

Department of
Business Management
Stellenbosch University

MASTER'S DEGREE
Brochure

2026



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Postgraduate Coordinator

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1.

Pursuing an MCom (Business Management) degree at Stellenbosch University

The Department of Business Management at Stellenbosch University (hereafter 'the Department' and 'the University' respectively) offers an MCom degree by thesis only (listed under code 11239 and module number 828 in the Yearbook of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)). This means that students who enrol for this programme are expected to conduct independent research under supervision. The outcome is a comprehensive MCom thesis that demonstrates the student's mastery of the research process and the ability to conduct independent research.

This approach offers a number of benefits:

- ▶ It allows for a deeper focus on a specific area – whether an industry or a business management phenomenon. This specialisation can be beneficial when working in a particular industry or context, or seeking employment in a niche field.
- ▶ It helps students gain a thorough understanding of various methodologies or research techniques, which will benefit their future research endeavours.
- ▶ It paves the way for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. Students not only master the research process, but also develop insight into what it takes to conduct and complete a comprehensive scientific study.

The MCom degree by thesis covers a range of fields in management studies and often involves an overlap between the different domains in the economic and management sciences.

In the Department, we are primarily interested in the following focal areas and their subdomains:

- ▶ Marketing management
- ▶ Innovation management, strategic management and entrepreneurship
- ▶ Financial management
- ▶ Investment management and financial planning

Therefore, studies primarily grounded in human resource management, industrial psychology, economics, development finance, data science and accountancy are largely beyond the scope of our MCom offering. Students interested in these areas may approach the relevant departments at the University.



2. Orientation of the MCom programme

The MCom programme is positioned first and foremost as a scientific endeavour.

As such, students should grasp the research process and develop scientific research capabilities. The programme seeks to help students understand what it takes to make a scientific contribution that pivots on sound theoretical knowledge. This scientific approach is what sets the MCom degree by thesis apart from a Master of Business Administration (MBA)* or a postgraduate diploma in a business-related field. However, management, as a subject, is largely seen as an applied science, which is why our MCom programme, too, derives its phenomena from real-world problems.

**If you intend to apply for an MBA, please contact the Stellenbosch Business School at www.stellenboschbusiness.ac.za*

3. Admission requirements

Candidates are admitted to the MCom (Business Management) programme provided that they:

- ▶ possess a BComHons or another honours degree with Business Management as major;
- ▶ have successfully completed an approved research methodology course; and
- ▶ present a written research proposal not exceeding 7 500 words (excluding the title page, table of contents, references and appendices), which is approved by the Department's MCom admissions panel.

4. Applying for the MCom (Business Management) degree

Prospective students who meet the minimum admission requirements above should apply online on the University's website before the closing date. In the month following the closing date, prospective students will receive communication from the programme leader and/or the Department's postgraduate coordinator regarding potential supervision.

The number of students admitted to the MCom programme may be influenced by factors such as staff capacity, the availability of resources in the Department, academic merit and the University's transformation objectives. As staff capacity and resources fluctuate from one year to the next, so does the number of students selected.

Should the number of applicants who meet the admission requirements exceed the available capacity in the Department, the following selection criteria will be applied:

- ▶ The chosen field of study or topic in which adequate expertise and capacity exist in the Department; and
- ▶ The candidate's proven capability (i.e. academic experience and skills) to successfully complete postgraduate studies, as assessed by the Department's MCom admissions panel.

5. Registering for the MCom (Business Management) degree

Candidates who have been selected and matched with a supervisor will be invited to the annual MCom orientation day. This compulsory, in-person event takes place each year in January or February. All candidates must register as Master's Preparation students to gain access to the University's resources for the sole purpose of compiling the research proposal. The Master's Preparation registration may not be completed over more than two semesters.

Candidates will present their research proposals to the Department's admissions panel. If the panel accepts the proposal, students may register for the MCom degree.

The MCom admissions panel consists of the following members:

- ▶ The MCom programme leader
- ▶ At least two focal area chairs
- ▶ A representative of the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC)
- ▶ The supervisor(s) (non-voting)

If necessary, focal area chairs may appoint proxies. Supervisors may not chair their own candidates' sessions.

The panel considers two key questions:

- ▶ Is the candidate's proposed MCom study feasible? In answering this question, the panel needs to establish whether the proposed study is reasonably achievable and has scientific merit.
- ▶ Is the candidate capable of carrying out the proposed MCom study successfully? In answering this question, the panel needs to establish whether the student has the necessary academic background to conduct the study.

The panel's recommendation categories are as follows:

- ▶ Accepted as is (candidate may proceed to register)
- ▶ Revise and resubmit to the satisfaction of the supervisor(s) – no oral presentation required
- ▶ Revise and resubmit to the satisfaction of the admissions panel – no oral presentation required
- ▶ Rejected – submit a new proposal and deliver a new oral presentation

The panel also confirms the supervisor and may advise that a co-supervisor be appointed. Once the panel has made a recommendation, the supervisor should ensure that all documentation required for registration is duly completed and submitted.

The University requires MCom students to be registered for **at least one year** before the degree may be conferred. The degree must be completed within **five years**. A student who takes longer than five years to complete the degree without offering a reasonable explanation may be deregistered. Students must also note the section titled "Annual reporting" in the University's Yearbook Part 1, General Rules, which contains important information about the progress of master's degrees.

Currently, the section reads as follows:

Candidate's obligation: If you are a student for the degree of Master, you shall have an obligation to keep your supervisor informed of how your research is progressing.

Written reports: Your supervisor must receive at least an annual written progress report from you. Faculties may set more frequent written progress reporting requirements.

Departmental reports: Departments shall report to the faculty annually on the progress of students engaged in research for degree purposes.

Reminder by the dean: If a department's annual report shows that you are not making satisfactory progress, or have failed to report on your progress or lack thereof, the dean shall in a formal letter remind you of your above-said obligation.

A student may submit their MCom thesis for examination only with their supervisor's written permission.

6. Supervision

Supervision is an integral part of postgraduate studies, and the relationship between the supervisor and the student is fundamental to the success of the research. The Department takes supervision very seriously. We expect only the highest possible standards from our supervisors and encourage students to bring it to our attention if they are not satisfied with the supervision received. Firstly, we rely on both students and supervisors to conduct themselves in a professional manner and ensure that they maintain a healthy relationship that will not only advance the quality of the research, but will also develop the student's scientific orientation. In addition, the relationship between the supervisor and the student is governed by a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which must be in place and signed by all parties. The supervisor will provide the student with an official version of the MoU. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that an MoU is drafted annually.

