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Doctor of Philosophy

PhD in Social Science with Social Inclusion and Development

Qualification code:
1CC R20 SIAD 971

Inclusivity is a fundamental issue in modern democratic societies around the globe. When dealing with the challenges of a painful, imperfect reality, the vision of inclusivity serves as a persistent driver to organise for a better future where all individuals, regardless of their differences and backgrounds, are enabled to live meaningful lives that matter to them personally and to others.

Different understandings, originating from a variety of professional disciplines, of how a socially inclusive society should be organised not only focus on the barriers and processes that impede progress, but also encompass those societal elements that will enable volition, choice, active participation, equal opportunities, and basic levels of well-being that will ultimately enhance individuals' freedom to live the kinds of lives they have reason to value.

This degree provides the opportunity for the identification of those extraordinary constructive dynamics that promote inclusivity as this is manifested in diverging, developmental, and coherent ways of functioning within societal spheres. The focus is on uncovering what is virtuous in a plural world and how the challenge to organise for an inclusive society can be dealt with constructively within social spheres.

About the PhD

This PhD aims to make a significant contribution to the contextual understanding of social inclusion and development by advancing a comprehensive understanding of how enabling practices derived from diverse disciplinary perspectives on optimal functioning can be harnessed to promote inclusivity within social spheres.

This research-oriented PhD in Social Science (Social Inclusion and Development) is a first in Africa and aims to explore issues in relation to social inclusion and development from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The purpose is to provide insights into what capabilities, strengths, constructive processes, states, and conditions within micro, meso, and macro levels of functioning are important in explaining and promoting individual and collective thriving and to apply new knowledge to plan and implement appropriate interventions, activities, and proposals in complex societal contexts that do not yet function cohesively.

Entry requirements

As a minimum, applicants should hold the equivalent of the following South African qualifications:

A master's degree with a mark of at least 65% (or an equivalent qualification as approved by Senate) in any discipline related to social development and/or management in different contexts across multiple levels (individual, familial, societal, and/or policy/programmatic environments). 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. The number of candidates who will be accepted is subject to the School's policy and capacity. All applications are assessed based strictly on academic merits and requirements.

Selection procedure

Candidates who meet 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

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 will 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 prescribed selection process.

Programme outcomes

- Present a completed thesis constituting original research that meets national and international standards and contributes to the national and international advancement of knowledge and understanding of social inclusion and its developmental aspects on the micro, meso, and macro levels of functioning from a social sciences perspective in the African context.
- Demonstrate expertise, mastery of the literature, and critical knowledge of meta-theoretical and philosophical perspectives on the role of cultural, social, economic, political, and historical aspects in enabling inclusivity within social spheres and the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives and create new knowledge or practice.
- Demonstrate the ability to contribute to scholarly debates around theories of knowledge and processes of knowledge production in social inclusion and development, and be able to compare, contrast, and evaluate perspectives on social inclusion as derived from different and diverging theoretical perspectives and interpret their applicability to developing models for a fully socially inclusive society.
- Demonstrate intellectual independence and advanced research skills through the ability to apply sophisticated research methodologies and research techniques to the solution of complex, unfamiliar problems associated with barriers to social inclusivity in the social sciences and the competence to integrate and apply research findings on best practices for social inclusivity in relevant local and global contexts as well as across disciplines.
- Demonstrate high levels of responsibility, self-reflexivity, and adaptability concerning the ethical implications of research on social inclusivity, the determination of associated research needs in (South) Africa, and the ability to relate these issues to international contexts.
- Demonstrate research leadership in a field or across disciplines, including the ability to plan, resource, manage, and optimise all aspects of research processes in complex and unpredictable contexts, to identify best practices and advance a truly Africa-relevant perspective on the development of human capabilities that enable social inclusivity.

Contact

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