

**College of Education
Psychology of Education
Research focus areas for 2026**

**RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES, AVAILABLE SUPERVISION CAPACITY AND
SELECTION CRITERIA, ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION PER
SCHOOL AND DEPARTMENT IN CEDU**

Research focus areas of the Department (2026)

- **Neurodevelopmental disorders**
 - Adolescent development and learning
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - Personality and social development of adolescents
 - Language development (ESL/EFL)
 - Spiritual intelligence
 - Multiple intelligences
 - Learners with physical impairments
 - Autism
- **Learning needs**
 - Learning theories
 - Reading comprehension in schools
 - Life skills and life orientation
- **Success in schools**
 - Development of new teachers
 - Academic achievement of adolescents
 - Study assistance/methods
 - Career guidance
- **ODEL teaching and learning**
 - Learner support in ODL
 - Academic integrity
- **Best practices in Psychology**
 - Therapeutic interventions for children, adolescents and adults
 - Psychopathology in childhood, adolescence and adulthood
 - Psychometrics
 - Positive psychology, specifically the asset-based approach
 - Psychological, educational and dynamic assessment
 - Individual therapy
 - Counselling in childhood and adolescence
 - Early attachment and parenting
 - Expressive and movement group therapy

- Psycho-educational health counselling
- **Africana Critical Theory, Postmodernism, and Social Justice**
 - Identity development according to the African worldview
 - Cross-cultural psychology
- **Psychosocial support**
 - Children in conflict with the law
 - Resilience in young offenders
 - Pastoral care for young offenders
 - Behaviour Modification
 - HIV/Aids and care-giver support
 - Gender issues
- **Mental health in schools**
 - Trauma
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Suicide behaviours
- **Behavioural challenges**
 - Discipline and punishment in schools
 - Bullying and positive parenting
 - Identity development
- **Environmental education (care for the environment)**

Research projects that postgraduate students can participate in

Name of project	Brief description of the project	Project leader	No of available positions for MEd students for 2025	No of available positions for PhD students for 2026
Fostering Health and Well-being in Adverse Living Environments	This project focuses on the exploration of the experiences, challenges, and successes of the stakeholders involved in supporting psychosocial issues experienced by foster children.	Dr. L Methi	2	2
ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)	This research project focuses on professional development and other stakeholders to assist learners with ADHD. The project will make a scientific contribution about the prevalence of ADHD in South Africa and contextually relevant programmes for ADHD.	Prof RJ Tabane	0	0
Adversities and support in education	This project focuses on the adversities and support in schools. Possible topics to consider include: • psycho-social and emotional effects of HIV/Aids (teachers and learners) • poverty • violence • xenophobia • learner and teacher well-being in education • emotional enhancement • support of school environments	Prof K Mohangi	0	0
Support mechanisms for learners experiencing barriers to learning	The aim of this project is to equip teachers with the necessary support on how to translate inclusive education policy into practice. Also, how to accommodate learners' diverse needs in the classroom.	Dr MA Mnguni	0	0

Focused M & D Programmes

Name of programme	Qualification code	Curriculum
MEd in Psychology of Education	98407	Research proposal and full research dissertation
PhD in Psychology	90058 - PSY	Research proposal and full research thesis

Important Information:

More information on the PhD in Psychology can be obtained from the UNISA website. Students should keep the Department's focus areas in mind when proposing a research topic for their dissertation or thesis.

Details of individual supervisors and their research interests or fields of expertise

Name of supervisor	Research interest/field of expertise	No of positions for MEd students still available for 2025	No of positions for PhD students still available for 2025
Dr BA Feldman	• Resilience • Well-being in school contexts • Psycho-educational support • Values-based education • Specific learning difficulties	2	2
Prof PJH Heeralal	• Mentoring • Postgraduate supervision • Teaching Practice	0	0
Dr MF Mavuso	• Success in schools • Psycho-educational support • Life skills and life orientation • Positive parenting • Autism • Barriers to learning and inclusion • Specific Learning disabilities/difficulties • Student Support	0	0
Dr AM Moll	• Learners with autism • Learners with physical disabilities	0	0
Prof K Mohangi	• Child and adolescent psychology • Adversities and support • Childhood HIV and Aids and caregiver support • Field of educational psychology: assessment and intervention	1	2

	• Qualitative research methodology: research methods with child participants • Language and literacy		
Dr S Ntshangase	• Childhood and adolescent development • Talent development • Mental health in schools	0	0
Dr H Olivier	• Positive psychology and resilience • Educational psychology therapy • Barriers to learning and Inclusion. • Learner/teacher psychosocial support • Counselling and wellbeing • Community engagement • Career guidance • Child development	0	0
Prof RJ Tabane	• ADHD • Special needs and inclusive education • Psychology and social cohesion, school integration, and desegregation • Cross-cultural psychology • School guidance and counselling • Child and adolescent psychology • HIV/Aids • Research methodology (qualitative)	0	0
Prof LDN Tlale	• Gifted child education • Children in conflict with the law • Children at risk • Vulnerable and orphaned children • Barriers to learning • Social justice • Qualitative research	1	1
Dr SD Tshalala	• Discipline and punishment in schools • Success in schools	0	0
Dr. MA Mnguni	• Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Inclusive Education	0	0
Dr CL Weber	• Resilience • Developmental disabilities • Intellectual disabilities	1	0
Prof MD Magano	• Wellness • Life skills and Life Orientation	0	0
Dr CM Somo	• Adolescent mental health • Family mental health • Odel – Academic Integrity	1	1

Dr DM Kumalo	• Child and adolescent Psychology • Mental Health • Discipline and school punishment • Bullying • Barriers to learning and inclusion. • Special needs education/inclusive education • Learning disabilities/difficulties • ODeL in teaching and learning • Behaviour Modification · Qualitative research	1	1
Dr. L Methi	• Mental health in youth • Mental health in vulnerable contexts	2	2
Dr. P Mahlangu	• Career guidance and counselling • Learner support and inclusive education • Neurodiversity in education • Learning disabilities/ neurodiversity	0	0
Dr. KM Metsing	• Identity development according to the African worldview • Cross-cultural psychology • Gender issues Attention Deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) • Therapeutic interventions for children, adolescents and adults • Positive psychology, specifically the asset-based approach • Expressive and movement group therapy • Trauma • Anxiety • Depression • Suicide behaviours • Bullying and positive parenting	0	0
Dr. NPA Buthelezi	• Psycho-educational health counselling • Trauma-informed care • African social psychology • Neurodevelopmental disorders • Behaviour Modification • Success in schools	0	0
Prof JO August	• Psychological Test Development • Psychometric validation studies • Special Needs and Inclusive Education • Digital Health	0	0
Prof LO Makhonza	• Neurodevelopmental disorders • Child and adolescent mental health • University students' mental health	0	0

Prof ND Maseko	• Learner support • Family, school partnership • Caregivers and foster care • Barriers to learning and inclusion • Parental involvement • Bullying and behaviour modification	0	0
Dr TV Mekingwe	• Learners and Students support • Life Skills and Life Orientation • Special needs and inclusive education • Learner discipline and Behaviour modification • Family and school partnership • Parental involvement	0	0
Dr KB Tshiloane	• Neurodevelopmental disorders: Autism • Success in schools: Development of new teachers • Psychosocial support: Children in conflict with the law, Resilience in young offenders • Learning needs: Learning theories, Reading comprehension in schools, Life skills and life orientation • Behavioural challenges: Discipline and punishment in schools, Bullying and positive parenting • Identity development	0	0
Ms MT Molekoa	• Career guidance • Psycho- Educational Health Counselling • Life skills and Life orientation	0	0

Models of supervision

The individual and co-supervision models are used. Co-supervision is mostly done for mentoring purposes and multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary (MIT) research. Some supervisors in the College supervise across departments. Students are therefore advised to study the lecturer profiles of other departments in the College when trying to identify a suitable supervisor.

Opportunities regarding external supervision

External supervisors may be considered if a suitable supervisor is not available in the Department. However, this will depend on the financial viability of the Department.

Contact details of the department

- Prof K Mohangi, Tel: 012 337 6169; e-mail: mohank@unisa.ac.za (M&D Coordinator)
- Prof LDN Tlale: NS Radipere Building, 06-61, Tel: 0124292064, e-mail: tlaleldn@unisa.ac.za (CoD)

Admission requirements, selection criteria, and selection information relevant for prospective master's and doctoral students

Minimum admission requirements for master's and doctoral studies in the College of Education

Master's of Education

An appropriate Honours Degree in Education, or a postgraduate diploma in the relevant field, or a 480 credit Bachelor of Education Degree with a minimum of 96 credits at NQF level 8. The average mark obtained for the degree shall be 60%. All students should have completed a module in research methods and methodologies as part of their previous level 8 qualification. Students who do not meet these requirements may follow an alternative pathway (e.g. RPL, submitting a portfolio, or working through a prescribed reading list – refer to **Possible alternative pathways**). The application should accord with the various research focus areas/areas of specialisation of the Department, the Department's capacity to provide expert supervision and the requisite qualifications listed above.

PLEASE NOTE: At this stage only the academic Master's of Education is offered, NOT the professional Master's of Education.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Psychology

An appropriate Master's of Education Degree preferably related to the field of study is required. The average mark obtained for the degree shall be 60%. Students who do not meet this requirement may follow an alternative pathway (e.g. RPL or submit a portfolio – refer to **Possible alternative pathways**). The application should accord with the various research focus areas/areas of specialisation of the Department, the Department's capacity to provide expert supervision and the requisite qualification listed above.

Supporting documentation to be submitted with application

For a Master's of Education (qualification code – 98407):

All relevant documentation as specified by the Department for Master's and Doctoral Administration Support.

Students should submit a short research outline of 600 to 750 words which sketches the intended research project, the research approach, problem statement, short literature review and a working title. In addition, a list of five scholarly articles and two books that have been consulted to compile the research outline should be provided. These sources should be predominantly recent, except for (classical) theories which can only be found in old sources. The Harvard referencing method should be used. Students should provide a declaration that they have consulted the relevant department's website prior to submitting their application and should propose the name of his/her preferred supervisor. Any form of plagiarism in the research outline is unacceptable.

For a Doctor of Philosophy/ doctorate degree:

All relevant documentation as specified by the Department for Master's and Doctoral Administration Support.

Students should submit a short research outline of 800 to 900 words which sketches the intended research project, problem statement, the research approach, a short literature review and a working title for the project. In addition, a list of ten scholarly articles and four books that have been consulted to compile the research outline should be provided. These sources should be predominantly recent, except for (classical) theories which can only be found in old sources. The Harvard referencing method should be used. Students should provide a declaration that they have consulted the relevant department's website prior to submitting their application and should propose the name of his/her preferred supervisor. Please note that any form of plagiarism in the research outline is unacceptable.

PLEASE NOTE: Students planning to focus in their PhD in Psychology on Educational Psychology/Psychology of Education should clearly indicate this in their research outline. It is therefore imperative that the first heading of the research outline should read: *PhD in Psychology, focusing on Educational Psychology*.

Selection procedures followed in the selection of candidates for postgraduate studies

Only candidates who meet the minimum eligibility criteria will be considered. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

The Department's supervision capacity and availability of external supervisors will be the first and most important selection criterion. No applicant will be admitted without a supervisor being allocated to the student. If a student requests to be supervised by a particular supervisor, but the supervisor is not available because of his/her existing supervision load, it is the Department's prerogative to allocate an alternative supervisor (internal or external). Further selection will be done based on the following selection criteria (the weight attached to each criteria is indicated between brackets as a percentage of the overall evaluation): the student's academic record and experience in research (30%); understanding of research methods as displayed in the research outline (30%); academic writing skills (30%); and addressing of past inequalities by taking race, gender and disability status into consideration (10%).

The Department will keep record of all the applications and reasons will be provided for unsuccessful applications.

Possible alternative pathways

The following alternative pathways exist for applicants who do not meet the admission requirements:

- Applicants with degrees that have different structures from normal South African honours or master's degrees, applicants whose degrees do not clearly correspond to the Department's admission requirements (e.g. no mark awarded for previous dissertations, no clear evidence of having completed a research-related module as part of the previous qualification, etc) or applicants who do not meet the admission requirements but who possess applicable experience in research or working experience relevant to the field of interest, that may qualify them for admission to a master's or doctoral degree, will be required to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL). Prior academic and research activities by the applicant will be evaluated in accordance with formal Unisa RPL procedures and the outcome of the RPL process will be submitted to and approved by the

chair of the Department. If the approved outcome of the RPL process is positive, the applicant will be allowed to proceed with an application for admission, subject to all terms and conditions governing the admission process.

- Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirement of 60%, may apply for an alternative pathway by submitting a portfolio containing a motivation letter indicating reasons for wanting to do the qualification and for selecting the specific area he/she is applying for, a CV highlighting experience relevant to the field of interest and evidence of engagement with research which could include one or more of the following: a written report of a scholarly nature, a literature survey, a paper presented at a conference, a published article.

The following alternative pathways exist for applicants whose applications were unsuccessful:

- Students who have been refused admission because of limited capacity within the Department or because their topic was not viable may reapply in subsequent years. It should be clearly indicated that it is a reapplication. The normal selection process will apply in case of reapplications.
- Students who were unsuccessful because of an inadequate research outline may revise their research outline and may reapply in subsequent years.
- A student whose application was unsuccessful because of inadequate academic writing skills may reapply in subsequent years if he/she can provide proof of measures put in place to improve his/her academic writing skills (e.g. enrolled for and passed a course in academic writing skills).

Application procedures and when to apply

The Department of Psychology of Education will not make use of differentiated registration dates. Applications for admission and registration will take place in accordance with the dates set by the Department for Master's and Doctoral Administration Support for bulk applications and registrations.

Students should

- apply for a student number if not previously registered, following the steps outlined in <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Apply-for-a-student-number-and-apply-for-admission>
- apply for a space in one of the focus areas using the online application process

Once acceptance in the research focus area and the allocation of a supervisor have been confirmed, they may register for the research proposal module.