors.

As an economist, you might analyse market trends, evaluate policy options, or model the economic impact of social programmes. A policy analyst may design strategies to improve food affordability; a business owner might create efficient supply chains; and a community organiser could help households gain access to financial education and support.

Together, these roles show that solving economic challenges requires many kinds of expertise. Your background in economics can position you to make a meaningful contribution in multiple ways.

## Understanding economics

### Before you start: Why choose economics?

Before considering pursuing this field of study, here are some basic questions you can ask yourself:

- Why are you interested in studying economics?
- Where does your interest come from?
- Where are you hoping to be in five years? In ten years?
- What opportunities are you hoping to prepare for by completing a qualification in this field?

### What is economics?

Economics is a social science that studies how humans make decisions in the face of scarcity. These can be individual decisions, family decisions, business decisions or societal decisions. If you look around carefully, you will see that scarcity is a fact of life. Think about finite resources such as labour, tools, land, and raw materials that are needed to produce goods and services that we want.

Economic analysis can help us understand diverse issues such as government, education, finance, health care, and the environment.

## Further reading

OpenStax. *Principles of Economics*. Available:

<https://opentextbc.ca/principlesofeconomics/chapter/1-1-what-is-economics-and-why-is-it-important/>

## Specialisation areas in economics

The principles of economics can be applied to many contexts, such as government, finance, consumer behaviour, law, health, agriculture, education, politics, and crime. The main topics studied in economics include:

**Microeconomics** studies individual markets and focuses on the choices made by individual decision-making units in the economy (e.g. consumers and companies) and the impact these choices have on individual markets. Topics included in this field are markets, supply and demand, opportunity cost, and game theory. Example microeconomic questions are: "How does the shortage of water affect real estate prices in rural areas?" and "Why do women end up doing most of the housework?"

**Macroeconomics** examines the economy as a whole and the impact of choices on the total level of economic activity. Some topics included in this field include inflation, GDP (gross domestic product), savings and investment, market growth, unemployment, and competition. Example macroeconomic questions are: "What is happening to the unemployment rate?" and "Is the total level of economic activity increasing or decreasing?"

**International economics** studies the flow of goods and services between nations. Topics included in this field are international banking, exchange rates, tariffs, and the effects of different types of economic systems.

**Economic theory** focuses on the development of models and applying these to current problems.

**Economic history** focuses on economic theories and ideas of former economists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx

Other subfields in economics include:

- Mathematical and Quantitative Methods

- Econometrics
- Game Theory and Bargaining Theory
- Finance and Financial Economics
- Public Economics, Taxation, and Government Spending
- Health, Education, and Welfare
- Labour and Demographic Economics
- Law and Economics
- Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics
- Urban, Rural, and Regional Economics
- Behavioural economics
- Organisational economics
- Market design
- Social choice theory

## Further reading

- <https://bizfluent.com/info-8281261-five-areas-economics.html>
- [https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\\_principles-of-economics-v2.0/index.html](https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-economics-v2.0/index.html)
- Moffatt, Mike. (2019). *What Are the Various Subfields of Economics?* Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/subfields-of-economics-1146356>

**Explore what specialisations Unisa offers** by reading through the descriptions of the undergraduate and Honours level modules offered at Unisa, as well as the research focus areas for Master's and Doctoral studies:

- Undergraduate: <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Register-to-study-through-Unisa/Subjects-&-modules/All-subjects/ECONOMICS>
- Honours: [https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Register-to-study-through-Unisa/Undergraduate-&-honours-qualifications/Find-your-qualification-&-choose-your-modules/All-qualifications/Bachelor-of-Commerce-Honours-in-Economics-\(98353\)](https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Register-to-study-through-Unisa/Undergraduate-&-honours-qualifications/Find-your-qualification-&-choose-your-modules/All-qualifications/Bachelor-of-Commerce-Honours-in-Economics-(98353))
- Master's and Doctoral studies research focus areas:  
[https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate\\_web/Content/Apply%20for%20admission/MD/Documents/CEMS-research-focus-areas-2019.docx](https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate_web/Content/Apply%20for%20admission/MD/Documents/CEMS-research-focus-areas-2019.docx)

# Opportunities in economics

## Job opportunities and work environments

### Possible job titles

- Behavioural science technician
- Behavioural scientist
- Business consultant
- Client portfolio administrator
- Commercial broker
- Commercial manager
- Commodities trader
- Credit risk analyst
- Demand-supply planner
- Development economist
- Econometrician
- Economic advisor
- Economic analyst
- Economic consultant
- Economic forecaster
- Economist
- Financial markets practitioner
- Financial programming analyst
- Industrial economist
- Importer or exporter
- Investment analyst
- Investment manager
- Labour market analyst
- Labour market economist
- Lecturer (university)
- Management consultant
- Macro-economist

- Market research analyst
- Micro-economist
- Mineral economist
- Portfolio administrator
- Property analyst
- Research analyst
- Research economist
- Researcher
- Risk analyst
- Small business economist
- Stockbroker
- Teacher (Economic and Management Sciences) (with further training)
- Technical investment advisor

## Possible work environments

- Economic consultants in both the public and private sectors
- Government departments (e.g. Department of Finance, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Mineral Resources, provincial government, and municipalities)
- International organisations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank
- Manufacturing and consulting firms
- Research organisations
- Self-employment
- South African Reserve Bank and other banking and financial institutions

## Exploring and researching careers

Making informed career decisions means going beyond what you already know. Career research helps you explore opportunities in economics, understand what employers are looking for, and identify the steps you can take to prepare yourself.

## Try this:

Here are some simple activities to help you explore opportunities in economics. Choose 2–3 to start with:

### 1. Online search

Search “career in economics South Africa” or “entry-level jobs in economics” and make a list of the qualifications and skills mentioned.

### 2. Occupational information websites

Visit the South African Department of Higher Education and Training’s [National Career Advice Portal](#). Search for “economist” and read about work activities, skills, and job outlook.

### 3. Job search portals

Check portals like [Indeed](#), [Career Junction](#) or [PNet](#). Type in “economics” and see which employers are currently hiring and the requirements.

### 4. LinkedIn

[Search for Unisa alumni](#) who studied economics and see where they work now. What career paths do they follow?

### 5. AI tools

Use ChatGPT or Google Gemini to ask: “What are emerging careers in economics in South Africa?” Compare the results with what you see on job portals.

### 6. Talk to others

Set up an informal chat with someone working in the economics field to learn more about their career journey and daily work.

### 7. Attend a careers fair

When Unisa or professional organisations host career fairs, look for employers related to economics. Prepare 2–3 questions to ask them about entry routes into the profession.

### 8. Join a professional organisation

- [The Economic Society of South Africa](#)

### 9. Volunteering

Look for volunteering or vacation work opportunities. Note the skills you develop through these experiences.

For more detailed steps and extra activities, see our [Career Research brochure](#).

## Preparing while you study

Many students believe that a degree will lead directly to a specific job. In reality, your career path is shaped by more than your major. It is also about the **skills you build, the experiences you gain, and how you prepare along the way**. While you study, there are many things you can do to get ready for opportunities.

Your degree is one part of your career journey. By building skills, gaining experience, keeping a portfolio, and investing in your confidence, you'll be better prepared for opportunities during and after your studies.

### Develop your transferable skills

Your studies give you subject knowledge and valuable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, working independently, and adapting to new situations. Reflect on what you're learning and practise explaining these skills in ways that employers will understand.

#### Activity

- List three skills you've strengthened this year and one example of how you've used each.
- List three skills you intend to strengthen and how you plan on doing so.

### Build a career portfolio

A portfolio helps you keep track of your achievements, experiences, and goals. Include your skills, certificates, volunteering, work experience, and career ideas. Over time, this will become a powerful tool for applications and interviews.

### Useful resource

- [Unisa Career Portfolio](#)

## Gain experience (volunteering or part-time work)

Getting experience outside your coursework helps you explore fields of interest, build networks, and develop workplace skills. Volunteering is especially valuable when done responsibly and with respect for the community.

### Think about

- Which organisations could benefit from your skills?
- What could you gain in return (skills, networks, insights)?
- How will this experience link to your career goals?

## Enhance your employability

Employability means your ability to get, keep, and grow in fulfilling work. Today's careers are flexible: people change jobs and industries often, and success can mean many different things. You can boost your employability by:

- Managing your personal brand (how others see your professionalism).
- Developing job search skills (CVs, cover letters, interviews, networking).
- Exploring flexible career paths and lifelong learning opportunities.

### Useful resources:

- [Unisa Prepare for Job Opportunities](#)
- [Counselling and Career Development YouTube channel](#)
- [PNet Grad Pack](#)
- [GradNext](#)

## Grow your self-confidence

Believing in your ability to succeed is just as important as skills and knowledge. Low self-confidence can hold you back from studying effectively, applying for opportunities, or connecting with others.

## Ways to strengthen your confidence:

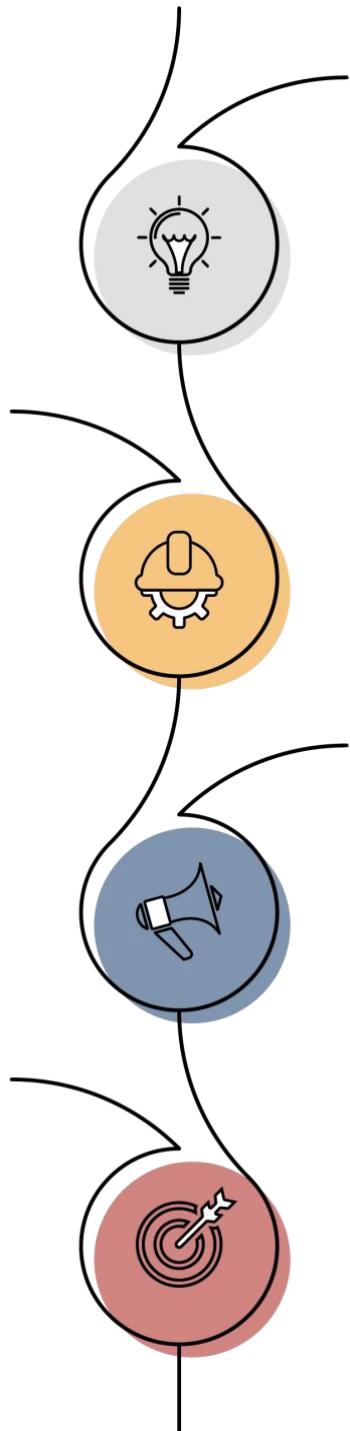
- Focus on your strengths and successes.
- Ask for help when needed — it's a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Practise self-talk that encourages growth instead of fear.

Remember: confidence grows with action. The more you try, the more you'll believe in yourself.

## Your roadmap to success

Embarking on a career journey while studying can feel exciting and overwhelming. This roadmap will guide you year by year, helping you to stay intentional, informed, and adaptable.

*Careers are rarely straight lines. Think of this roadmap as a flexible guide: you can move between stages depending on your opportunities and goals.*



### Year 1: Explore and build foundations

- Reflect on your interests, strengths, and career goals.
- Research career paths linked to your qualification.
- Plan your modules and think about postgraduate options.
- Identify key employability skills to develop.
- Create a basic CV and LinkedIn profile.
- Join a student or professional organisation.

### Year 2: Grow and gain experience

- Focus on excelling in your studies.
- Apply for internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work.
- Attend workshops, webinars, or conferences.
- Gain certifications (if relevant).
- Expand your professional network.
- Update your CV and portfolio with new experiences.

### Year 3: Refine and specialise

- Revisit your career goals and explore specialisations.
- Connect with alumni and seek mentorship.
- Strengthen your professional presence (LinkedIn, portfolio, personal website).
- Practise with mock interviews and improve communication skills.
- Contribute to professional discussions online or at events.

### Final Year: Launch your career

- Start an intentional job search (LinkedIn, job boards, company websites).
- Tailor your CV and cover letters for each application.
- Practise interviews and refine your elevator pitch.
- Attend career fairs and networking events.
- Evaluate and negotiate job offers with guidance from mentors.
- Commit to lifelong learning and professional development.

## My career learning plan: Next steps

Your next step is to plan how you will get the information that you still need to make optimal career decisions. Use SMART goals to help you plan your career research.



**S – Specific:** What exactly do I want to find out?

**M – Measurable:** How will I know I've done it?

**A – Achievable:** Can I realistically do this step?

**R – Relevant:** Does this help me make better career decisions?

**T – Time-bound:** By when will I do it?

*What career questions do I still need answers to?*

My career question	What steps will I take?	By when?	Who/what can help me?	Done?	What's next?
E.g. What jobs can I do with an economics qualification?	Search LinkedIn profiles of Unisa economics graduates	15 Oct	LinkedIn, Alumni page	Yes	Connect with 3 alumni

Career planning is not about having all the answers right now. It is about staying curious, setting small goals, and building momentum.

# Study opportunities at Unisa

## Undergraduate qualifications in economics

College of Economic and Management Sciences

- [Bachelor of Administration \(98315 - BAD\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Business Administration \(98316 - BBA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce \(98314 - GEN\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce in Economics \(98305 - ECS\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce in Economics Quantitative Economics \(98305 - QEC\)](#)
- [Higher Certificate in Economic and Management Sciences \(98237\)](#)

If you do not meet admission requirements for the undergraduate qualification in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, then you will need to explore the option of applying for a Higher Certificate offered in the College of Economic and Management Sciences.

Completing a relevant Higher Certificate programme will enable you to meet the requirements for a diploma or degree.

Visit the Unisa website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications> for more information about the admission requirements for these degrees.

## College of Human Sciences

- [Bachelor of Arts African Languages and Economics \(99311 - ALE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts African Politics and Economics \(99311 - APE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Afrikaans and Economics \(99311 - AEC\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Anthropology and Economics \(99311 - ANE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Archaeology and Economics \(99311 - ARE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Archives and Records Management and Economics \(99311 - AME\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Art History and Economics \(99311 - AHE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Economics and Communication Studies \(99311 - ECO\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts English Studies and Economics \(99311 - ESE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts History and Economics \(99311 - HEC\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Information Science and Economics \(99311 - ISE\)](#)

- [Bachelor of Arts International Politics and Economics \(99311 - IPE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Politics and Economics \(99311 - PEC\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Psychology and Economics \(99311 - PSE\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Sociology and Economics \(99311 - SEC\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics \(90079\)](#)

Visit the Unisa website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications> for more information about the admission requirements for these degrees.

## **Postgraduate qualifications in economics**

### **Honours degrees**

- [Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics \(98353\)](#)

### **Master's and PhD**

- [Master of Commerce in Economics \(98583\)](#)
- [Doctor of Philosophy in Economics \(90022\)](#)

Read more about the Research Focus Areas [here](#).

## Frequently asked questions

### I did not complete mathematics at matric level – can I study economics at Unisa?

You will need to consider applying for admission to a Higher Certificate offered in the College of Economic and Management Sciences. Visit the [Unisa website](#) for more information about the available Higher Certificates and their requirements. Completion of a Higher Certificate does not guarantee you admission to a further qualification since the University also considers the number of available spaces for a specific qualification. Read more about the role of the higher certificate qualifications [here](#).

### I completed mathematics, but my marks were below 50% – what can I do?

You will need to consider applying for admission to a Higher Certificate offered in the College of Economic and Management Sciences. Visit the [Unisa website](#) for more information about the available Higher Certificates and their requirements. Completion of a Higher Certificate does not guarantee you admission to a further qualification since the University also considers the number of available spaces for a specific qualification. Read more about the role of the higher certificate qualifications [here](#).

# Counselling and career development services at Unisa

The Unisa Directorate for Counselling and Career Development offers career, academic, and personal counselling services to Unisa students and the broader community. You can talk to a counsellor about:

- **Career decisions.** I am not sure which career path to follow; I don't know which qualification would be best; I want to change my career direction...
- **Career information.** How can I find out more about a career in ...
- **Employability.** How do I market myself to employers? How can I look for work? How can I compile an effective CV? How do I go about networking with others? How do I put together my career portfolio? How can I meet potential employers? How can I improve my interview skills?)
- **My studies at Unisa.** How can I get started with my studies? How do I plan my studies? How can I study more effectively? I don't feel motivated to continue with my studies... I feel worried about preparing for/ writing the exams. I failed my exams – what now? I need to improve my reading/ writing/ numeracy skills
- **Personal issues and mental health.** How can I have better relationships with others? How can I cope more effectively with issues that impact my studies?

## Contact us

- Send an email to [counselling@unisa.ac.za](mailto:counselling@unisa.ac.za).
- Make an appointment to see a counsellor:
  - [In-person at a Unisa Centre](#)
  - [Online \(on MS Teams\)](#)

## Further self-help resources for career, academic and personal development

Our website: [www.unisa.ac.za/counselling](http://www.unisa.ac.za/counselling)

Our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/unisacareers](http://www.youtube.com/unisacareers)