

SACAP launches its first masters degree

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SACAP (the South African College of Applied Psychology) is taking its range of successful programmes to new heights with the launch of a [masters \(MSocSci\) degree in community mental health promotion](#).



The masters programme is aligned to SACAP's mission to play a key role through education in boosting South Africa's severely limited capacity, and overwhelming need for accessible, quality mental health care services. As with all of SACAP's other social sciences programmes the new masters qualification is geared towards addressing South African realities.

"SACAP's new masters (MSocSci) degree in community mental health promotion will train students in line with the National Skills Development Strategy III and the National Development Plan 2030 so that they can advance, lead, and innovatively contribute to the promotion of mental health for all South Africans," says Dr Laura Fisher, Head of Strategic Development at SACAP and the degree's programme designer.

There is a real need for this calibre of strategic leader and innovator in the mental health field in South Africa. While South Africa's Mental Health Policy Framework (MHPF) and the Strategic Plan 2013 – 2020 affirm the belief that mental health is crucial to the overall well-being of the South African population, little has been done to address post-apartheid's inequitable public sector mental health service and scale up services to those most in need and at risk. Endemic poverty, violence, prejudice, high levels of trauma and stress, a failing education system, HIV and TB, substance addiction and abuse and high unemployment rates result in widespread mental illness that compromises people's well-being and the quality of community life on a vast scale.

"Our focus will be on developing strategic leaders and social innovators who are skilled in community mental health promotion, and empowered to act as catalysts for the development of robust and successful community mental health structures and strategies," says Dr Fisher. The qualification will also build core competencies such as advanced scholarship and research capabilities.

SACAP's masters in community mental health promotion aims to attract honours graduates from a range of health and social science disciplines such as psychology, social work, education, sociology, nursing and occupational therapy, among others. The programme is also aimed at those who are already leaders in the field of mental health but want to improve their ability to effectively change the face of mental health service delivery and promotion in South Africa. "It is a rigorous Masters-level academic programme that is ideally suited to candidates interested in being at the forefront of mental health innovations in South Africa; those who want to take up a leadership position when it comes to making a proactive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of the South African communities," Dr Ashley Smyth, SACAP's Academic Dean points out.

Employment opportunities for SACAP MSocSci graduates will be wide-ranging across the public, academic, NPO and corporate sectors where there is a focus on community and social development; management and leadership; mental health advocacy and promotion; human rights advocacy; education; policy implementation; research, monitoring and evaluation, as well as in consulting and change management.

In order to ensure the integrity of SACAP's unique, intimate learning environments, the intake of MSocSci students will be limited to 20 candidates per campus per year (starting with Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2019). SACAP's educational philosophy is student-centred and focused on providing a wraparound support service to help students achieve their academic goals. Successful applicants can expect to be immersed in experiential, theoretical and practical learning with quality curriculum materials and support and motivation in the demanding self-study component of the Masters programme. The small group classroom environment with a low student-educator ratio optimises the academic and interpersonal dynamics of the healthy teaching and learning environment that is the trademark of SACAP.

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