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FROM THE CHAIR'S OFFICE

As 2024 draws to a close, one cannot help but take a step back and reflect on the year that has been.

I took over the reins as Chair of the Department from 1 July 2024 and the ride has been nothing short of exhilarating. The second semester was jam-packed with lectures, short learning programmes, social impact activities, conference attendances and presentations, and writing retreats, to name just a few activities.

External quality reviews form an important part of the Department's activities and health checks. A departmental audit was carried out by an external panel from 4-6 September. Several commendations and suggested recommendations were made, which will enable the Department to elevate its offerings to an even higher standard.

We had a very productive research drive during the second semester. Several staff members presented research papers at the International Test Commission conference held in Granada, Spain, from 2-5 July, the International Congress of Psychology held in Prague, Czech Republic, from 21-26 July 2024, the International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics held in Nice, France, from 22-27 July, the SAAFP 26th Annual Practitioners Congress, held in Cape Town from 7-8 September, the International Business Conference held in Stellenbosch from 22-25 September, and the 2nd Emerging Countries International Conference (ECIC) held in Ghana from 3-5 December.

The Department continued to make its mark in terms of social impact with the High Schools Career Guidance Project, and also with other projects such as Emotional

Intelligence training for Mfesane in Vredenburg.

Reflecting on the year cannot be complete without acknowledging everyone who made it possible. People form the bedrock of everything we do. Our staff, our students, our partners and our friends – each person played a significant part in the success of this Department.

This year, we said goodbye to two of our staff members who are retiring at the end of 2024: Dr Billy Boonzaier and Prof Aletta Odendaal, the previous chair of the Department. As we bade farewell to them at the Department's year-end function, we expressed our gratitude for a lifetime of service. Words cannot adequately convey our appreciation for what our colleagues have meant to us and invested into our Department. We wish them all the best for the next chapter in their lives.

The Department has a bright future ahead of it. I am excited to work together with each member, to embark on new initiatives, develop and renew our programmes, and increase our research and social impact footprint. We wish you a blessed time of rest and time with your loved ones, and may you come back rejuvenated in the new year.

Prof Crystal Hoole
Chairperson: Department of Industrial Psychology



Departmental audit leads to commendations and recommendations

As part of Stellenbosch University's drive to ensure that its qualifications and offerings provide quality and relevant education and that we enable graduates to find employment, departments are regularly reviewed by external panels.

The Department of Industrial Psychology was audited from 4-6 September 2024 by a panel of independent reviewers. The self-evaluating report covered the period 2018-2023, with references to activities ongoing in 2024, where relevant. The panel consisted of Prof Marieta du Plessis (Chair, UWC), Prof Marius Stander (NWU) and Prof Calvin Mabaso (UJ). The panel had the opportunity to scrutinise the content of the Department's programmes, modules and short courses. The panel also interviewed a selection of students (undergrad and postgrad), interns, staff, members of the Deanery, alumni and contract lecturers. The Department was congratulated on the progress made since the previous audit process.

The Department's noteworthy strengths were:

- A stable work environment with sound management practices
- Improved diversity and transformation of staff
- Strong practical exposure in both undergraduate and postgraduate curricula
- Excellent facilities and support from the Faculty and Dean's office

- A warm, engaging and supportive atmosphere experienced by postgraduate students
- A strong sense of pride and appreciation among staff and students for the University, Department and subject field

The panel also provided recommendations to support the Department's ongoing efforts to be a world-class department, focusing on the following areas:

- Research output and focus
- Strategic planning and prioritisation
- External partnerships and internationalisation
- Human Resource Management (HRM) programme consideration
- Postgraduate curriculum structure
- Short learning programme portfolio optimisation

The Department has already submitted a detailed response report to the University and is actively working on these recommendations. It is a valuable process that enables us to continuously improve, remain relevant, and provide the best possible education.

Department says goodbye (and hello) as staff members move on



Dr Billy Boonzaier



Prof Aletta Odendaal



Rahkeenh Peters



Portia Adonis

At its year-end function, the Department of Industrial Psychology said goodbye to **Dr Billy Boonzaier**, senior lecturer in Organisational Psychology, and the previous chair of the Department, **Prof Aletta Odendaal**.

Earlier this semester, the Department also bade farewell to **Rahkeenh Peters**, who served as departmental secretary from April 2020 to August 2024, and as the programme administrator of the Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Human Resources

Management, the BPsych Equivalence programme and the Basic Applied Psychometrics short course.

"Although it was a fast-paced environment, I made the most of it. I realised that teamwork is very important and that everyone must get along because we were working towards the same goal," says Rahkeenh.

She is still a staff member of Stellenbosch University and is now working in the Faculty of Science. She was succeeded by **Portia Adonis**.

Staff attend international and national conferences

Several staff members of the Department of Industrial Psychology attended international and national conferences during the second semester. Attending conferences provides networking opportunities, broadens horizons and encourages new perspectives and ideas.

Among the conferences attended were the International Test Commission Conference held in Granada, Spain, from 2-5 July, the International Congress of Psychology held in Prague, Czech Republic, from 21-26 July 2024, the International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics held in Nice, France, from 22-27 July, the SAAFP 26th Annual Practitioners Congress, held in Cape Town from 7-8 September, the International Business conference held in Stellenbosch from 22-25 September, and the 2nd Emerging Countries International Conference (ECIC) held in Ghana from 3-5 December.

ITC conference

Prof Deon de Bruin, Prof Gina Görgens-Ekermans, Ms Lisa Bailey and Ms Susan Goosen attended the International Test Commission's conference. The conference theme was "Working together to improve cross-cultural assessment and research".

Prof Görgens-Ekermans presented in person, while Susan Goosen and Lisa Bailey presented posters with their supervisor, Prof De Bruin.

Highlights included interesting presentations, meeting up with researchers from across the world, and the beautiful setting in Granada.

The topic of Prof Görgens-Ekermans' presentation was 'Measurement invariance/equivalence of the index of psychological well-being at work across black and white South African employees'.

"The talk was well attended, and I received excellent feedback. Susan and Lisa also had much interest in their poster presentations," she said.

"The value of attending conferences such as these is immeasurable," said Susan. "Additionally, we had a great time travelling together as colleagues."

Lisa described the conference as "an amazing learning and confidence-building experience for a new researcher".

Another highlight of the conference was the virtual speech delivered by Prof Aletta Odendaal, former chairperson of the Department, as the outgoing president of the ITC.



Prof Dragos Iliescu (extraordinary professor in the Department), with Prof Gina Görgens-Ekermans, Prof Deon de Bruin, Lisa Bailey and Susan Goosen.

AHFE 2024

Mr Tendai Mariri, a lecturer in Human Factors and Ergonomics, and in Labour Relations, attended and presented at two conferences this year, one internationally and one nationally.

At the 15th International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics (AHFE 2024), Tendai presented a paper co-authored with Prof Aletta Odendaal, based on his ongoing PhD research.

This largely academic conference allowed him to share preliminary PhD findings with an international scientific audience and build future collaborative research partnerships.

"Writing the conference paper and preparing for the presentation also helped with refining ideas. The pre-conference tutorials were also very helpful in learning from a diverse group on important human factors and ergonomics," he added.

Tendai also presented at the MineSafe Mine Health and Safety Conference 2024 (MineSafe24) organised by the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM) held in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, from 6-7 November.

"The presentation, on the critical topic of non-compliance, was well received and triggered valuable discussions. The networking and science-industry collaborative engagements are also some of the key highlights of this conference."



NGO benefits from workshop on Emotional Intelligence

Prof Görgens-Ekermans and Dr Yolandi Fontaine, together with postgraduate students of the Departments of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and the Faculty of Military Science, joined forces to host a workshop on Emotional Intelligence as part of the Social Impact project "Creating HEROs through psychological capital".



The acronym HERO stands for **H**ope, **E**motional Intelligence/Self-Efficacy, **R**esilience, and **O**ptimism.

The workshop was conducted in Vredenburg with coordinators and community employees working for Mfesane, a local NGO offering community-based health care and support services to families, together with skills training and education, whilst empowering communities through sustainable partnerships.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the capacity to deal effectively with one's own and others' emotions. Enhanced levels of EI increase stress resilience, whilst also boosting other positive psychological outcomes on an individual level (e.g., better physical health, less burnout). The workshop's material was developed by Prof Gina Görgens-Ekermans and is supported by previous research published on the efficacy of this intervention in different contexts.

The Social Impact project was registered by Dr Fontaine, a senior lecturer in the Department of Industrial Psychology at the Faculty of Military Science (FMS), with Prof Görgens-Ekermans as a collaborator. This initiative aims to support leadership development

under FMS students by providing programmes to the local community, focusing on developing psychological resources to enhance positive work and personal life outcomes.

The workshop was preceded by a "Train the trainers" session with honours students of the Military Academy and selected master's students from the Stellenbosch campus. Prof Görgens-Ekermans and Dr Fontaine subsequently hosted the workshop, with the postgraduate students acting as additional facilitators.

It was a great success, and discussions are underway to repeat the workshop and also host it at other branches of Mfesane.

A similar (repackaged) EI training intervention was used in tutorials for Industrial Psychology third-year students on the Stellenbosch campus, as part of the third-year IP module. This initiative aimed to increase the graduate attributes of the Department's third-year students, through practical hands-on training in their own EI. The intervention was well received and will be repeated in 2025 with an associated research component.



Appreciative Inquiry workshop

Ms Susan Goosen, a contract lecturer and PhD student in the Department, recently presented a workshop to Grade 10 learners of Hex Valley High School in De Doorns. It was an Appreciative Inquiry workshop titled "Your future and your dreams: a learning style and career workshop."

Putting theory into practice

This semester, students in Strategic Human Resource Development 784 had to put theory into practice by designing and facilitating a full-day training workshop, and then presenting this workshop to various companies.

For senior lecturer Dr Michelle Visser, the aim was simple. Many students hope to find work in a corporate institution one day, where they might be responsible for training and development. It therefore makes sense that they gain “real-world” knowledge of the changing role of training and development in organisations.

“The standard was very high this year and the feedback was very positive,” says Dr Visser. “Some of the companies where the workshops were hosted want to buy the material the students developed, while others said they would be interested in employing the students.”

According to class representative Cherise van Duyker, this module was undoubtedly the most challenging course she completed during her four years of study, but also the most rewarding.

“At the beginning of the course, there was a great deal of uncertainty and nervousness about how we would develop the material, let alone present a workshop to a real company. Dr Visser encouraged us to experiment with the content and discover our unique styles. While she provided guidance on the essential elements to be included, she also gave us the freedom to be creative.”

According to Cherise, the course enabled the students to develop critical skills that will serve them well in their careers. These skills include the development of training material, presentation skills, leadership and teamwork skills, and adaptability and independence skills. They



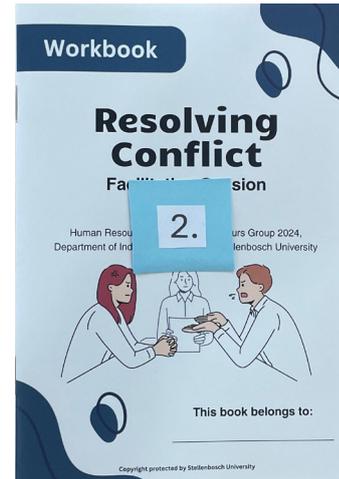
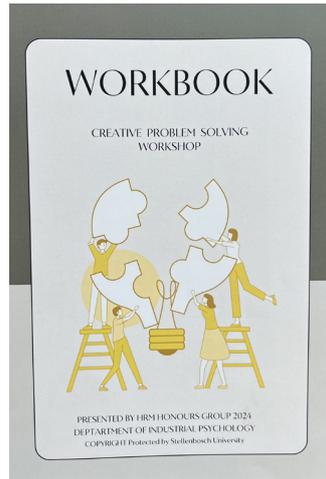
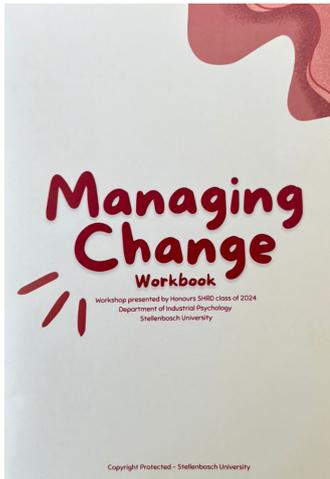
had to create facilitator guides and workbooks and ensure that these resources were practical, logical, and engaging.

She feels the module provided valuable exposure to a real-world scenario, offering insights into what companies genuinely expect.

“This immersion into practical experience allowed us to understand how crucial it is to consider a company’s background, values, and culture when developing materials. Initially, we approached the course from a purely academic perspective, but by the conclusion, we understood what working professionals truly value.



“If I were to step into a Human Resources role today, I would feel fully equipped to facilitate soft skills development. While the approach may differ – depending on the company – this course prepared us to think on our feet, adapt quickly, and handle unexpected challenges with composure. Dr Visser’s structure for the course emphasised resilience and resourcefulness, essential qualities for any HR position.



The ability to develop and facilitate workshops is a rare and highly valuable skill that applies to a wide range of HR roles."

The class was divided into three groups, each tackling a unique topic and presenting to different companies:

Group one: Seané Venter, Thiago Adlung, Esethu Sijinga, and Maano Matumba presented on change management at Sticitt in Somerset West.

Group two: Anda de Bruyn, Khanya Kekeletso Mphahlele, Kayla Sonnenberg, and Jané Theron focused on resolving conflict at Agri Technovation in Wellington.

Group three: Cherise van Duyker, Kayla Schefermann, and Atang Makhasane explored creative problem-solving at Pep headquarters in Cape Town.

BPpsych Equivalence Programme: Second intake

Stellenbosch University's BPpsych Equivalence Programme forms an important part of aspiring psychometrists' journey and annually offers 40 students the opportunity to acquire the professional and theoretical skills required to meet the learning outcomes associated with the BPpsych degree structure and the Training and Examination Guidelines for Psychometrists. It is targeted at postgraduate students in the broader field of Psychology who are interested in becoming

professional (independent practice) psychometrists.

The following students were part of the July intake:

Front: Maite Monnwa, Akeelah Bezuidenhout, Caitlin Smith, Marlene Hannigan, Margo Hansby, Yusra Noordien, Maryam es-Samadi and Nqobile Ngubane.

Back: Tristan von Hage, Ravind Govender, Suzaan-Mari Graham, Kamohelo Mokheseng, Ashley Muller, Kay Jade Daniels, Chelsea Liebenberg, Jessica Monk, Amanda Ndumo and Bruce Isdale.



Loneliness at work: A growing issue leaders need to address

Author: **Mpho Mdlongwa***

Loneliness is becoming a hot topic in today's workplace. It's surprising, but about 20% of workers around the world are dealing with loneliness. Interestingly, older employees (over 35) seem to feel it a bit less (19%) than their younger counterparts (22%) (Gallup, 2024).



So, what exactly is loneliness in the workplace?

It's that nagging feeling of being disconnected, as though your social and emotional needs aren't really being met. This isn't the same as isolation, which is more about not having access to opportunities or resources. Loneliness is more about the emotional side of things – feeling like you don't belong or aren't connecting with others.

Although loneliness appears to be an issue for employees who go into the office (16%), it's unsurprisingly even more common among remote workers, with 25% feeling lonely. With virtual and hybrid work here to stay, leaders need to take this issue seriously. After all, loneliness can negatively affect employee performance, morale, and even health.

So, what can leaders do to fight loneliness in their teams?

First, they need to be able to spot the signs, which might include:

- Less engagement: Employees might seem less interested or involved.
- Absenteeism: More frequent or unexplained absences.
- Deviant behaviour: Issues like working slower than usual or skipping meetings.
- Anxiety or distrust: Employees might seem more on edge or less trusting.

Recognising loneliness isn't enough. Leaders need to take action with practical solutions that can make a real difference. Here are a few ideas:

- Build strong social connections: Encourage team members to get to know one another beyond work tasks. Setting up virtual chat rooms or hosting casual events like picnics could help.
- Promote open communication: Regular check-ins and feedback sessions keep everyone connected.
- Create a supportive work environment: Foster a culture where colleagues support one another and use positive, encouraging language.

In the end, it's up to leaders – especially those leading virtual teams – to tackle loneliness head-on. Ignoring it can decrease productivity and morale, so it's

worth investing the time and effort to create a more connected and engaged team.

Mpho is exploring leader effectiveness in virtual and hybrid teams as part of her PhD research at Stellenbosch University under Profs Deon de Bruin and Aletta Odendaal. She is currently in the data collection phase for the study on virtual and hybrid teams.

"I've always been passionate about understanding workplace dynamics and human behaviour. The challenges leaders faced during the COVID-19 pandemic sparked my interest in how leadership in virtual and hybrid settings impacts team dynamics in a VUCA (short for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world.

This field of study is especially relevant in today's business landscape, where remote work and hybrid teams are becoming more common. So, issues such as employee productivity, well-being, and loneliness are becoming increasingly prevalent as remote work grows. My research is aimed at developing a model and assessment tool to identify and measure effective virtual team leaders, to help leaders better navigate these challenges and support their teams in the evolving world of virtual work."

Seeking virtual and hybrid team members for research

Research focus:

Virtual Team Leader Effectiveness

Target participants:

Anyone working or planning to work in virtual or hybrid teams

Time commitment: 30-35 minutes

By taking part, you will help identify what makes virtual leaders successful and how leaders can best support their teams in these settings.

SURVEY LINK

Your insights will influence the future of virtual team leadership – join the conversation today!

Department of Industrial Psychology's list of publications for 2024

Bißantz, S., Frick, S., Melinscak, F., Iliescu, D., & Wetzel, E. (2024). The potential of machine learning methods in psychological assessment and test construction. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 40(1)*, 1-4. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Booyesen, C., & Malan, D.J. (2024). Intention to quit among Generation Y information technology professionals in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 50(0)*, a2199. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Becker, J.R., Buckett, A., Rossier, J., Gyorkos, C., Massoudi, K., & de Bruin, D. (2024). The moderating role of personality in the job strain process: A latent interaction approach. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 50*, a2040. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Görgens-Ekermans, G., Ghezzi, V., Probst, Tahira, M., Barbaranelli, C., Petitta, L., Jiang, L., & Hu, S. (2024). Measurement invariance of cognitive and affective job insecurity: A cross-national study. *African Journal of Psychological Assessment, 6(0)*, a147. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Iliescu, D., Samuel Greiff, S., & Wetzel, E. (2024). Improving the structured reporting of test adaptations. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 40(3)*, 169-171. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Iliescu, D., & Greiss, S. (2024). Adopt universal standards for study adaptation to boost health, education and social-science research. *Nature, 628(4)*, 36.

Iliescu, D., Greiff, S., Ziegler, M. et al. (2024). Proliferation of measures contributes to advancing psychological science. *Communications Psychology, 2*, 19. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Iliescu, D., Bartram, D., Zeinoun, Pia, Ziegler, M., Elosua,

P., Sireci, S. Geisinger, K., Odendaal, A., Oliveri, M.E., Twing, J. & Camara, W. (2024). The Test Adaptation Reporting Standards (TARES): reporting test adaptations. *International Journal of Testing, 24*, 80-102.

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Iliescu, D., Greiff, S., & Dutu, R. (2024). The emic-etic divide in test development and adaptation recommendations to authors to address cross-cultural comparability. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 40(2)*, 97-100. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Iliescu, D., Greiff, S., & Rusu, A. (2024). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses in psychological assessment. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 40(5)*, 341-342. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Ionel, M.S., Ion, A., Iliescu, D., & Visu-Petra, L. (2024). Climbing anxiety scale (CAS-20): Preliminary development and validation. *Psychology of Exercise and Sport, 73*, 102635.

Mironov, C., Ciolan, L., Iliescu, D. Nedelcu, A., Zanfirescu, S., Serban, M., Avarvare, D. (2024). An empirical investigation into the utility of descriptions of inclusive vocational excellence practices. *Journal of Educational Sciences, 24*, 1(47).

Pretorius, D.J., Jäckel-Visser, M. & Malan, D.J. (2024). Role of non-cognitive variables in learner performance among disadvantaged learners. *South African Journal of Education, 44(1): Art. #2374*. [VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Van Schalkwyk, I., Naidoo, A.V., Jäckel-Visser, M., Rabie, S., & Van den Berg, F. (2024). Beroepsvoorligting in Suid-Afrikaanse hoërskole: verleentheid of geleentheid? *LitNet, 31 (3)*, 18 Maart 2024.

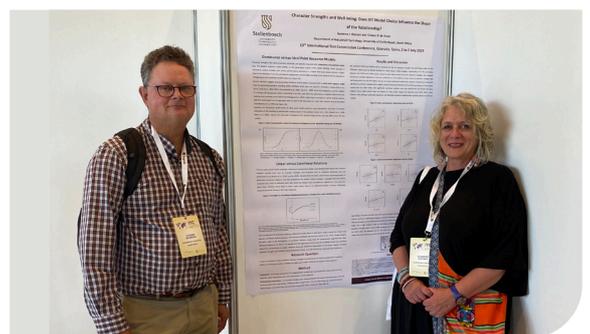
Lecturer receives award at EMS research day

Susan Goosen, a contract lecturer and PhD candidate in the Department of Industrial Psychology, received an award for the best presentation in the Early Career category at the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences' annual research day.

The topic of her presentation was "Character strength profiles differentially predict well-being when a dominance or ideal point response model is applied".

This is the third article in her PhD by publication. The title of the PhD is "The measurement of character strengths: Ideal point versus dominance measurement models".

"I'm very excited about this award, because I didn't expect it. There were so many other great presentations. I'm also happy that the other researchers found my research interesting."



As part of her research, Ms Susan Goosen presented a poster titled "Character strengths and and well-being: Does IRT model choice influence the shape of the relationship" at the International Test Commission conference in Spain in July. With her is her supervisor, Prof Deon de Bruin.

The Department of Industrial Psychology would like to wish its students, staff, alumni and industry partners a safe and blessed festive season and a prosperous 2025.