



Centre for
Public Mental Health

Master of Philosophy in Public Mental Health

The Centre for Public Mental Health (CPMH) is a joint initiative of the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University (SU) and The Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The vision of the CPMH is to be a collaborative inter-institutional multi-disciplinary Centre that conducts high quality research on public mental health, and uses evidence for teaching, consultancy and advocacy to promote mental health in Africa. This vision is in keeping with the transformational vision and social commitment of the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University, and their endeavor to develop research and exchange networks in Africa.

The CPMH was established for the following reasons:

- Mental health needs to be recognized as an essential part of public health in low and middle-income countries¹
- There is an urgent need to build professional mental health capacity in Africa²
- Many African countries need policy, service and legislative frameworks to deliver evidence-based interventions and address mental health systematically as a major public health and development issue
- There are currently no Centres that offer training and research in this area on the African continent.

In an attempt to address this situation, and recognizing the numerous benefits of collaboration, the two Universities have established the CPMH as an independent inter-disciplinary academic research and teaching centre for public mental health promotion and service development in Africa.



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1 World Health Organisation, 2003, *Investing in Mental Health*, http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/investing_mnh.pdf

2 WHO, 2003, WHO, 2006. Project Atlas: Resources for Mental Health and Neurological Disorders, <http://www.who.int/globalatlas>

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH

A key gap in current mental health professional training in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa is an orientation to public mental health. This means an orientation to the mental health needs of populations, and the policies, laws and services that are required to meet those needs.

The training offered by the Centre provides clinicians, health service managers, policy makers and NGO workers with crucial skills to enable them to plan and evaluate the services that they deliver and manage; lobby effectively for mental health; take on leadership roles in the strengthening of mental health systems; and conduct research in various aspects of public mental health in Africa. Mental health is frequently marginalised in decision-making for health service resources, partly because mental health professionals lack the skills and information to plan services, advocate for appropriate resource allocation, and conduct research. The training offered by the Centre would enable them to take on these crucial responsibilities.



It is important to note that the training offered by the Centre would not provide a distinct professional training that can be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. The intention of the training programme is to enhance the capacities of health professionals, policy makers and service managers to develop and implement mental health policy using an evidence-based approach and respect for human rights of people with mental health problems. This would therefore not clash with already established training, but address key gaps in current training, as outlined above.

Programme structure and contents

The programme is designed to be relevant and accessible to full-time working health and development professionals, building on their professional knowledge and increasing their capacity in these roles.

The MPhil in Public Mental Health is a part-time research training programme that focuses on the acquisition and broadening of specialized knowledge in a specific area of Public Mental Health. It aims to develop research skills, particularly with respect to planning and execution of research and the reporting of research results. Students will need to attend a face-to-face seminar in research methodology in Cape Town for 2 weeks in January, and 2 weeks in July, followed by ongoing coursework and supervision via distance learning using internet and mobile resources. The programme will take a minimum of 1 year to complete.

The programme will provide an inter-disciplinary approach, with inputs from staff with varied academic backgrounds, including public health, psychiatry, psychology and the social sciences. It is focused on the context of African public mental health and draws on the experience of the lecturers and the participants in the programme. Students will benefit from the international academic reputations of the collaborating institutions, excellent facilities, rich human resources and well-established local, African and international collaborations. Research supervisors employed by the Centre are acknowledged experts in public mental health, with a proven publication record and experience of supervising and/or mentoring junior researchers.



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The programme will require the completion of the following components:

1. Two modules in Advanced Research Methods for Public Mental Health: Quantitative research methods, and Qualitative research methods

These modules aim to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills in quantitative and qualitative research methodology, including statistics and epidemiology. The emphasis is on developing the student's ability to effectively plan, execute and report both qualitative and quantitative research.

2. Public Mental Health Dissertation

The dissertation component aims to provide students with the opportunity to acquire specialised knowledge in a specific area of Public Mental Health. It also provides a practical opportunity for the student to master the research process, which includes selection of a topic; self-driven but supervised protocol development; data collection and management; analysis and interpretation; and communication of study findings, including oral presentations and publication. The dissertation will preferably be related to the ongoing work conducted by participants in their



respective countries. For example, students may choose for the dissertation to evaluate a mental health programme in their own service organization or region. This would serve the dual function of developing the student's research skills under supervision, and building research in the field of public mental health in Africa.

Students are required to successfully complete a dissertation of 20,000 words, as well as an oral presentation of the research. Students will be encouraged to publish their research in academic peer-reviewed journals.

Assessment

The research methodology module will be assessed by means of practical and written assignments. A minimum of 50% is required as pass mark for the programme.

The dissertation is examined according to the University's regulations for the examination of master's theses as stipulated in the relevant university handbook. Dissertations will be assessed by an internal examiner, selected from staff within the teaching programme, and moderated by an external examiner, from another South African academic institution.

Admission and selection requirements

Candidates for this programme should be in possession of an Honours degree or post-graduate diploma in Public Mental Health or a cognate discipline, on NQF level 8. In addition, candidates should:

1. have experience of working in a mental health, health or development related field for at least three years; and
2. be employed within a managerial or leadership role, or have the capacity for such a role, and
3. show evidence of adequate English language and writing proficiency for postgraduate academic studies.

Applicants are required to:

1. Complete the university application forms,
2. Write a motivating letter indicating why they would like to enroll in the course and how it will contribute to their career development and potentially to mental health research development in Africa, and



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3. Provide an example of their academic writing.

Applications must reach the Centre by 30 September and must have the following attached:

- A comprehensive CV
- Copies of Certificates/Diplomas/Degrees
- Awards for exceptional achievements
- An example of the applicant's writing skills e.g. best article.
- Contact details of at least three referees.

Recognition of Prior learning (RPL) is in place to facilitate access to candidates who do not meet the above academic criteria. Experience of working in mental health related health or development will be a strong recommendation. Rigorous attempts will be made to offer the programme to students from previously disadvantaged communities.

Candidates wishing to gain Recognition for Prior Learning will need to submit a detailed application that includes the above attachments together with the following:

- A motivation/justification for admission to the programme
- Details of relevant work experience, highlighting skills that would be an advantage in the programme
- Leadership positions held or potential for this.
- Involvement in regional/national associations/forums/working groups.

- Evidence of writing skills or involvement with the offering of training.
- An analysis of his/her strengths and limitations, and how the applicant intends to address these in the programme
- Any other information (not mentioned above) that the applicant would like to offer in order to indicate that he/she should be considered for admission to this programme.

Please note:

- For administrative purposes, candidates are required to register at either SU or UCT. Candidates should indicate their preference in their application, but as we require an equal number of students enrolled at each university, we cannot guarantee registration at the university of the student's choice. The course content and requirements will be the same for both universities. Degrees will be awarded by the registering university.
 - Successful completion of the Post-graduate Diploma in Public Mental Health, or selected modules thereof, may be a due performance requirement for any candidate
 - The offering of this programme will be subject to a minimum required number of students.
 - **Application Deadline: 30 September**
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Enquiries

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