

Bachelor of Social Science Honours in Psychology

Module Descriptors

Research Methodology (NQF 8, 20 credits)

This module explores various research methodologies frequently employed in studies within the social sciences. It further introduces the student to the philosophical assumptions that underpin research, as well as the paradigms embedded in one's choice and approach to research in a particular study. It explores the rationale behind adopting a quantitative or qualitative approach to research, relative to answering the research question/s. This module disseminates knowledge on the selection of a research design, sampling technique, data collection procedure, as well as the analysis of data and places emphasis on the importance of ethical principles that guide ethical research practices.

Theory and Practice of Psychopathology (NQF 8, 18 credits)

This module engages the student in the critical discussion and evaluation of, the various factors and complexities involved in the assessment processes, and interpretation of mental health illnesses. This module provides the student with an understanding of the classification of mental illness using the DSM-5. It further introduces the student to the changing landscape of assessment and diagnosis, by discussing the current developments in the field of assessment and diagnosis of mental disorders. Traditional and contemporary perspectives surrounding abnormal behaviour and psychopathology will also be explored. The content for this module has been formulated around two documents; the findings of the first large population-based mental health epidemiological survey in South Africa (the South African Stress and Health study), carried out as part of the World Health Organization World Mental Health (WMH) Survey Initiative, and the National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan 2013 – 2020, by the South African Department of Health. As a result, while this module looks at the theory and practice of psychopathology in western society, it also places emphasis on mental health disorders prevalent in South Africa.

Approaches to Diversity in Psychology (NQF 8, 12 credits)

This module is designed to critically engage with diversity as a central issue in the discipline of Psychology in South Africa. In this module, students will explore the uniqueness of the South African context and individuals within that context, by critically engaging with the discourses, ideologies and attitudes that shape diversity issues in South African communities. Topics for engagement in this module include culture, race, gender, sexualities, xenophobia, sex work, ableism, and poverty. Students will be asked to consider the relevance of Psychology in South Africa in relation to these issues.

Ethics in Psychology (NQF 8, 12 credits)

This module aims to encourage the student to engage in current thinking practices of ethics in psychology. Ethical decision-making models will be explored and the impact of social, cultural and personal values,

biases and beliefs will be discussed. Students will engage in critical discussion around the complexity of ethical dilemmas in psychology. The contentions among ethical, legal and moral issues in the helping profession will be explored. Ethical practices are discussed across the various spectrums of psychology, specifically; mental health counselling, school counselling, career, marriage and family counselling, and related professional demands that practitioners should be able to negotiate via a maze of ethical codes and standards of care. As far possible, ethical dilemmas and ethical practice will be discussed through a South African lens. Finally, this module will serve as a resource that reminds students about the most important fibres of the psychology profession: critical thinking, problem-solving, professional integrity, client care, moral behaviours, reflective practices, and a desire to do good for persons in all situations.

Research Thesis (NQF 8, 30 credits)

This module provides an opportunity for the student to engage in the research process and to conduct a research study on a researchable topic. This module holds a dual focus whereby students will conceptualize the research, write the proposal and collect the data as a group project, and then analyse, write up and report on the findings in their individual capacity. Furthermore, this module enrolls the student in areas that are key to the research process. These areas consist of: i) the conceptualisation of the topic guided by the assigned supervisor, ii) an extensive literature search, iii) constructing relevant research questions, objectives and/or hypotheses, iv) detailing the methodology underlying the study, v) analysing the data, as well as, vi) the presentation of the results. Ethical procedures specific to the research process will be explored, with strong impetus on the adherence of sound ethical practice in research and the dissemination of research findings. The research thesis module comprises of: i) the research proposal, ii) the research mini-thesis, and iii) the research day poster presentation, and is run over two terms.

Psychotherapeutic Models of Intervention (NQF 8, 18 credits)

This module engages the student in the application of various psychotherapeutic models of intervention in counselling contexts. Through case studies, the theory, techniques, therapeutic goals and processes of different psychotherapeutic approaches will be explored. This will be done to illustrate the principles of change and significant contributions of the various models. Students will engage in the process of selecting and applying effective treatment modalities for various types of cases. Central to this module is the critical evaluation of evidence-based practices and the development of a solid ethical framework for practice. This will be based on a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of psychotherapeutic models of intervention and counselling practice in the South African context.

Psychological Assessment (NQF 8, 18 credits)

This module offers the student the opportunity to gain an insightful understanding of the entire process of assessment from the design and development of psychological measurement tools to the subsequent interpretation and reporting of test scores. Throughout the module, the emphasis is placed on assessment tools and practices that promote fair and ethical assessment. This affords the student the opportunity to explore the challenges and limitations of psychological measurement enabling the student to consider the characteristics of a good measure critically. This includes building an understanding of the psychometric properties that contribute towards the statistical rigour of assessment tools such as norms, reliability and validity. The student will also be introduced to processes involved in making assessment accessible to specific audiences, such as differently-abled persons and children and in using and adapting measures within multi-cultural environments.