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Doctor of Philosophy

PhD in Social Science with Relational Dynamics and Development

Qualification Code: 1CC R19 L901V

Rationale for the programme

Given the uncertain time in which humanity finds itself, people and communities are desperate to address the basic need of belonging and connectedness. However, we witness accounts of a lack of ethical and respectful relational interactions across the globe almost on a daily basis – high and shockingly severe incidents of gender-based aggression, xenophobic attacks, domestic violence, and interracial intolerance. More subtle, but of as much concern, is evidence of strained intergenerational relations with serious implications for the care needs of older-growing populations. These issues are complex and require relationally-focused research. Internationally, various initiatives aim to promote effective relationships. These initiatives are not theory rich, and furthermore, it cannot be assumed that interventions developed in the Global North or Middle East can be transferred as is to other contexts such as South Africa. We urgently need research to develop theory to inform policy and context-specific, relationally-focused interventions.

About the PhD

This PhD aims to make a significant contribution to the advancement and contextual understanding of transferrable knowledge of relational dynamics and its developmental aspects across the spectrum of diversity (for example, different languages, ages, genders, and so on) and on multiple levels (for example, interpersonal, intergenerational, communal, work, and/or broader societal). This a research-oriented PhD in the field of social sciences and does not aim to prepare students to conduct any psychological act as described in South African's Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 or from a health perspective.

Entry requirements

Degree-level qualifications

As a minimum, applicants should hold the equivalent of the following South African qualifications: An appropriate master's degree in any discipline related to relationships, development, and/or management in different contexts and/or across multiple levels (for example, interpersonal, intergenerational, communal, work, and/or societal), with an average mark of 65%, or an equivalent qualification as approved by Senate. For international applicants, an evaluation certificate issued by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) must be submitted if a previous qualification was obtained in a foreign country. Applications are assessed on strict academic merit and requirements.

Continuous learning

In addition to a master's degree, any proven record of additional courses related to the field of relational dynamics and development.

Selection procedure

Candidates who fulfil the entry criteria may initially receive provisional acceptance based on the capacity available. After that, candidates will be subjected to a further selection process before final approval is granted:

- Preparation of a draft research proposal
- Selection interviews
- Successful completion of a short online learning programme in research methodology

Programme requirements

All admitted students must attend an introductory and orientation meeting and at least two workshops on topics related to broad theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary research, which will be offered online. PhD students are required to submit a research proposal that meets the required standard for title registration within six months of registration. Should students be accepted for the PhD, they may not change their programme during the academic year. Should students wish to change their programme, they would have to formally cancel their studies and reapply for admission to the other programme the following year. In this case, acceptance is not guaranteed, and the application will undergo the normal selection process.

Supervision

Over the course of this three- to four-year programme, a group supervision model will be applied. Students will receive supervision as a group from a transdisciplinary team and collegial input from other PhD students.

Programme outcomes

- Present a thesis that constitutes original research that meets national and international standards and contributes to the national and international advancement of knowledge and contextual understanding of relational dynamics and its developmental aspects on the individual, familial, intra/intergenerational, communal, or broader societal levels from a social sciences perspective in the African context.
- Show mastery of the literature and state of research.
- Demonstrate a depth of knowledge and high levels of theoretical understanding of the multidisciplinary field of relational dynamics and development.
- Demonstrate intellectual independence and advanced research skills through the ability to apply sophisticated knowledge and research methodologies to the interdisciplinary solution of complex challenges of relational dynamics and development and the competence to integrate and apply theoretical knowledge and research findings in relevant local and global contexts, with the potential to inform policy and practice.
- Demonstrate research leadership within a field or across disciplines, including the ability to plan, resource, manage, and optimise all aspects of research processes in complex and unpredictable contexts.
- Demonstrate high levels of responsibility, self-reflexivity, and adaptability concerning the determination of socially relevant issues and research needs in, as well as ethical implications for, (South) Africa. Furthermore, demonstrate the ability to relate and mainstream these issues to international contexts.

Contact

For more information, please contact Prof. Vera Roos on 016 910 3410 or send an email to vera.roos@nwu.ac.za.