

**SOP: Completing your Master's research project in the Department of Psychiatry,
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University.**

1. Master's programmes in Psychiatry (excluding MMed (Psychiatry))

Master's programme	Course Convenor	Research component
MSc Neuroscience	Prof Sian Hemmings (smjh@sun.ac.za)	100%
M Addiction Care	Dr Muneeb Salie (muneeb@sun.ac.za)	100%
MPhil Addiction Psychiatry	Dr Lize Weich (lizew@sun.ac.za)	<50%
MPhil Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	Dr Fiona Schulte (fionaschulte@sun.ac.za)	<50%
MPhil Clinical Neuropsychiatry	Prof Laila Asmal (laila@sun.ac.za)	<50%
MPhil Clinical Neuropsychiatry - Old Age Psychiatry	Prof Dana Niehaus (djhn@sun.ac.za)	<50%
MPhil Community Mental Health	To be appointed. Contact Mary Pienaar (maryp@sun.ac.za) for all queries.	<50%
MPhil Infant Mental Health	Dr Anusha Lachman (anusha@sun.ac.za)	<50%
MPhil Mindfulness	Mr Clayton Arendse (claytona@sun.ac.za)	100%
MPhil Neuropsychiatry - Psychosomatic Medicine	Dr Kerry Louw (kerrylouw@sun.ac.za)	<50%

2. Introduction

Other than the MMed in Psychiatry, the Department of Psychiatry offers 10 additional Master's programmes. These programmes are either:

- **Master's degree by thesis** - *In cases where only a thesis is required, and no additional postgraduate submodules, the final mark for the Master's degree shall be determined on the basis of the thesis and of an oral presentation*
OR
- **Master's degree on the basis of theoretical work and an assignment** - *In cases where theoretical work – in the form of postgraduate submodules and, depending on the situation, possibly also additional reading/assignments – and a research assignment are prescribed, the assignment (including the oral presentation thereon) shall amount to a weight of less than 50% of the final mark, but to no less than one third, or to no less than 25% in exceptional and specially approved cases, of the final mark (structured Master's studies).*

For all Master's research projects, the initial research proposal must be approved by a departmental research committee, as well as by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. In instances where research is conducted on animals, the proposal must be approved by the Committee for Experimental Animal Research of the

Faculty (REC:BES) and where research involves any biohazardous organisms and materials (including those of biological origin and nanomaterials), the proposal must be approved by the Committee for Biological and Environmental Safety (REC:BES).

3. Additional research support

The Department of Psychiatry has a dedicated Science Writer who provides research support. Students are encouraged to make use of this support to ensure the timely completion of their research assignments. It must be emphasized that the candidate is ultimately responsible for all aspects of their research study, and that the supervisor remains the primary facilitator. Duties of the research coordinator include:

- Preparing for research: The science writer will provide assistance with finding a supervisor, defining a feasible research question, finding and reviewing literature, understanding research methods, academic writing skills and referencing conventions.
- Monitoring research progress: The science writer will assist with research planning and time management.
- Assistance with research protocols: The science writer will assist with the preparation of a protocol and will also review and edit completed protocols and other related materials (i.e. consent forms, surveys, etc.). The research coordinator will ensure protocols meet departmental and HREC requirements.
- Assistance with research: The use of a biostatistician is encouraged (book a free biostatistics consultation [here](#)). The science writer can provide guidance on data processing, management, and analysis.
- Assistance with manuscripts: The science writer can assist with the preparation of a manuscript for examination, and support the publication process (finding a journal, manuscript preparation, editing and formatting).

Science Writer:

Dr. Muneeb Salie

Room 0026, K Floor, Clinical Building

Email: muneeb@sun.ac.za

Telephone: +27 21 938 9454

4. SOP - Master's research project:

a. Research proposal/protocol:

- i. Students applying for the *M in Addiction Care* and *MPhil in Mindfulness* must contact the respective course convenors before they formally apply for the programme to discuss their potential research project. A proposal will need to be submitted and approved by the course convenors before they are allowed to apply and register for the course.
- ii. Students applying for the *MSc in Neuroscience* programme will be presented with a list of available research projects and supervisors from which to select. The student will then be required to develop a full protocol in collaboration with their supervisors within 3 months of registering.

- iii. Students applying for any of the other Master's programmes should aim to have identified suitable supervisors and a research project within 3 months of registering.

b. Protocol presentations:

- i. All Master's students will be required to present their research protocol at a formal meeting in the Department of Psychiatry, or the Department in which their primary supervisor is affiliated (MSc Neuroscience).
 - 1. Students are not allowed to present protocols without the explicit approval of their supervisor.
- ii. **MSc Neuroscience:** students to present within 3 months of registering. If the supervisor is from the Department of Psychiatry, students will present at either the SAMRC/SU GBD meeting (for scheduling email: Aqeedah Roomaney: aqeedahr@sun.ac.za) or the SA PTSD meeting (for scheduling email: Berte van der Watt, bertevdwatt@sun.ac.za).
 - 1. Students need to send their protocol to their supervisors at least 3 weeks before that are scheduled to present for approval.
- iii. **M Addiction Care and all MPhil programmes:** students to present within 6 months of registering at either the Academic Tuesday meeting (for scheduling email: the Chief Registrar (Dr Christoff Geldenhuys, cgeldenhuys@sun.ac.za or Dr Kate Mawson, kmawson@sun.ac.za) or the department Postgraduate Committee (PGC) meeting (for scheduling email: Prof Leigh van den Heuvel, llvdh@sun.ac.za or Prof Dana Niehaus, (djhn@sun.ac.za)).
 - 1. Students are to liaise with the person responsible for scheduling well in advance to secure a presentation date for when they anticipate their protocol to be completed to prevent any unnecessary delays.
 - 2. Students need to send a copy their full protocol at least 1 week before their scheduled presentation to Prof Dana Niehaus (djhn@sun.ac.za), Prof Leigh van den Heuvel (llvdh@sun.ac.za) AND Miranda Majiet (majietm@sun.ac.za).

c. Protocol approvals and submissions:

- i. After your protocol presentation you need to revise it according to all feedback received after your presentation.
- ii. Submit a copy of your final protocol to the EHOD to be signed off.
- iii. Proceed with submitting your protocol and all other required documentation for Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval using the [online submission portal](#).
 - 1. Guidelines for the HREC application process at the University of Stellenbosch can be found on the Health Research Ethics [webpage](#).
 - 2. If research will be conducted in a provincial or local authority health facility, such as public sector hospitals or clinics, the

research protocol must also be submitted to the provincial government for approval (see additional information [here](#)).

3. Research conducted on current SU staff and students needs University approval (apply at: www.sun.ac.za/permission).

4. **Research can only commence after you receive HREC approval, and all other necessary institutional approvals have been obtained.**

a. Should the Masters' research project be part of a larger study, the Masters' student does not require further ethics approval - provided that the overarching study has valid, up-to-date ethics approval.

i. For MSc, see HREC guidance [here](#).

ii. For all other Master's programmes, see HREC guidance [here](#).

5. **IMPORTANT REMINDER – HREC reports**

a. Annual HREC progress reports need to be submitted timeously while the research project is in progress.

b. You need to submit a final report to HREC at the completion of your research project.

d. **Examination:**

i. For guidelines on formatting your thesis/research assignment and submitting for examination refer to:

1. [FMHS Master's Thesis guidelines](#) (MSc Neuroscience, M Addiction Care, and MPhil in Mindfulness). Also see submission timeline infographic below.

2. [FMHS Master's Research Assignment guidelines](#) (All MPhil programmes except Mindfulness). Request the Department of Psychiatry template for research assignments from the department Science Writer.

3. **Before submitting for examination**, your thesis/research assignment must be submitted to Turnitin. Contact the department Science Writer if you need assistance with this.

4. **Master's thesis and research assignments emanating from the Department of Psychiatry should ideally be in the format of published OR publication-ready manuscripts.**

a. See section 5.9 (page 5) in the [FMHS Master's Thesis guidelines](#) (MSc Neuroscience, M Addiction Care, and MPhil in Mindfulness).

b. See Option 1 (page 2-3) in the [FMHS Master's Research Assignment guidelines](#) (All MPhil programmes except Mindfulness).

ii. **Graduation:**

1. **Master's by thesis** (MSc Neuroscience, M Addiction Care, and MPhil in Mindfulness):

a. For possible graduation in December, candidates must submit their theses for examination before or by 30

August of the same year. *A copy of the final thesis (after addressing all examiners feedback) must be uploaded to SUNScholar by the 3rd week of November to be able to graduate at the December graduation ceremony.*

- b.* For possible graduation in March, candidates must submit their theses before or by 30 November of the preceding year. *A copy of the final thesis (after addressing all examiners feedback) must be uploaded to SUNScholar by the 3rd week of February to be able to graduate at the March graduation ceremony.*

c.

2. Master's by research assignment (All MPhil programmes except Mindfulness):

- a.* To graduate at the December ceremony: before 1 October.
- b.* To graduate at the March ceremony: before 1 December.

MASTER'S THESIS SUBMISSION TIMELINE

Tygerberg Doctoral Office

