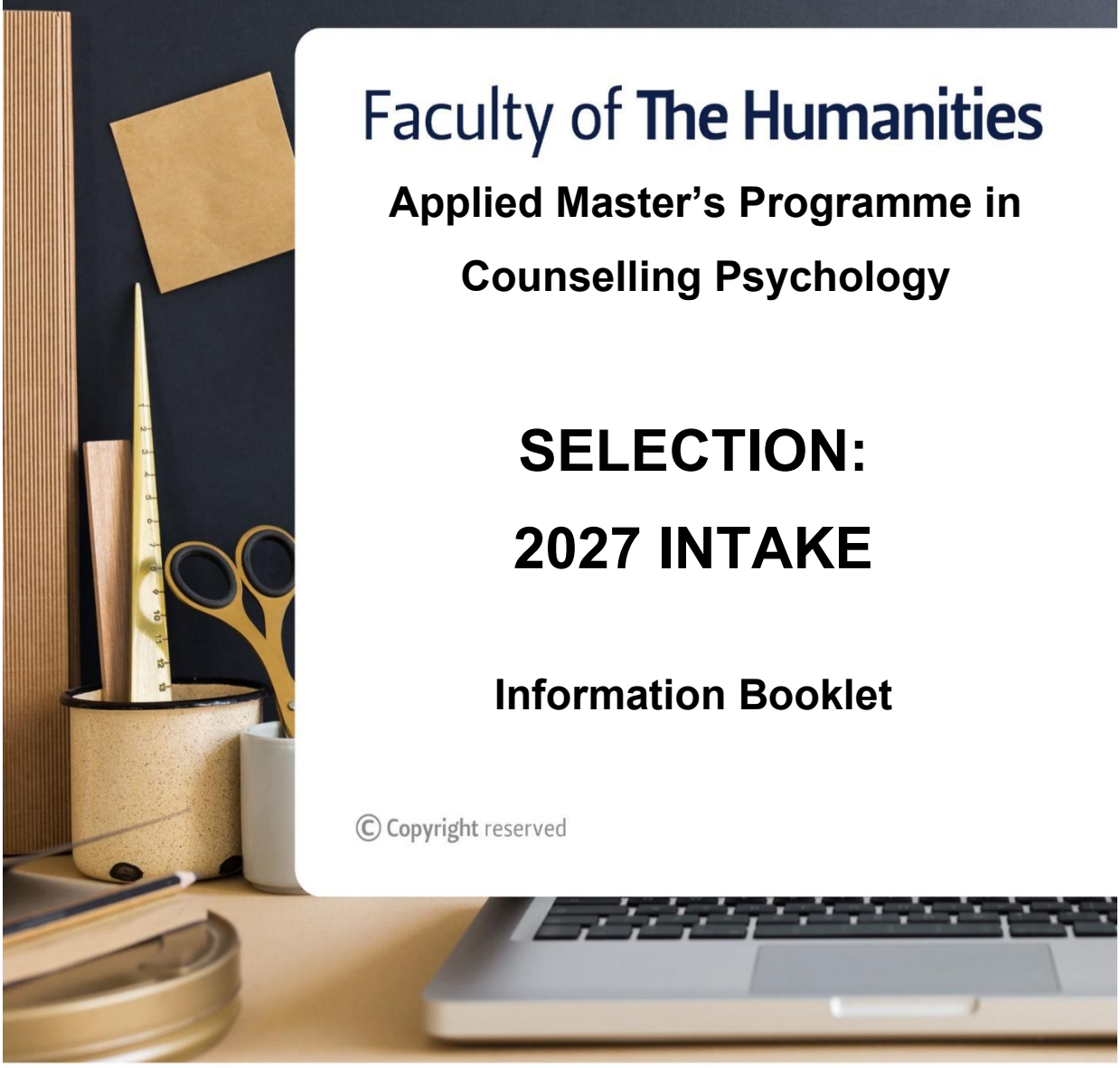

Faculty of The Humanities

Applied Master's Programme in Counselling Psychology

SELECTION:

2027 INTAKE

Information Booklet

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VISION 130 Renew and Reimagine for 2034

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
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1 Overall Orientation

Thank you for your interest in one of our Master's Programmes in Psychology. The University of the Free State currently offers a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology and a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology. These professional qualifications are designed to lead to registration as a Clinical or Counselling Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

The academic requirements for these degrees include one year of full-time study, one year of accredited internship (professional training), and a mini-dissertation submission. The language of instruction in both programmes is English. Students registered for clinical psychology must complete a community service year following their internship. Note that an additional requirement for registration would be the successful completion of a national Board Examination, which the HPCSA manages.

Our department strives for academic excellence and aims to produce qualified psychologists who can serve the diverse South African population effectively. The master's programmes are designed to train students to meet the needs of our transforming society. With the compilation of the programmes, we consider the HPCSA requirements and national and international trends within the discipline. We expose our students to multiple therapeutic approaches, including humanistic approaches (such as Person-Centred Therapy), cognitive approaches (such as

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), constructivist approaches (such as Solution-Focused Therapy) and integrated approaches (such as Schema Therapy). Through internal and external moderation, the department ensures that our training is of a high standard. We take pride in students' development of critical thinking skills, in-depth knowledge of the discipline, and the ability to apply knowledge within different contexts.

Credit value:	240
NQF level:	9
Co-ordinator:	Mrs Eloise Venter (Counselling Coordinator)
Secretary:	Mrs Elize Du Plessis

2 NATURE OF THE COUNSELLING PROGRAMME

The requirements for the MSocSci Counselling Psychology degree involve full-time study, an internship, and the submission of a mini-dissertation over two years. In the **first year,** students are based at the Department of Psychology for full-time, on-campus study and are expected to participate actively in the learning process. The emphasis is on the integrated theoretical training of all core applied psychology topics during the first year, as the main aim is to assist students in acquiring a range of core professional psychological competencies. Students also gain practical exposure by rendering psychological services to the public, as well as through community intervention programmes. All practical work is conducted under the supervision of registered psychologists.

The overall learning outcomes for the first year of training are:

A. Students should demonstrate the ability to use psychological assessment to conceptualise, diagnose, plan, and monitor therapeutic processes and outcomes.

B. Students should demonstrate the ability to develop theoretical and aetiological formulations based on a thorough understanding of different psychotherapeutic systems. They should have acquired the ability to use a range of psychological interventions with different age groups and contexts.

C. Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of psychological practice that meets professional and ethical standards, including ethical codes and legislative frameworks.

D. Students should be able to design, manage and conduct ethical and responsible research that contributes to psychological knowledge, theory, and practice and demonstrate the ability to report on such research.

The **second year** entails the completion of an internship at an accredited training site. Internships are intended to provide trainees with basic competence in the scope of practice for their relevant registration categories. Students are responsible for obtaining an accredited 12-month internship (approved by the HPCSA) within the registration category they have registered

for as student psychologists. Failure to complete the internship within the specified time will require of the student to apply for an extension of their internship, which would need to be approved by the HPCSA. This extension may be unpaid.

The UFS Department of Psychology serves as a collaborating university for internship institutions. However, we **do not accept responsibility for the placement of students at internship institutions**.

3 HPCSA Registration as a Counselling Psychologist

Registration as a counselling psychologist takes place after a student has completed the following successfully:

a. Academic training (theoretical and practical assessment)
b. Accredited internship (12 months)
c. Research (submission of an extensive mini-dissertation)
d. Board Examination (administered by the Health Professions Council of South Africa - HPCSA).

Students must pass a national examination by the HPCSA's Professional Board of Psychology. This examination can be written during February, June, or October of a specific year.

For more information regarding internships or the board exam, please get in touch with the Health Professions Council of South Africa at +27 12 338 9300 or visit their website at www.hpcsa.co.za.

4 Fees & Compensation

The first year of the course is an academic study year and consequently occurs without financial compensation. Students usually receive monetary compensation from the internship site during their internship year. However, no guarantee can be provided for this.

Students who require financial assistance are advised to contact the **Financial Aid Department, University of the Free State (Tel. 051-401-9160/2106/3603)** in time.

5 Selection

5.1 Selection Process

Owing to the limited number of internship positions, prospective candidates are subject to a selection process. The Department of Psychology is committed to providing a teaching and learning environment that is welcoming, supportive, and accessible to all applicants, regardless

of age, ethnicity, culture, language, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or religion, and to ensuring that all applicants have an equal opportunity for academic success.

The training of applicants in the two programmes (clinical and counselling) will adhere to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) regulations as stipulated in their documents. Core competencies, as adopted by the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) on 15 June 2016, will also form part of the process. We also align our selection process with the Constitution – Bill of Rights (Act 108 of 1996); Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Act 4 of 2000); Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998); Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995); Consumer Protection Act (Act 68 of 2008); Protection of Private Information Act (Act 4 of 2013) and the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000).

The Department uses the following selection criteria:

a. Academic potential and achievement
b. Psychological knowledge and insight
c. Interpersonal skills
d. Maturity
e. Research skills

Previous work experience, community involvement and HPCSA registration as a psychometrist or registered counsellor will also be taken into consideration.

5.2 Minimum Requirements

The following requirements apply:

1. Prospective candidates should be in possession of (or in the process of obtaining) an exit-level 8 qualification in Psychology (Honours or BPsych equivalent);
2. A pass mark of at least 65% in the honours qualification in Psychology is a prerequisite to register for the applied master's programme [Reg A61.1]. Candidates who must still complete their fourth year of training in Psychology in the year when they apply are selected conditionally, pending the successful completion of their 4-year degree with a final mark of at least 65%;
3. Fluency in English is a requirement, with preference given to candidates who are fluent in another official South African language in addition to English;
4. Applicants who are successfully selected for one of the programmes and who are not South African citizens, will only be selected provisionally on the condition that they obtain the necessary documentation for HPCSA registration timeously for the M1 year, as well as the necessary documentation for employment during their internship year will only be selected provisionally on the condition that they obtain the necessary documentation for employment during their internship year.

5.3 Application Process

Incomplete or **late** applications **will not be considered**, as well as for the following reasons:

- Candidates who apply for selection in more than ONE registration category;
- Candidates who fail to provide the department with their verified academic record timeously;
- Candidates who use friends or family members to compile a referee report;
- Candidates who submit AI-generated responses to application questions.

The application process consists of 5 steps:

I. **STEP 1:** Read this **Information Booklet** carefully. You will need to familiarise yourself with the contents of the **Selection Information Booklet** and determine if you meet the **Minimum Admission Requirements** described therein before proceeding to STEP 2.

II. **STEP 2:** Complete the **UFS Postgraduate application** to apply for admission to the UFS in 2027. Access this process through the UFS website: https://www.ufs.ac.za

III. **STEP 3:** Complete the **Departmental Application Form** at this link**:** **https://forms.office.com/r/qT0PC1rmgR** by 17:00 on 31 May 2026.

IV. **STEP 4:** Sign up for and complete the online assessment. **Select your preferred timeslot here**: https://forms.office.com/r/dYtgqvAX1G

V. **STEP 5:** Submit **certified copies** of your **academic records** via email to **duplesse@ufs.ac.za by the following due dates:**
a) Applicants with completed Hons: Deadline: before 17:00 on **31 May 2026**.
b) Applicants currently enrolled for Hons: Deadline: before 17:00 on **6 July 2026.**

Applications of candidates who fail to complete any of these steps by the due dates displayed above **will not be considered**.

As your application proceeds through the phases of the selection process, you will be notified of any additional requirements, such as participating in an online group activity and obtaining a referee report.

5.3.1 PHASE 1: SIFTING (1 JUNE - 6 JULY)

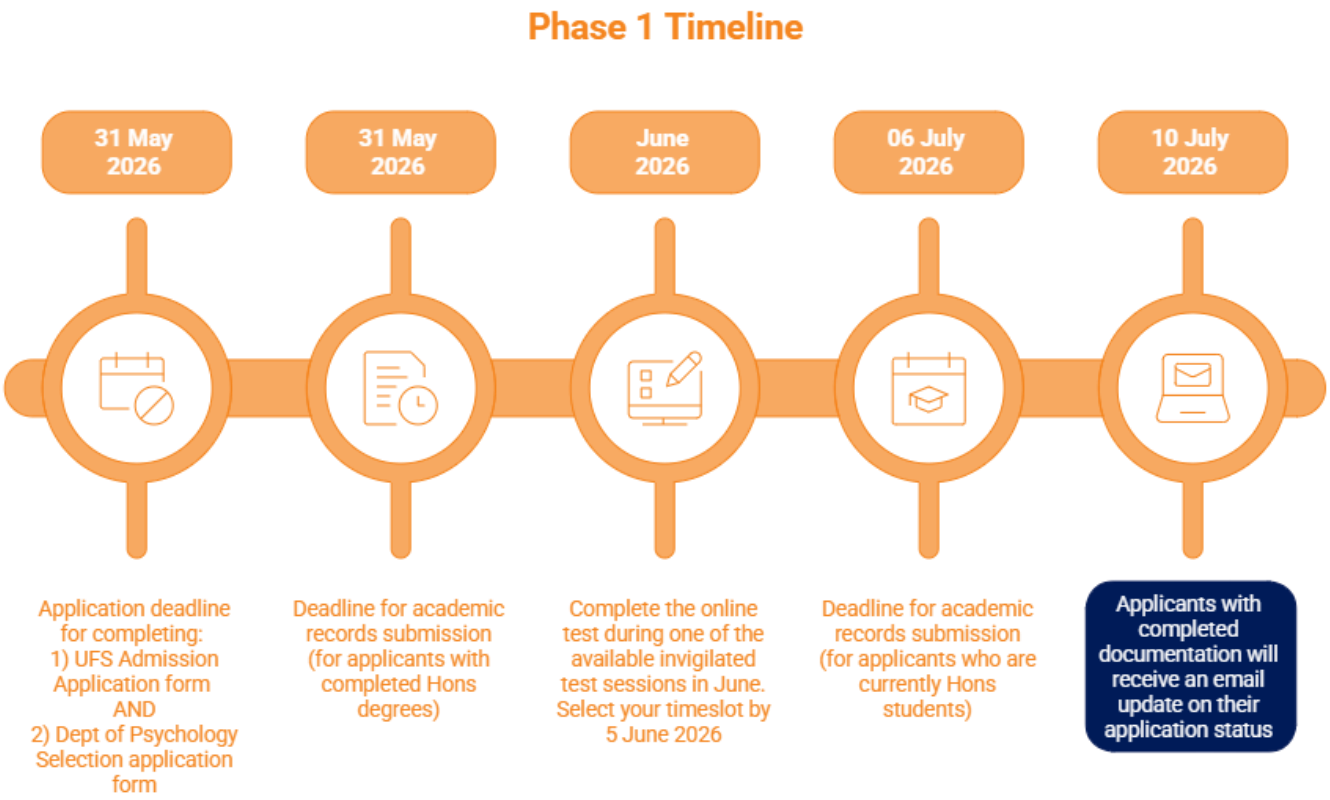
Applicants will be sorted based on their academic potential and achievement, psychological knowledge and insight, work experience (part-time and full-time) and community involvement and research experience. When applicants are pursuing an honours degree in psychology at the time of applying for selection, the marks obtained for their third-year psychology modules will also be considered. Since the level of complexity/difficulty differs between the undergraduate and honours academic years, the third-year mark will be recalculated using a weight of only 0.9 to make it more comparable. The module marks of applicants with a completed honours degree will have a weight of 1. An example of the practical

implementation of this weighting in calculating academic requirements is provided in the box below:

Candidate 1 has 4 psychology 3rd-year modules with the following marks: 80; 75; 82; 90 AND two honours modules with the following marks: 77 and 79. The calculation will be: (80+75+82+90)*.9/4 =73.6 plus (77+79)/2 = 78. Her final mark will be (73.6 +78)/2 = 75.8
Candidate 2 has completed his honours degree with the following marks: 72; 71; 78; 68; 75; 70. In this case, the final mark will be (72+71+78+68+75+70)/6 = 72.3

Candidates will also complete an online assessment during invigilated sessions. The aim of this is to obtain an impression of every candidate's depth and breadth of knowledge related to the field.

The top-ranking applicants (based on academic achievement, online test performance, as well as work, research and community volunteering experience) will proceed to the next stage.

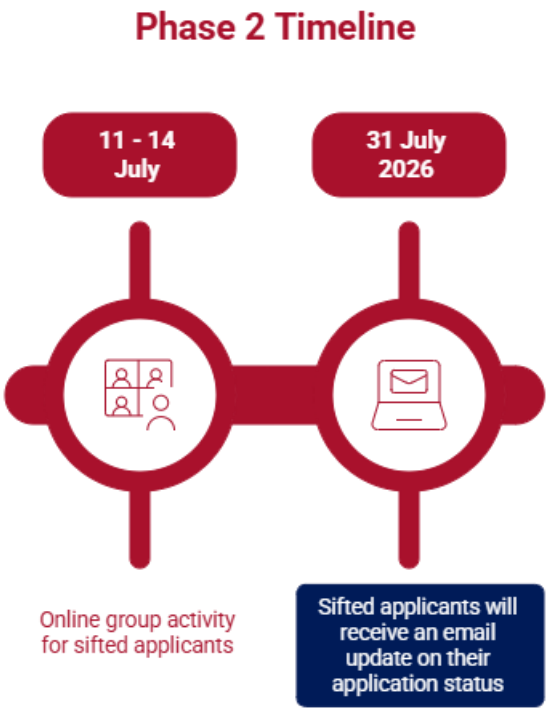


*5.3.2 Phase 2: Shortlisting **(10 July- 27 July)***

Applicants who proceed to Phase 2 will receive an email inviting them to participate in an online group activity between 11 and 14 July. Should an applicant not be available during one of the group timeslots in this period, their application will not be considered during this phase.

The selection panel will review the full application forms for the top-ranked candidates. The panel members will peruse the relevant application forms for their assigned registration category. They will also review the recordings of the group activities. They will independently rate each application on the presence of suitability and readiness indicators. Selection panel members will consider the following criteria during this process, namely (a) interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity, (b) insight into psychology as a profession, and (3) maturity.

Based on this round, 30 applicants per programme will be invited to the interview phase of the selection process.



5.3.3 Phase 3: Selection (In person, 18-20 August)

Applicants invited to the interview phase will be required to ask one referee to complete and submit an online referee report by 11 August 2026. A family member or friend cannot act as a referee. Your referee should also complete the referee report only if they are willing to provide telephonic confirmation between the 20th and 21st of August.

During the interview week, the following activities will take place on the Bloemfontein campus:

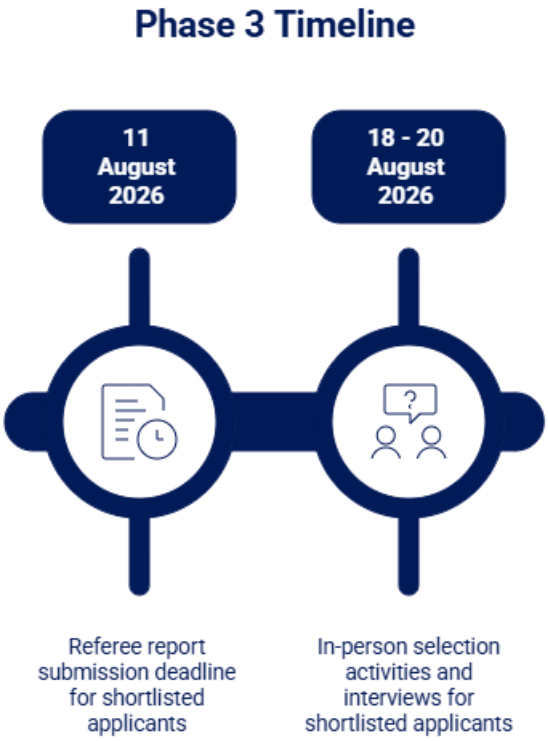
Activity 1: Candidates will be required to participate in a research assessment. The rationale for this assessment is to evaluate the candidates' research competency. This will be coordinated by a research panel.

Activity 2: Candidates in each programme will be assigned to groups and receive instructions for an unprepared group activity. These activities will be observed by the respective panels and are designed to evaluate how applicants deal with novel situations, interact with other group members, make decisions, solve problems and demonstrate self-insight. The group activities

will not be scored. However, information gathered during observation of these activities may be used to inform questions during the individual interviews.

Activity 3: Candidates will be required to participate in individual interviews. Interviews will be conducted by panels comprised of academic staff members, external stakeholders (representatives of internship organisations) and a moderator.

All applicants who are invited to the interview round of the selection process will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses. The University of the Free State and the Department of Psychology will not be held liable for any of such costs. Concessions cannot be made for online or virtual interview attendance.



*5.3.4 PHASE 4: FINALISATION **(21 AUGUST)***

Applicants who completed the interview phase will be ranked based on their performance during the interview and research assessments. The referees of the top-ranked candidates will be contacted telephonically for verification and any required additional information. The list of successful candidates will be compiled, and the coordinator will inform the successful applicants telephonically.

Selection may be withdrawn if, at any point during this phase or during their registration period in the selected programme, the department becomes aware that the applicant withheld information that could have influenced their selection or acceptance into the programme. Such information will be reviewed during an ad hoc meeting of the selection panel to determine whether it would have jeopardised the selection of this student, resulting in a potential suspension of their selection to or registration in the relevant programme.

6 FEEDBACK

All applicants will receive notice via email regarding the outcome (successful/unsuccessful) of the shortlisting process. After the interview phase, the successful candidates will be informed telephonically. Unsuccessful candidates will receive an email regarding the outcome of the interview process.

The Department provides no other form of feedback. The Department adheres strictly to specific procedures when selecting the new intake of students. The decision of the Department regarding the success of an application is final and binding. If your application was unsuccessful, no correspondence will be entered into by the Department with you or any associates or family regarding the outcome.

7 A FINAL WORD

Please note applying for selection entails two application processes: a) departmental and b) institutional. We are responsible for communicating the outcome of the departmental process to you. Therefore, please ensure that your correct email address is used during this process. The University of the Free State keeps the institutional application process for postgraduate studies open until next year's registration period. You will, therefore, continue to receive communication from the UFS until early 2027 indicating that your application is "still in process" or "pending", irrespective of the departmental outcome. This often creates confusion for applicants. To clarify: your acceptance to the UFS for postgraduate studies in applied psychology is subject to the outcome of the departmental selection process. Although you applied to both the department and the university, the outcome of your departmental application, as communicated by our department by the end of the interview week in August, stands as the **final outcome** for the MSocSci Counselling Psychology programme.

We appreciate your interest in our Master's programme. We trust that you will experience the selection process as fair and use it as an opportunity for personal growth and development.

- ***The Selection Team***