


Department	Economics
Discipline	Economics
Research Focus Area	Public Economics
Total Capacity for 2026	8 (7 Master's and 1 PhD)

The purpose of this document is to provide prospective Master's and Doctoral applicants in the field of Public Economics with an overview of staff members' current research agendas, as well as broader research topics in these fields. Applicants should consult our [institutional repository](#) and [list of current and recent topics](#) to ensure that their proposed topics do not overlap with other topics that we have supervised or are currently supervising within the department. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that the proposed study makes a significant and original contribution to the scholarly body of knowledge.

Prospective students are encouraged to match their research interests to potential supervisors' research profiles. Applicants can also contact specific staff members to discuss their research ideas before applying. We advise against reusing Unisa Honours (HRECS83) research topics for new Master's applications. Applicants wishing to extend their research in these fields are required to discuss such extensions with potential supervisors. Please note, however, that research discussions with individual staff members do not guarantee acceptance into the programme as the final decision rests with the Departmental Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) and is based on a range of institutional requirements.

Supervision Team details:	Academic Profile	Capacity
Prof Z Robinson Office: 5-77 Email: robinz@unisa.ac.za ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6375-7535 .	Prof Robinson is a professor in the Department of Economics. She holds a PhD (Economics) degree from the University of Cape Town. Her research focus areas include Macroeconomics with a focus on Public Economics and Mineral economics. Her research interests include amongst others: Public Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government failure vs market failure with specific reference to Africa/BRICS • A critical appraisal of tax avoidance and/or tax evasion in Africa/BRICS • Ease of doing business and regulatory reform in South Africa Mineral Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyclical commodity price and sustainability impact on the South African economy Supervision type: Quantitative and qualitative research Econometrics: Intermediate	None
Dr N Mkhize Office: 4-37 Email: mkhizni@unisa.ac.za ORCID ID:  orcid.org/0000-0001-6207-7538	Prof Mkhize holds a PhD (Economics) degree from the University of South Africa. His research focus areas include amongst others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Economics, • Open Economy Macroeconomics, • Inclusive Growth, • Public Finance, and • Health Economics. 	1 Master's 1 PhD

	<p>Supervisor type: Qualitative and quantitative</p> <p>Econometrics: Intermediate</p>	
<p>Dr SJ Joubert Office: 4-46 Email: sjjoub@unisa.ac.za</p> <p>ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-1033</p>	<p>Dr Joubert holds a DCom (Economics) degree from the University of South Africa. His research interests include financial markets, household finances and fiscal sustainability.</p> <p>Possible topics under these items include:</p> <p>Financial markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining co-operative financial institutions (CFI's) in the South African economy • Examining mutual banks in the South African economy • Analysis of various asset classes (performance, volatility, etc) over time and their impact on the JSE and/or South African economy <p>Household finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the (contrasting) findings of the allocation of households' assets between various surveys and the National Accounts • The use of stokvels as a saving instrument by households in South Africa. • Foreign saving(s) of South African residents <p>Fiscal sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of demographic changes (e.g. longevity and ageing) on fiscal sustainability in South Africa. • Should South Africa have a mandatory contribution, public pension ('social security') system? • The impact of a basic income grant (BIG) on South Africa's fiscal sustainability • An analysis of National Treasury's forecast accuracy and its impact on fiscal planning in South Africa • General analysis of the development of government (and other) debt levels in South Africa. These could include comparative studies, e.g. with other developing countries. 	<p>1 Master's</p>

	<p>Supervision type: Quantitative and qualitative research</p> <p>Econometrics: Advanced</p>	
<p>Dr G Maluleke Office: 4-15 Email: malulg@unisa.ac.za</p> <p>Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5234-3115</p> <p>Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=dQ_GK3UAAAAJ&hl=en</p>	<p>Dr Maluleke holds a PhD (Economics) degree from the University of South Africa. Her research interests include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public investment in infrastructure, education • Government spending and poverty reduction <p>Supervisor type: Quantitative</p> <p>Econometrics: Intermediate</p>	<p>2 Masters</p> <p>1 PhD (Co-Supervision)</p>
<p>Dr NP Vacu-Nggqila Office 4-12 Tel: 012 433 4758 E-mail: vacunp@unisa.ac.za ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4518-7764</p>	<p>Dr Vacu-Nggqila is a lecturer in the Department of Economics at UNISA. She holds a PhD in economics degree from UNISA. Dr Vacu-Nggqila’s research interests are macroeconomics, with a particular focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal policy • Public Economics and International trade • International trade policy and socioeconomic issues in African developing countries • International finance and public economics • Public economics and environmental issues <p>Supervision type: Quantitative research</p> <p>Econometrics: Intermediate</p>	<p>1 master’s co-supervision</p>
<p>Ms L Nkosi</p> <p>Office : 4-06 e-mail : nkosil@unisa.ac.za</p> <p>Google Scholar : https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=mjcFzswAAAAJ&hl=en</p> <p>Orchid ID : https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9478-2714</p>	<p>Ms L Nkosi is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics. She holds an MCom (Economics) degree from the University of South Africa. Her research focuses mainly on public economics, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public finance • Energy economics • Industrial organisation of state-owned enterprises <p>Supervision type: Quantitative and qualitative research</p> <p>Econometrics: Advanced</p>	<p>1 Master’s</p>

<p>Ms TS. Moletsane</p> <p>Office 4-48 Email: moletts@unisa.ac.za ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8993-2191</p>	<p>Ms Moletsane is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics holds a MCom (Economics). Her research includes:</p> <p>Public Economics with the main focus on tax policy, public spending and public debt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect of direct and indirect tax on tax revenue and economic growth. • The effect of VAT on economic growth. • Productive public expenditure and budget analysis • The impact of Carbon tax on economic growth. <p>Health Economics focusing on economic evaluation, the economics of Health Systems, Universal health coverage and Health Equity Studies.</p> <p>Industrial organisation and competition policy: Analysis of the health and Energy markets in terms of pricing, regulation and policy.</p> <p>Supervisor type: Quantitative</p> <p>Econometrics: Intermediate</p>	<p>2 Masters (co-supervision)</p>
<p>Dr IA Iwegbunam</p> <p>Office 5-77</p> <p>Email: eiwegbia@unisa.ac.za</p> <p>Orchid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8893-1384</p>	<p>Dr Iwegbunam holds a PhD (Economics) degree from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests include macroeconomics focusing on fiscal and monetary policy issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of Monetary Policy on Income Inequality in Emerging Markets Economies/South Africa • Relationship between Monetary Policy, Fiscal Policy, and Economic Growth in Emerging Markets Economies/South Africa • Monetary Policy, Fiscal Policy, and Exchange Rate Shocks on Real Output Growth in Emerging Markets Economies/South Africa • The Role of Fiscal Policy and Economic Growth across South African Municipalities or across a set of Emerging Market Economies <p>Supervisor type: Quantitative</p> <p>Econometrics: Intermediate</p>	<p>1 Master's (Co-supervision)</p>
<p>Model of supervision</p>	<p>Candidates will be allocated to a supervisor but will be required to work independently within the requirements of higher degree studies. Additionally, the candidate will have to present his/her work to a panel</p>	

	<p>of academics at colloquia. / Additionally, the candidate should submit his/her work to be reviewed by a blind peer review process.</p> <p>As part of the process of obtaining the Master’s, the Department of Economics requires that all Master’s degree candidates present the proposal to the departmental higher degrees committee. The presentation must be within one (1) year of successful registration of the programme. Therefore, all registered students are required to make allowance for the presentations in their year plan. The presentations will take place in the department. Accommodation and travel arrangements should be made by the student. Provision will be made for presentations via MS Teams for students who are not able to physically attend.</p> <p>The following should be noted regarding the presentation of the proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A complete draft of the proposal must be submitted to the candidate’s supervisor by the end of August of the relevant year. 2. The proposal presentations will take place in the last week of October. Students will be informed of the respective dates in due course. 3. Each candidate has to prepare a 15-minute presentation. 4. All feedback must be incorporated and the final proposal submitted to the supervisor by the third week of November of the respective year.
Selection criteria: Master’s/Doctorate	Refer to the qualification website for selection criteria.
Selection Procedure	Refer to the qualification website for the selection procedure.
Research scope	
Reading: Subject Field	<p>This is a selection of articles and/or recent books in this research focus area. Further reading over and above these is essential.</p> <p>No specific articles are prescribed here, because of the diverse scope of topics researched in public economics. It is, however, essential that you read extensively on the chosen topic.</p>
Reading: Research Methodology	<p>This is a selection of journals you may read to orientate you better concerning methodology. Further reading over and above these is essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Journal of Public Economics • 2 National Tax Journal • 3 Finanz Archiv/Public Finance Analysis
Resources: Scholar community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Institute of Public Finance
Potential M&D research focus areas or research projects	
Unit of Analysis	Research Focus
The economic rationale of government in a mixed market economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency, markets and governments • Market failures: externalities, public goods and inequality • Government failure: public choice, bureaucratic behaviour and corruption
The economics of public expenditure and, in particular,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social insurance and social security • Transfer payments and their impact • Basic income grants

public spending on social security and social insurance	
The economics of selected tax types and tax reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxation as a source of finance and its impact on equity and economic efficiency • The economics of various taxes • Tax reform and policy trends in emerging market economies
National Health Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determinants and impact in emerging economies
Fiscal federalism and intergovernmental fiscal relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal federalism and the supply of local public goods