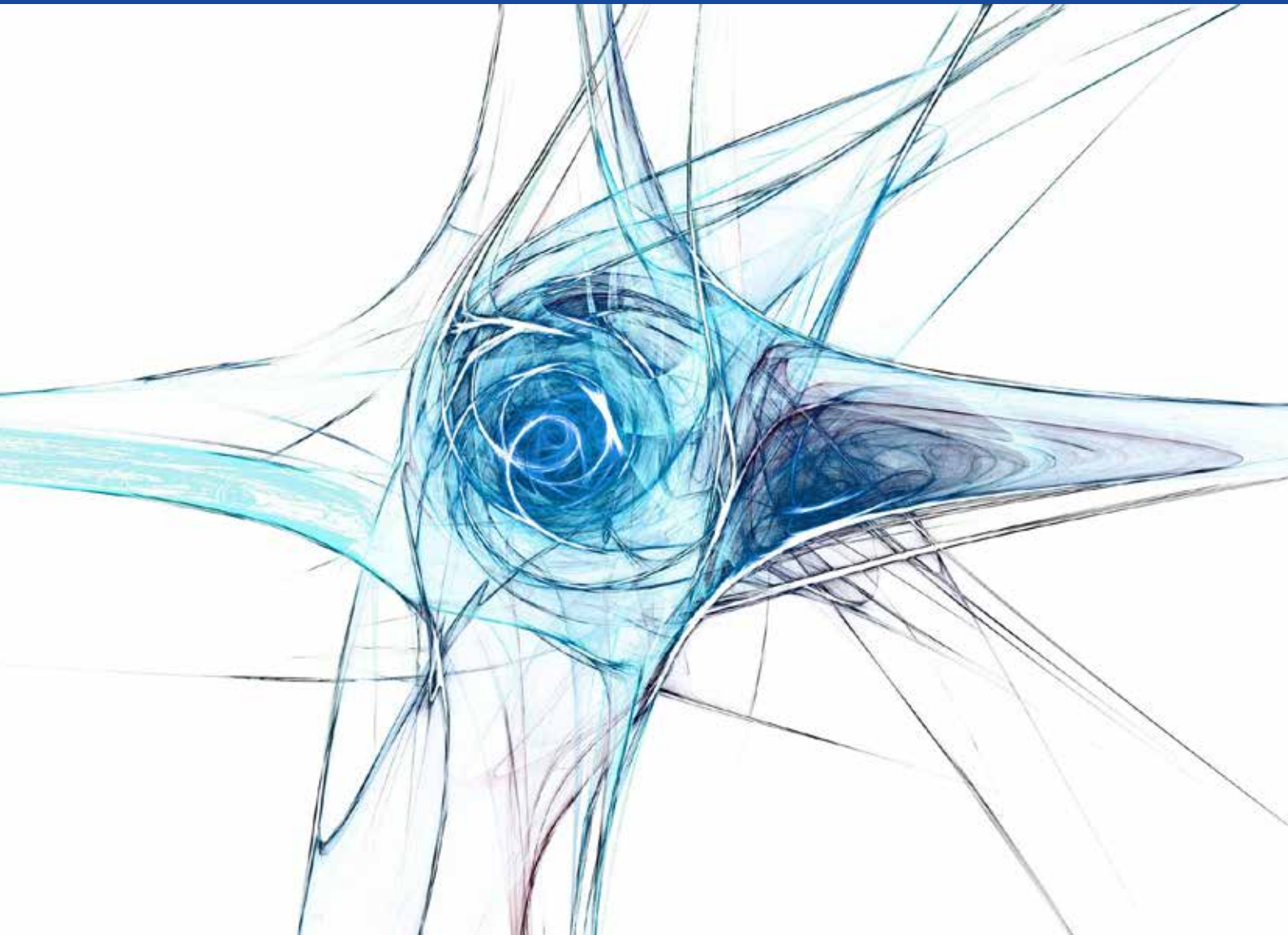


Psychology @ Unisa

A complete guide to preparing
yourself for career opportunities



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The information in this publication is correct as of 14 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.

Introduction

There is great diversity in the field of psychology, and on the African continent, the possibilities for exploration and research are vast. Unisa is uniquely positioned to support this journey, as its teaching and learning extend beyond South Africa's borders, offering students the chance to contribute to psychological knowledge from a distinctly African perspective.

Studying psychology prepares you for a wide range of professions. Employers value the skills psychology majors develop — from collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to understanding human behaviour in complex contexts. All of Unisa's Psychology and Industrial & Organisational Psychology modules equip students with transferable skills that can be applied in many sectors, not only in traditional psychology roles.

Many students start their psychology studies anxious about the uncertainty of professional training opportunities at the Master's level. It is common to feel that only registered psychologists can make meaningful contributions. But the reality is broader: your academic training opens doors to a wide array of careers, research opportunities, and innovative ways to apply psychological knowledge to meet the needs of communities in South Africa, across Africa, and beyond.

The question is not only "Will I become a registered psychologist?", but also "How can I turn my psychology education into a fulfilling career while contributing to the communities I care about?" This brochure is designed to help you explore these options, discover possibilities you may not have considered, and build a career that aligns with your interests, strengths, and values.

Career planning self-assessment

Career planning is not a once-off decision. It is an ongoing process of reflection, learning, and action. This short self-assessment will help you identify where you are in your journey and highlight areas that may need more attention as you explore your options in psychology.

Activity

Take a few minutes to complete the checklist below. Be honest with yourself — the goal is not to have all the answers, but to understand what you still need to learn or do.

After completing the table, look at the statements you marked as “No”. Use these to identify your career planning gaps and make short notes on the actions you could take next (for example, “talk to a practising psychologist”, “attend a career webinar,” or “read more about postgraduate options”).

STATEMENT	YES	NO
1 I am sure that I want to major in psychology		
2 I want a psychology-related career		
3 I am familiar with the types of jobs that psychology graduates can apply for		
4 I am aware of the skills that employers expect psychology graduates to have		
5 I know about the different fields in psychology		
6 I know which field in psychology I am interested in		
7 I understand the kinds of work done by different types of psychologists (e.g. clinical, research, and educational)		
8 I know where to look for information about a career in psychology		
9 I have spoken to at least one person who works in the field of psychology about a career in psychology		
10 I know what steps I will have to take to achieve my career goals.		
11 I can identify career paths related to psychology that does not require professional registration with the HPCSA.		

STATEMENT		YES	NO
12	I understand the curriculum requirements for my psychology degree		
13	I know about other study options (not psychology) after completing my first degree		
14	I know the admission requirements for postgraduate studies in psychology		
15	I know how to prepare for applying for a Master's programme in psychology		
16	I have ideas for gaining experience in the psychology field during my studies		
17	I regularly read about topics in psychology		
18	I understand other disciplines related to psychology		

Tip: Don't be discouraged by your "No" answers — they highlight where you can grow next. Career exploration is a process of curiosity, connection, and courage.

Career options

Psychology is a broad and fascinating field that studies how people think, feel, and behave. Whether you want to help others, understand the human mind, or make workplaces better, psychology offers many paths to explore.

You could work in areas such as:

- Clinical and counselling psychology: supporting people's mental health and well-being.
- Educational and developmental psychology: helping people learn, grow, and reach their potential.
- Organisational and industrial psychology: improving motivation, teamwork, and productivity at work.
- Health, neuro- and forensic psychology: studying the links between mind and body, the brain, and behaviour in legal settings.
- Community and social psychology: promoting inclusion, resilience, and social change.
- Research, teaching, and assessment: designing studies, teaching psychology, or developing psychological tools.

- Special interest areas: such as sport and exercise, trauma, addiction, gender and sexuality, or environmental psychology.

Academic and practitioner route

There are two main paths in psychology: the academic route and the professional (practitioner) route. Each offers different career opportunities.

Academic route	Professional route
Focuses on research and teaching. Graduates may work in universities, research institutions, or fields that apply psychological knowledge in broader contexts. This route does not include psychological testing, counselling, or psychotherapy.	Focuses on training to become a registered counsellor, psychometrist, or psychologist. These professionals work directly with people to assess, support, or treat psychological concerns. Registration is through the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Current registration categories include registered counsellor, psychologist, and psychometrist (independent practice).

Before deciding which route to follow, it is essential to do thorough career research. Understanding the study paths and professional requirements can help you set realistic expectations and explore alternative options if you decide not to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology.

What problems do you want to solve

One way to think about your future in psychology is to focus on the problems you care about, not just job titles.

“Don’t ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems do 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 understanding human behaviour could help address them.
3. Ask yourself: What knowledge or skills would I need to help solve these problems?

Example:

You may want to address the problem of increasing mental health challenges among young people. Different professionals can contribute in unique ways:

- A counselling psychologist may provide therapy and emotional support.
- A community psychologist could design programmes that promote mental well-being.
- A research psychologist might study the factors that affect youth resilience and recommend effective interventions.
- An educational psychologist could help schools create supportive learning environments.

Further resource

- [Career Talk: Your career in psychology](#)

What can I do with a Bachelor's or Honours degree?

A degree in psychology gives you valuable theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and people-focused insights that are useful in many settings — even beyond traditional psychology roles.

Graduates with a background in psychology often work in:

- Business and industry: human resources, marketing, project management, consulting, coaching, or research.
- Research organisations: such as the Human Sciences Research Council, the Unisa Centre for Applied Psychology, and other research institutes.
- Government departments: including Labour, Social Development, the South African Police Service, and Correctional Services.
- Non-profit and community organisations: local, national, and international NGOs that promote health, education, and social development.
- Education and training: schools, colleges, and universities, supporting teaching, learning, and student development.

Tip: For a thorough exploration of options to consider with a Bachelor's and/or Honours degree in Psychology, visit this website: <https://humanities.uct.ac.za/departments/psychology/student-resources/what-can-i-do-my-psychology-degree>.

Your psychology studies also prepare you for further specialisation or postgraduate training if you choose to become a registered counsellor, psychometrist, or psychologist.

Continue with the career research activities that follow to discover even more opportunities related to your psychology qualifications.

Identify opportunities with career research

Making informed career decisions means going beyond what you already know. Career research helps you explore opportunities related to psychology, 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 psychology. Choose 2–3 to start with:

- 1. Online search**
Search “career in psychology South Africa” or “entry-level jobs in psychology” 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 “psychologist” and read about work activities, skills, and job outlook.
- 3. Job search portals**
Check portals like [Indeed](#), [Career Junction](#) or [PNet](#). Type in “psychology” and see which employers are currently hiring and the requirements.
- 4. LinkedIn**
[Search for Unisa alumni](#) who studied psychology 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 psychology in South Africa?” Compare the results with what you see on job portals.
- 6. Talk to others**
Set up an informal chat with someone who studied psychology and now working 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 psychology. Prepare 2–3 questions to ask them about entry routes into the profession.

8. Join a professional organisation

- Join the PsySSA Student Division to connect with peers, attend conferences, and access mentorship and research opportunities.

9. Volunteering

Look for volunteering or vacation work opportunities in labs, schools, or community science projects. Note the skills you develop through these experiences.

10. Experience studying psychology

Sign up for a free course related to psychology on MOOC platforms such as Coursera, EdX, Open University, etc.

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

Professional psychology in South Africa

If you want to practise as a professional psychologist or counsellor in South Africa, you must register with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

You can register in one of the following categories:

- Registered counsellor
- Psychometrist
- Clinical psychologist
- Counselling psychologist
- Educational psychologist
- Industrial psychologist
- Forensic psychologist
- Neuropsychologist
- Research psychologist

Each category has its own scope of practice, which outlines what activities practitioners are allowed to perform.

For more information about registration requirements, training, and accredited universities, visit the [HPCSA Board for Psychology](#) website.

Tip: Registration with the HPCSA is required only if you plan to work as a professional psychologist, counsellor, or psychometrist.

You can also use your psychology degree in many other careers — in business, research, education, and community development.

As you read this, keep in mind the contribution you want to make and the problems you feel called to solve. Many students become fixated on a specific job title such as “clinical psychologist” or “neuropsychologist”. When this happens, it becomes easy to overlook the many other meaningful roles available in psychology and the wider human-services ecosystem.

Instead of focusing only on a title, think about the real position you want to take in improving lives, advancing knowledge, or supporting communities. Your psychology training equips you with ways of understanding people, behaviour, and systems. These skills remain valuable across many contexts, even beyond traditional professional psychology pathways.

When you shift your attention from job titles to the impact you want to have, new possibilities open up. This mindset will help you stay motivated, explore widely, and design a career that is both meaningful to you and responsive to the needs of different communities.

Registered counsellor

A registered counsellor provides psychological screening and short-term interventions to help individuals function more effectively. According to Professor H. G. Pretorius (2012), their role includes:

- Making counselling services accessible and affordable
- Acting as “emotional paramedics” in trauma situations
- Intervening appropriately and referring when needed
- Supporting communities and promoting health in a culturally sensitive way
- Designing, implementing, and monitoring preventative and developmental programmes

Where they work

Registered counsellors work in a variety of settings, including:

- Community-based organisations, schools, prisons, and children’s homes
- Universities, as counsellors or lecturer
- Businesses, in human resources, recruitment, and employee support

Professional training route



Where do they work?

Community-based settings such as schools, non-government organisations, prisons, and children's homes; universities as counsellors and lecturers; organisations as HR practitioners and recruitment consultants.

Training at Unisa

At Unisa, the BPsych equivalence programme is being restructured to meet HPCSA requirements.

Psychology graduates can also pursue the accredited undergraduate and Honours degrees in Psychology, with the option to continue to a Master's in Clinical Psychology or Master's by dissertation.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Psychometrist

A psychometrist specialises in psychological assessments and the interpretation of assessment data. They can independently select, administer, score, and interpret psychological tests, provide feedback to clients, and write reports. Psychometrists consult a registered psychologist only when necessary, within their defined scope of practice.

Important note: Psychometrists cannot use certain specialist tests, such as personality measures like the TAT, CAT, or Rorschach; neuropsychological measures; or tests used to diagnose psychopathology (e.g., MMPI-2).

Where they work

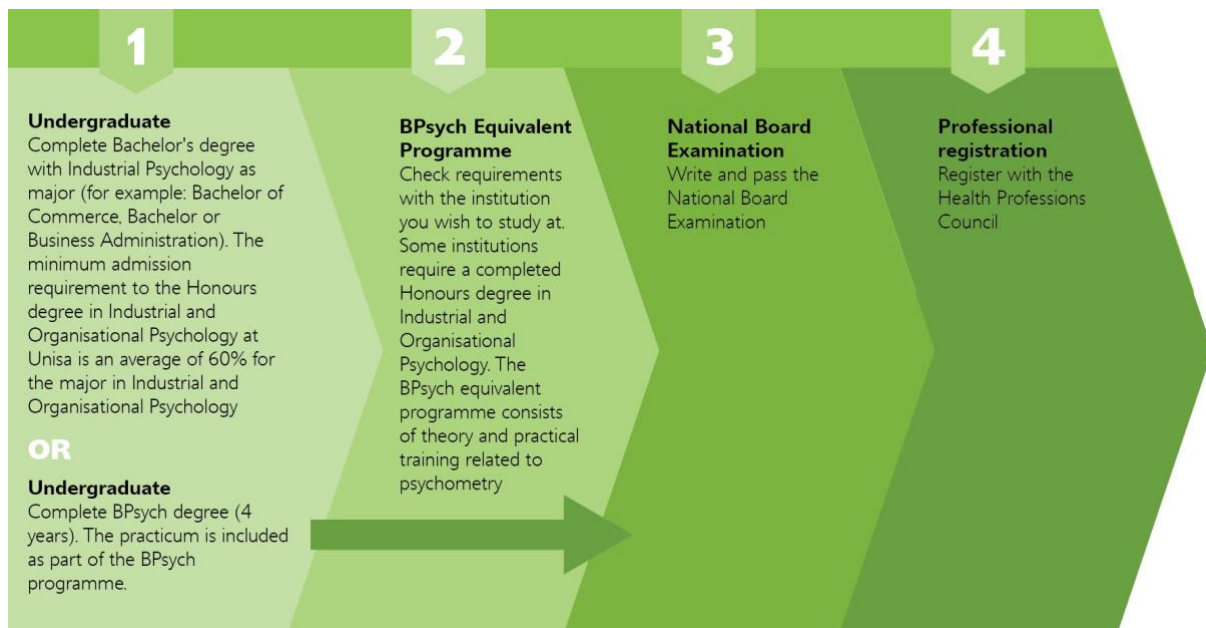
- Psychometrists may work in:
- Private psychological practices
- Companies, industries, or government departments
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

They may practise independently but must adhere strictly to their scope of practice and cannot perform activities reserved for counsellors or registered psychologists.

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of psychometrists:

<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Professional training route: Psychometry



Training at Unisa

At Unisa, you can train as a psychometrist through the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychometry, which may lead to professional registration with the HPCSA after passing the National Board Examination.

The one-year programme includes:

- Five compulsory coursework modules in semester one
- A six-month work-integrated learning (WIL) practicum in semester two

Admission requirements: an NQF 7 qualification in psychology or industrial/organisational psychology, with a minimum average of 65% in the major(s) or selected modules. Only a limited number of students are accepted annually.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Clinical psychology

A clinical psychologist provides diagnostic and therapeutic services to people experiencing mental or emotional distress. They often work alongside medical, paramedical, and other professionals. The focus is on medium- to long-term interventions at secondary and tertiary levels, addressing both treatment and prevention.

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of clinical psychologists:

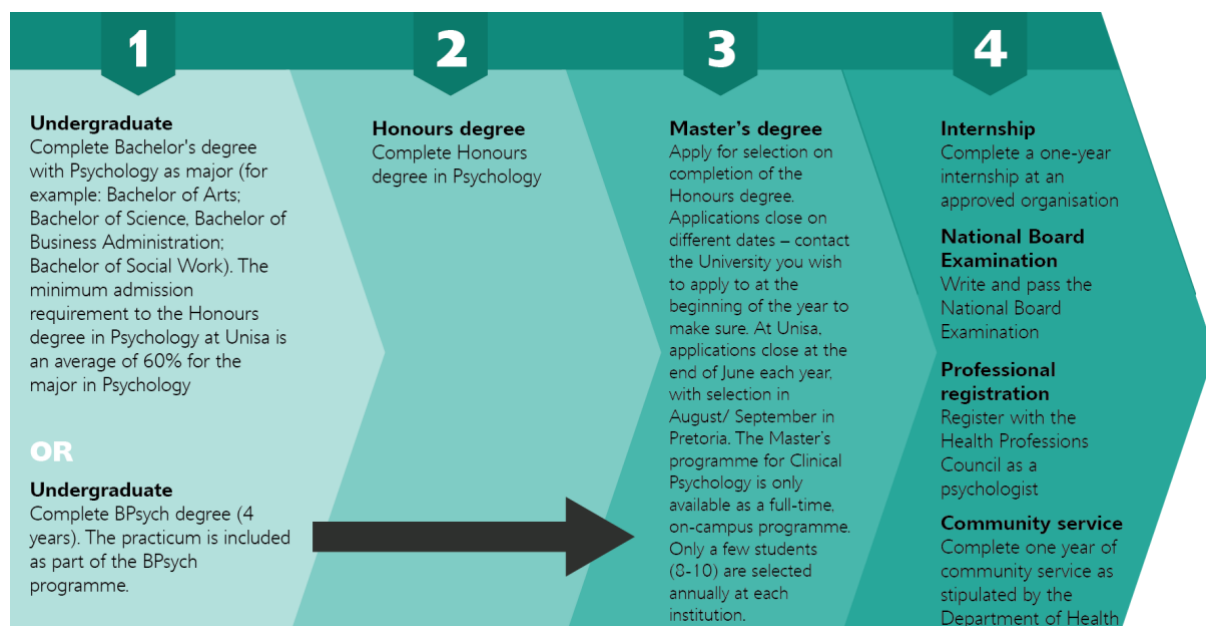
<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Where do they work?

Clinical psychologists can work in a variety of settings:

- Private practice or self-employment
- Mental health institutions, hospitals, schools, and counselling centres
- Government departments, NGOs, and community-based organisations (CBOs)
- Tertiary institutions, focusing on teaching, research, and community engagement
- Specialist areas, such as forensic psychology, neuropsychology, bereavement, or sports psychology
- Some also act as expert witnesses in court or provide consultancy services.

Professional training route: Clinical psychology



Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on “List of accredited institutions” and then on List of accredited Universities.

The information for the Unisa Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology is available here:

<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Qualifications/Selection-degrees>.

Forensic psychology

A forensic psychologist is a clinical psychologist who specialises in working with people involved in the legal system. They combine psychological expertise with knowledge of the law to assess, treat, and advise individuals and institutions.

Forensic psychologists may:

- Conduct psychological assessments, diagnoses, and interventions
- Provide therapeutic support or refer clients to other professionals
- Advise on policies using forensic psychological research
- Design, manage, and evaluate forensic programmes and interventions
- Conduct and supervise research in forensic psychology
- Train and supervise students, interns, and other registered psychologists
- Provide expert evidence or opinions in legal contexts

Further reading:

- <https://forensic-psychologist.co.za/how-to-become-a-forensic-psychologist/>
- <https://forensic-psychologist.co.za/forensic-psychology/>

Professional training route

There is no separate Master’s programme in forensic psychology. Practitioners first train as clinical psychologists before specialising in the forensic field.

Neuropsychology

Neuropsychologists specialise in how the brain and nervous system affect behaviour, emotions and cognition. They assess, diagnose, intervene and rehabilitate people with brain-related conditions

(such as traumatic brain injury, stroke, tumours, neurodegenerative disorders). They may also conduct research, advise on policy, supervise others and give expert opinion.

Where they work

Neuropsychologists may be found in private practice, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, forensic settings, research institutes, tertiary education and community health services.

Training route

After completing a Bachelor's and Honours in Psychology, prospective neuropsychologists follow a professional Master's qualification in Neuropsychology that meets HPCSA-accredited standards (currently only offered at the University of Cape Town). Once registered, they may practise independently in this category.

Further reading:

- <https://www.neuropsychologysa.co.za/>
- <https://www.sacna.co.za/who.php>
- <https://www.sacna.co.za/>

Research psychology

Research psychologists specialise in studying human behaviour and societal issues through applied research. They investigate problems, evaluate interventions, and generate knowledge to help society understand and address challenges. This path is ideal for students interested in psychology as a scientific discipline rather than therapy or clinical practice.

Professional training in research psychology equips students with advanced skills in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research. A Master's degree in research psychology also provides a foundation for PhD studies and a career in academia.

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of research psychologists:

<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Where do they work?

Graduates with a research psychology Master's degree can work across diverse research environments, including:

- Science councils and research organisations (e.g., Human Sciences Research Council)
- Government departments and policy research units
- NGOs, advocacy organisations, and community-based organisations
- Market research, media, financial institutions, and management consulting
- Public health, education, and personnel development
- Research and Development (R&D) departments
- User experience departments or companies
- Self-employment as a research consultant

A table follows with an indication of some of the sectors graduates can find internships and/or employment.

Institution/Organisation/ Unit/Company	Website
Social and Health Research Councils, Units, and NGOs	
Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences (ISHS)	Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences (ISHS)
Centre for Health Policy (CHP)	http://www.chp.ac.za/
Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)	http://www.csvr.org.za/
Sonke Gender Justice	http://www.genderjustice.org.za/
Centre for Development and Enterprise	http://www.cde.org.za/
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)	http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/jobs
South African Medical Research Council (MRC)	https://www.samrc.ac.za/
Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI)	http://www.pari.org.za/
South African Institute of Race Relations	http://irr.org.za/

Institution/Organisation/ Unit/Company	Website
Institute for Security Studies South Africa	http://www.issafrica.org/about-us/careers-and-opportunities
Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA)	https://www.uj.ac.za/faculties/humanities/research/research-centres/centre-for-social-development-in-africa-csda/
JVR (Psychometric Research)	https://www.jvrpsychometrics.com/
Educational Research Councils, Units, and NGOs	
JET Education Services	http://www.jet.org.za/
Umalusi	http://www.umalusi.org.za/
Council on Higher Education	http://www.che.ac.za/newsroom/vacancies
Mindset Network	https://www.mindset.africa/
NWU Optentia Research Unit	www.optentia.co.za
UCT - Gender Health and Justice Research Unit	http://www.ghjru.uct.ac.za/ghjru/internships/how-to-apply
Research Consultancies and Market Research Companies	
Khulisa Management Services	http://www.khulisa.com/
Genex Insights (Previously TMS)	http://www.genex.co.za/
Kantar Group	https://www.kantar.com/locations/south-africa# =
Accenture	https://www.accenture.com/us-en/careers
Ipsos South Africa	https://www.ipsos.com/en-za/opportunities-ipsos
Kaufman Levin Associates	http://www.kla.co.za/
TTS-Top Talent Solutions	http://tts-talent.com/
Government or Parastatal Organisations or Units	
South African Police Service	https://www.saps.gov.za/careers/careers.php
Parliament of South Africa	https://www.parliament.gov.za/careers-parliament
SABC	https://www.sabc.co.za/sabc/sabc-vacancy-list/
Military Psychological Institute (MPI)	http://www.dod.mil.za

If you wish to pursue HPCSA registration, you have to complete an internship at an HPCSA accredited internship site, following which you would write the Professional Board for Psychology examination. A list of HPCSA accredited internship sites is available on the HPCSA website at

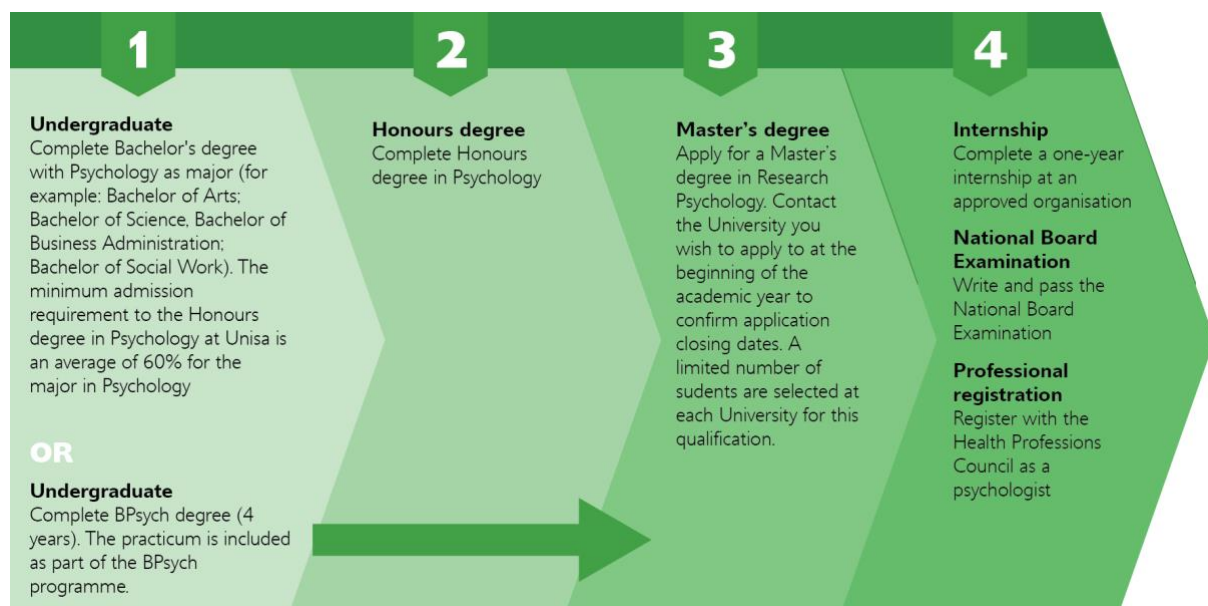
Download the List of Accredited Universities here:

<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations>.



Thank you to PsySSA, the DRM (Division for Research and Methodology), and the PsySSA Student Division for information about the opportunities related to research psychology. To join PsySSA, the DRM, and/or the Student Division, for more information, as well as educational and career-related support, visit <http://www.psyssa.com>.

Professional training route: Research psychology



Training at Unisa

Unisa is in the process of restructuring the Master's degree to be accredited with the HPCSA for research psychology. Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Industrial Psychology

Industrial and organisational psychologists study the interaction between people and work environments. They apply psychological principles to improve employee well-being, organisational productivity, and overall job satisfaction. The field combines knowledge of individuals, groups, organisations, and work processes to promote healthy, efficient workplaces..

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of industrial psychologists:

<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Where do they work?

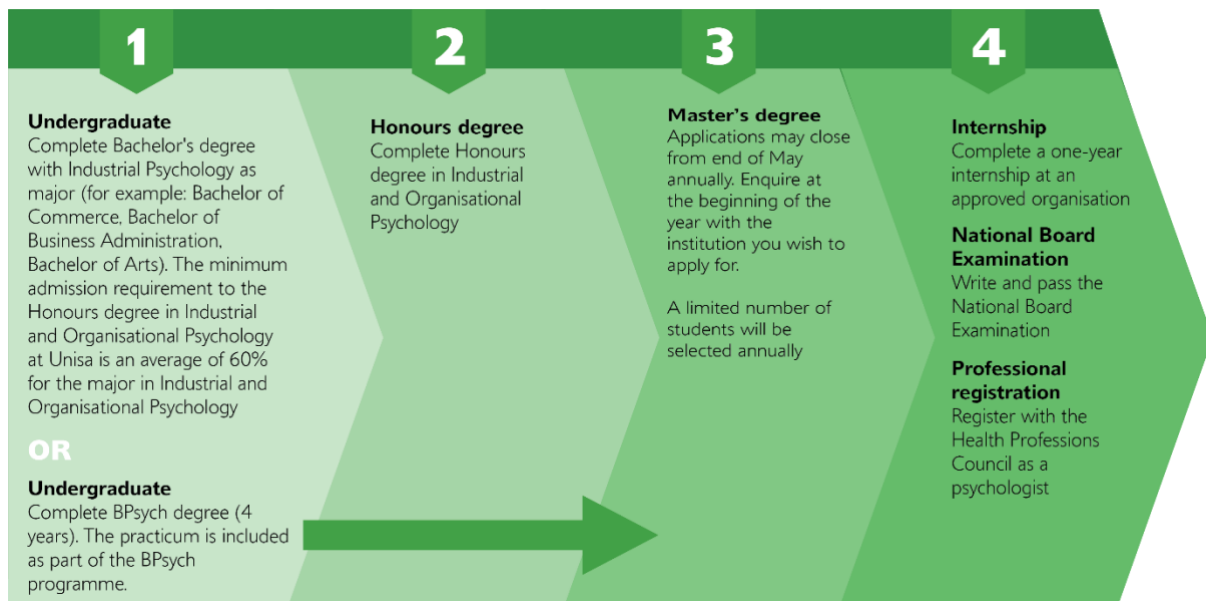
Graduates can work in:

- Private and public companies
- Large organisations, including mining houses, insurance companies, and government departments
- Consultancy roles for trade associations, retailers, or manufacturers
- Universities as lecturers and researchers
- Research organisations such as CSIR, HSRC, or marketing research companies
- Roles in executive coaching, organisational development, labour relations, and employee wellness

South African Board for People Practices (SABPP)

The South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) is approved by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) for some crucial human resources qualifications in South Africa. The Board offers various levels of professional and pre-professional registration from level 1 (HR technician) to level 5 (master HR practitioner). Please see the Board's website at <http://www.sabpp.co.za/> for further information about the qualifications needed.

Professional training route: Industrial psychology



More information about the Unisa MCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology (Course work) (Selection degree) is available here: <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Qualifications/Selection-degrees>.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Educational Psychology

Educational psychologists support learning and development in educational contexts. They guide and counsel learners, teachers, and parents on emotional, academic, and career-related challenges. They also conduct research on learning processes, develop teaching methods, and train teachers. School psychology is closely related and focuses on helping learners with school adjustment, subject choices, and personal matters.

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of educational psychologists:
<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Where do they work?

- Schools, universities, and private practice

- Community-based organisations, NGOs, and children's homes
- Universities as lecturers or researchers
- Government and research institutions.

Professional training route



Training at Unisa

Unisa does not currently offer a Master's degree in educational psychology. Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

Counselling psychology

Counselling psychologists help clients navigate life challenges and developmental issues to improve psychological well-being. They assess cognitive, emotional, personality, and developmental functioning, including areas such as career choice and life adjustment. They may also:

- Identify and refer cases of psychopathology
- Provide policy advice
- Conduct research

- Train and supervise other psychologists
- Provide expert opinions

Read more about the guidelines related to the training of counselling psychologists:

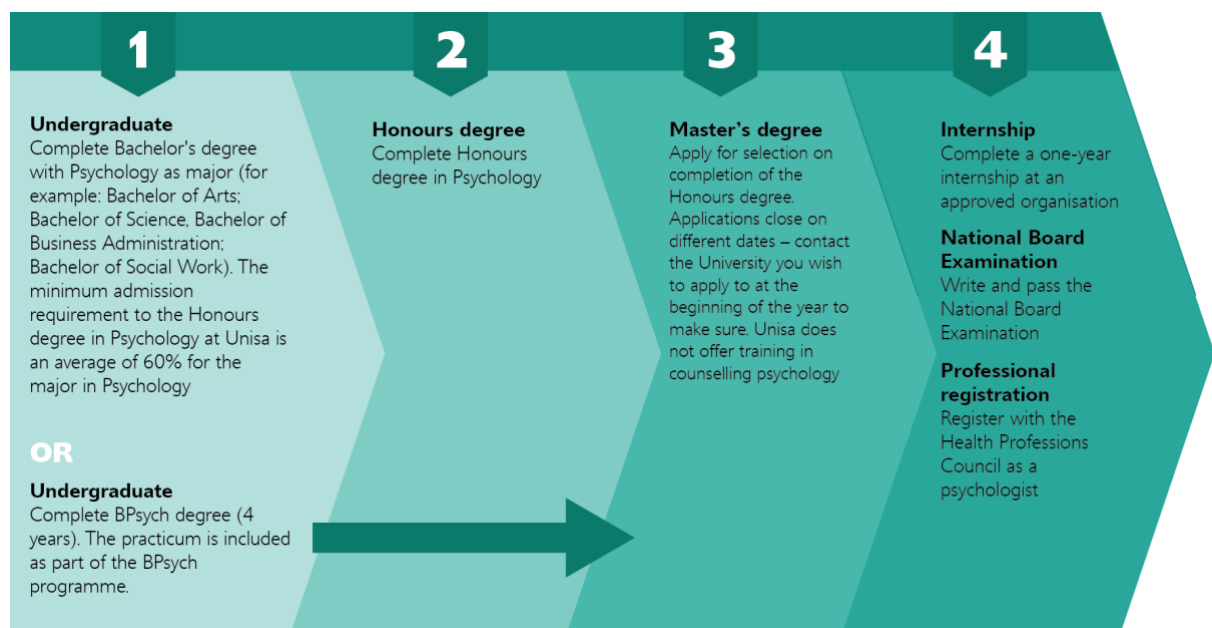
<https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/guidelines>.

Where do they work?

Graduates can work in:

- Private practice
- Department of Health and other government services
- Universities and universities of technology
- Organisations offering wellness services
- Community-based organisations and NGOs
- Research institutions

Training route



Training at Unisa

Unisa does not offer training at the Master's level for counselling psychology.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on “List of accredited institutions” and then on List of accredited Universities.

Other psychology specialisation areas

In addition to the main HPCSA registration categories, many psychologists specialise in distinct areas of interest. These specialisations allow you to apply psychological knowledge in unique and innovative ways. Here are a few:

Cognitive psychology

Explores how people learn, understand, remember and make decisions. Most cognitive psychologists engage in research at universities or research centres, and some work as consultants in human-factors, UX or industrial design.

Social psychology

Focuses on how individuals and groups are influenced by their social environments. Social psychologists may conduct research or work as consultants in marketing, policy design, conflict resolution, branding, or community-based organisations.

Sport psychology

Studies psychological factors related to performance, physical activity and well-being. While not a separate HPCSA registration category, many professionals with training in clinical or counselling psychology specialise in this area, working with athletes, coaches and sport organisations.

Further online resources related to sport psychology in South Africa:

- [University of Pretoria Sport Science and Medical Unit](#)
- [University of Cape Town Sport Science Institute of South Africa](#)
- [PerformingMind](#)

Applied experimental and engineering psychology

This field sits at the intersection of psychology and technology. Practitioners may design and evaluate products, medical instruments, workplaces or safety systems, applying psychological principles to human–machine interaction and design..

Behavioural science and behavioural economics

Behavioural scientists analyse how humans make decisions and behave in contexts like public health, consumption, finance or community programmes. Behavioural economics blends psychology and economics to improve decision-making in government, business and policy.

Further reading:

- <https://www.behavioraleconomics.com/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201705/what-is-behavioral-economics>

Art therapy

There is no formalised registration category with the Health Professions Council of South Africa for art therapy. In terms of professional training, there would not be one best route to take, since clinical, counselling, and educational psychologists could use forms of art therapy in their work. While you are busy with your undergraduate psychology modules that you need to complete to get to your chosen postgraduate programme, you could start making contact with practitioners in this area to find out more about their backgrounds and possibly get more practical recommendations.

Art Therapy (<http://www.arttherapy.co.za/>) offers several workshops and courses in this field. Their website also contains some useful information about the field. The Art Therapy Centre also offers training programmes and descriptions of their projects. You could consider becoming involved with art therapy on a volunteer basis while busy with your formal studies.

Music therapy

The music therapist uses music to restore, maintain and improve mental and physical health. The Department of Music, University of Pretoria, offers a Masters in Music Therapy (<http://www.up.ac.za/en/music/article/44462/training-in-music-therapy>).

Further online resources related to music therapy in South Africa:

- [South African Music Therapy Association](#)
- [South African Network for Arts Therapies Organisation \(SANATO\)](#)

Social Work

Although not strictly a psychology specialisation, social work overlaps considerably with psychology. Social workers focus on individuals, groups and communities, empowering people and promoting social justice. A psychology major can be a strong foundation for social work, community development or combined careers.

Learn more about careers related to community development and social work in our [Community Development and Social Work @ Unisa career brochure](#).

Play therapy

Play therapy uses a variety of techniques that give traumatised children the opportunity to communicate feelings, emotions, experiences, and behaviour through play (<http://gestaltplaytherapy.co.za>).

Where to apply?

The University of Pretoria offers a [Master's in Social Work with specialisation in Play-based intervention](#)

The [Centre for Play Therapy and Training](#) offers short learning programmes aimed at social workers, psychologists, registered counsellors, and educators.

Psychiatry

According to the South African Society of Psychiatrists (<http://www.sasop.co.za>), a psychiatrist is “a medical doctor, who has specialized in the field of Psychiatry. To be able to practice, a Psychiatrist must be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), as a Psychiatrist, under the specialist register”.

Psychiatrists have medical training and can examine, diagnose, and treat patients with a medical illness that can lead to mental problems. Psychiatrists are also trained in psychotherapy and therefore can treat patients through psychotherapeutic interventions. Psychiatrists can prescribe medication and psychotherapy to treat mental illness.

A Psychiatrist must first complete a medical degree. This is usually indicated as an MBCHB or MBBCH degree. This qualification takes six years to complete. An internship follows that takes another year, and South African doctors are then required to complete one year of community service.

After this, a doctor could specialise and become a “specialist”. It takes another four years of study to gain the qualification to practice as a Psychiatrist. This qualification is usually indicated as an MEd Psych or a FF Psych or FC Psych.

Learn more about psychiatry on the following websites:

- A Career in Psychiatry booklet (<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/discoverpsychiatry/acareerinpsychiatry.aspx>)
- World Psychiatric Association (<http://www.wpanet.org/>)

Psychological Society of South Africa

About PsySSA

The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) advances South African psychology as a science and profession of global stature and promotes psychological praxis as relevant, proactive, and responsive to societal needs and well-being. PsySSA has dedicated its work to the construction and development of post-apartheid South African Society. The Society is also involved in ongoing negotiations with the government, other legislative bodies, and the private and civil society sectors to contribute to issues affecting South Africa's rapidly changing environment. As the representative body of psychologists in the country, the Society lobbies for members and advocates for psychology as a vital science and relevant practice. The Society provides a valuable networking facility for all members. PsySSA publishes the quarterly leading psychology journal in Africa, the South African Journal of Psychology as well as PsyTalk.

For more information about PsySSA and becoming a member, visit the website at <http://www.psyssa.com/>.

PsySSA Student Division

You can join PsySSA as a student member. The [Student Division](#) focuses on student matters and is interested in being a voice for psychology students. Goals of the Student Division include: researching different concerns regarding psychology students (survey and round tables); exposing psychology students to the academic and professional discipline of psychology (i.e. PsySSA Conference); creating opportunities for psychology students to engage in mentorship opportunities; assisting the community through community projects (giving student volunteer experience); connecting students to professionals and researchers in their respective fields of interest; addressing the mental health stigma in South Africa among the youth; and assisting psychology students to connect with professionals to gain skills to produce publishable material.

Your education plan

Which degree should you start with?

To pursue a career in psychology, the key requirement is to include psychology as your major at all levels (first, second, and third year). Beyond that, your choice of degree can be guided by your interests and career goals.

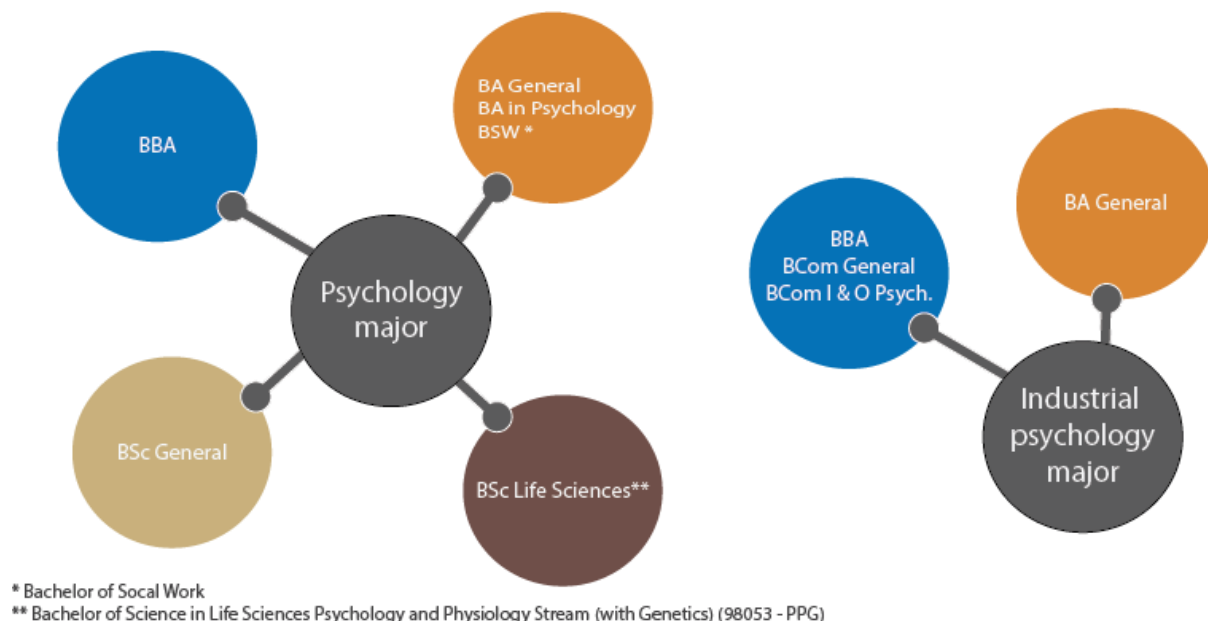
For example:

- If you are interested in neuropsychology or forensic psychology, a science-focused degree (such as BSc Psychology with Physiology) may be helpful.
- If you are drawn to community psychology, a social science background (such as BA General or a Bachelor of Social Work) could be beneficial.

It's normal if your path is not yet clear. Your experiences during your studies, including volunteering, internships, and networking, will help shape your career identity and expand your understanding of opportunities in psychology. As you progress, you will be able to make more informed choices about specialisations and career directions.

Tip: Focus on building a strong psychology foundation while exploring experiences and interests — this will help you discover where you want to specialise later.

Psychology or industrial and organisational psychology can be completed as a major for the following degrees:



College of Human Sciences

Psychology can be taken as a major subject in many Bachelor of Arts degrees. Examples include:

- Languages & Psychology/ Industrial and Organisational Psychology: African Languages, English Studies, French, Arabic
- Social Sciences & Psychology/ Industrial and Organisational Psychology: Anthropology, Development Studies, Sociology, Communication Studies, Political Studies, History
- Arts & Psychology/ Industrial and Organisational Psychology: Art History, Philosophy, Music in History & Society, Theology, Religious Studies, Scripture
- Other Combinations: Criminology, Economics, Geography, Private Law, Information Science, Ministry, Industrial & Organisational Psychology

These degrees allow you to major in two subjects (e.g., Psychology + English Studies). Your choice of second major can broaden your career options.

Further reading:

- [Career research brochure](#)
- [Career information brochures](#) (such as this one)

Specialisation degrees

Psychology can be taken as a major for the following degrees in the College of Human Sciences:

Programme	Number of majors	Further studies
BA in Psychology	One (Psychology)	Honours in Psychology
BA Social Work	Upon completion of this programme you will be a professional social worker and have completed a major in Psychology	Master's in Social Work or Honours in Psychology (minimum admission requirement: an average of at least 60% for your major subject)

College of Science, Engineering and Technology

Students can select one or two majors for the BSc General degree. Psychology can be chosen as one of these majors. Other available majors include:

- Science & Mathematics: Applied Mathematics, Mathematics, Statistics, Physics, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Biomedical Science, Biotechnology
- Biological Sciences: Botany, Microbiology, Physiology, Zoology
- Social & Environmental Sciences: Geography, Archaeology
- Technology & Computing: Computer Science, Information Systems, Operations Research

Major subject	Possible career opportunities	Possible work environments
Geography	Conservationist; geographer; educator; tour guide; environmental impact assessor; environmental consultant; environmental; researcher	Government; education; tourism organisations; environmental conservation bodies; industrial sector; military institutions
Operations Research	Operations researcher; data/quantitative analyst; consultant	Public and private companies; mining companies; financial institutions; production companies; research organisations; consulting firms
Statistics	Econometrician; market research statistician; social research statistician; statistical consultant; statistician; data analyst; data scientist	Banking and financial industry; chemical industry (research and development); agriculture (plant breeding, animal production); meteorology; telecommunications; market research; consulting firms; social research institutions/ companies; own business

Major subject	Possible career opportunities	Possible work environments
Computer Science/ Information Systems	Programmer; Database administrator; lecturer; software developer; technical writer; training specialist; Artificial Intelligence developer; human-computer interface (HCI) specialist; business analyst; customer relationship manager; IT consultant	Banks and financial services; consulting firms; computer manufacturers; computer training; government; health care; insurance companies; mining industry; education; software development companies; Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
Physiology	Physiologist; research scientist; lecturer; laboratory technician; medical sales representative	Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); government departments; laboratories; industry; hospitals; pharmaceutical companies; biotechnology companies

Tip: Choosing a complementary second major can create unique career combinations (e.g., Psychology + Statistics can lead to research or data analysis roles).

College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences

Programme	Number of majors	Further studies
Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences Psychology and Physiology Stream (with Genetics)	Two majors (Psychology and Physiology)	Honours in either major subject (minimum admission requirement: an average of at least 60% for your major subject)

College of Economic and Management Sciences

Programme	Number of majors	Further studies
Bachelor of Commerce Generic degree	Two majors (Industrial and Organisational Psychology will be one major)	Honours in either major subject (minimum admission requirement: an average of at least 60% for your major subject)
Bachelor of Business Administration	Two major subjects (Business Management and Psychology or Industrial and Organisational Psychology)	Honours in either major subject (minimum admission requirement: an average of at least 60% for your major subject)

Programme	Number of majors	Further studies
BCom Industrial and Organisational Psychology	One major (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)	Honours in Industrial and Organisational Psychology (minimum admission requirement: an average of at least 60% for your major subject)

Postgraduate qualifications

Postgraduate qualifications in Psychology

- Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology Applied Psychology for Professional Contexts
- Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology Community and Health Psychology
- Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology Psychological Counselling
- Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychometry
- MA in Psychology (Full Dissertation)
- MA in Psychology (Full Dissertation) Research Consultation
- MA in Clinical Psychology (coursework)(selection degree)
- PhD in Psychology

Download the research interest areas in the Department of Psychology here:

<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Research-focus-areas/College-of-Human-Sciences>.

Industrial and Organisational psychology

- BCom Honours in Industrial and Organisational Psychology
- Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychometry
- MCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology (Full Dissertation)
- MCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology (coursework)(selection degree)
- PhD in Psychology (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)
- PhD in Psychology (Consulting Psychology)

Download the research interest areas in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology here: <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Research-focus-areas/College-of-Economic-and-Management-Sciences>.

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's 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.

Further reading:

- [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. Volunteers normally work under the supervision of psychologists and social workers. Organisations making use of volunteer counsellors include Lifeline (counselling); SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group); Nicro, Childline and Rape Crisis (abused women and children); Alcoholics Anonymous (addictions); Hospice Association of SA and St Luke's Hospice

(death and dying); FAMSA and ACVV (relationships/family counselling); ATICC and AIDS Helpline (HIV/AIDS) and Triangle Health Care Project (sexuality).

Note that being trained as a volunteer counsellor, without professional psychological qualifications, does not qualify you to be a professional counsellor or psychologist or to practice independently. However, volunteering helps you to contribute to a community and learn valuable skills. Volunteering will allow you to clarify your interests related to helping others and expanding and strengthening your network.

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.

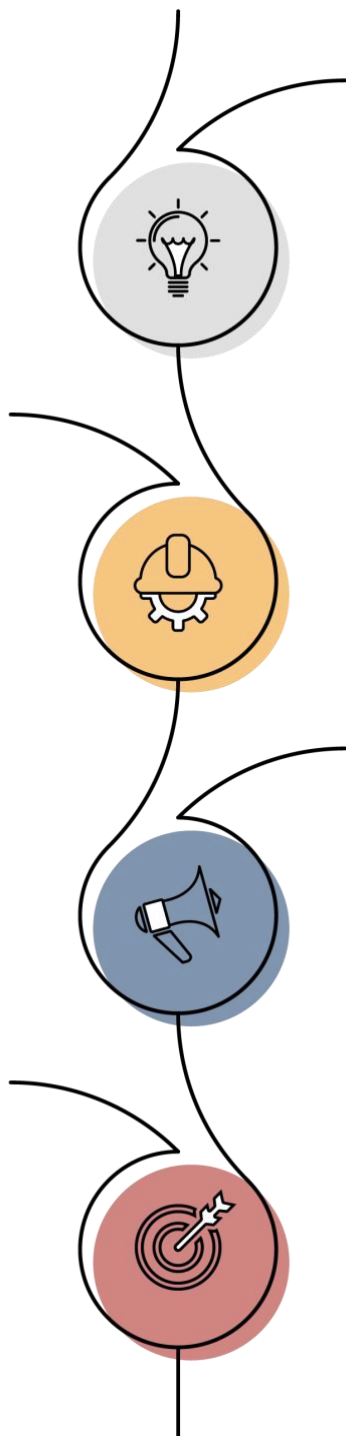
Ways to strengthen your confidence:

- 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

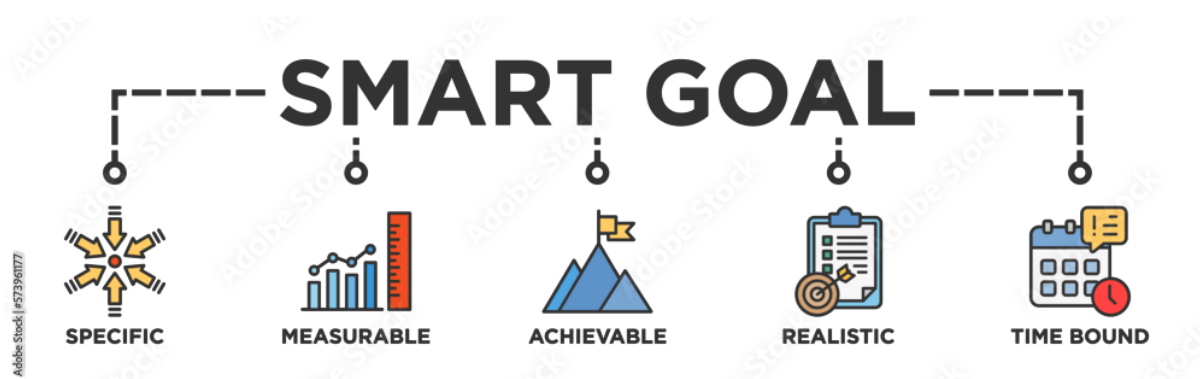
- Revisit your career goals and explore specialisations.
- Connect with alumni and seek mentorship.
- Strengthen your professional presence (LinkedIn, portfolio, personal website).
- Practise with mock interviews and improve communication skills.
- Contribute to professional discussions online or at 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 a psychology degree?	Search LinkedIn profiles of Unisa psychology graduates	15 Oct	LinkedIn, Alumni page	Yes	Connect with 3 alumni

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

Frequently-asked questions

I did not obtain an average of 60% for my undergraduate studies at Unisa and now I do not qualify to continue with my Honours degree. What now?

You will not be able to repeat modules that you have already passed at Unisa. You will need to explore the option of completing modules for non-degree purposes at another university as part of their occasional studies programmes. Occasional studies may be done full-time or part-time depending on the course. Contact the application sections of these institutions for further information. Also, use this brochure to explore other career and study options should you not be able to continue with further studies in psychology or industrial and organisational psychology.

I did not complete psychology or industrial and organisational psychology as a major for my undergraduate degree and I now want to study further in this field. What now?

Unisa currently restricts enrolment for non-degree purposes due to the implementation of the new enrolment plan. Even though there may still be circumstances where students could qualify to study modules for non-degree purposes, you need to prepare yourself that this may not be a possibility at Unisa. Your first step is to apply online for admission to the Honours degree (even if you know you do not qualify for direct admission). Your application will be declined, but you can then appeal the outcome so that you can be advised of options such as completing relevant undergraduate modules for non-degree purposes.

Also, you can explore options at other institutions. Some universities offer modules for non-degree purposes as part of their occasional studies programmes. Occasional studies may be done full-time or part-time depending on the course. Contact different universities for further information.

I want to be a child psychologist – what should I study?

You will need to ask yourself from what perspective and in which contexts you wish to work with children.

- If you are drawn to working in schools, helping learners with learning or adjustment problems, consider the pathway of an Educational Psychologist.
- If you prefer clinical work (diagnosis, therapy or intervention for children), the pathway of a Clinical Psychologist is more appropriate. Clinical training deals with emotional, developmental and personality difficulties across all age groups, including children.

Choose your undergraduate and postgraduate study to reflect this direction.

Why are only a limited number of students selected each year for the professional training programmes at the Master's level?

These programmes involve intensive, supervised training, requiring high-level staff resources, specialist facilities and client placements. Because of these resource constraints and to preserve training quality, only a small cohort is admitted annually.

What do I do if I am not selected for a professional training programme (such as the MA in Clinical Psychology)?

Not being selected does not mean your degree is wasted. You already possess many transferable skills in research, communication, assessment, and human behaviour.

- Use these skills: volunteer or work in community projects, youth groups or NGOs.
- Build your experience and network in psychology-related roles.
- Explore alternative career paths with your degree + Honours, such as organisational roles, education, wellness, research, or consulting.

There are [resources](#) that outline psychology careers beyond the professional registration routes.

What selection criteria are used for the MA Clinical Psychology programme?

Selection varies by university, but typically includes: a strong Honours average (often $\geq 60\%$), a qualifying major in psychology/ BPsych, evidence of academic and professional suitability, and a competitive interview or assessment of interpersonal skills and professional readiness. Some

institutions also require community service, language proficiency or assessments of personal suitability.

I am not close to Pretoria – can I apply for the MA in Clinical Psychology?

Unisa students need to attend regular clinics, workshops, and group discussions, and complete practical work. It is therefore not possible to complete this programme unless you live within easy reach of the main campus in Muckleneuk, Pretoria for training purposes.

Would I be able to practice as a counsellor/psychologist in another country?

Each country and state or province within that country would have different requirements for individuals to practice as counsellors and psychologists. Educational systems are also different. For example, in some countries, you need to have a Doctorate to practice as a psychologist, whereas in others it is a Master's degree. It is recommended that you check with the licensing board/ organisation in the country that you are interested in to find out about the requirements. In South Africa, all psychological practitioners have to be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

Unisa is currently not offering the BPsych equivalent programme for registered counsellors – what now?

The undergraduate and Honours degrees in Psychology are accredited and the options of doing a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology, Research Psychology, and Master's by dissertation remain open after the Honours degree in Psychology. You may contact other institutions to enquire about completing training to register as a counsellor. Each institution has requirements in terms of registering for this programme, even if you have completed your Honours degree. It is important to start thinking about other options you could pursue given your qualifications, skills, interests, and career vision. You are not limited only to qualifying as a registered counsellor/ psychometrist. Use the information and activities in this book to explore more options.

Download the List of Accredited Universities to identify institutions that offer the qualification related to this practice area. Go to <https://www.hpcsa.co.za/board/psychology/evaluations> and click on "List of accredited institutions" and then on List of accredited Universities.

What practical issues should I consider in terms of the Master's in Psychology (Clinical Psychology)?

Only 6-10 students are selected per year for the Clinical programme (at all Universities that offer this training). If you are not selected, do you have alternative options to further your career development? Do you have support for dealing with not being selected? Financial planning: you will be studying full-time for one or two years. Have you planned how you will fund your studies? Accommodation? Transport? Study-related expenses such as photocopying, printing, and access to the Internet? How will you plan for their support if you have been earning an income and others depend on you? Support during your studies: The demands of the training require that you need to have substantial support from others - think about people you could talk to about some of the challenges. It might be people who have completed the programme, or just people who could create a space for you to share your experiences.

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.
- 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

Our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/unisacareers