

Master of Development Studies (Coursework)



Programme overview

The Master of Development Studies is a two-year distance, part-time learning programme offered by the Centre for Development Support within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Free State (UFS). The programme is designed to develop students' ability to engage with theoretical knowledge and to do research relevant to application in the field of development work. The qualification will equip graduates for further academic work or for professional practice in a range of contexts, for example, in NGOs, government, parastatals or the private sector.

The programme is also available as a Master of Development Studies (Dissertation).

Admission requirements

For admission to the programme, the student must have a minimum of an Honours degree or Post Graduate Diploma in a related field, and have qualified with an average of 65% or higher.

Applicants need to submit:

- A written motivation of 500 words as to why the candidate wishes to study the Master of Development Studies.
- An essay of 5000 words on the topic "What do you consider to be the most significant development challenges facing your region?"
- Students who have obtained qualifications from outside of South Africa are required to submit a SAQA verification certificate.

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Programme structure:

The programme is structured over a two-year period and comprises six modules. There are three compulsory modules and three elective modules, of which students choose two. As a distance learning programme, the majority of learning is self-directed, following a study guide and study material made available online.

Each module is led by a facilitator and learning is supported by compulsory contact sessions held at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein campus, during the year.

In Year 1, students attend three one-week contact sessions (in January, May and September).

In Year 2, there are two one-week contact sessions (in February and June). The final output of the programme is a research mini-dissertation.

Curriculum

Module code	Module Name	Credit Allocation	Compulsory or Optional
EDSA7905	Development, Underdevelopment and Poverty	20	Compulsory (core)
EDSR7905	Applied Development Research	20	Compulsory (core)
EDSQ7900	Mini-dissertation	100	Compulsory (2nd year only)
Electives (choose 2 of 3)			
EDSS7905	Development and Natural Environment	20	Optional (fundamental)
EDSU7905	Human Settlement in a Developing Context	20	Optional (fundamental)
EDSP7905	Action Learning Project	20	Optional (fundamental)
		Total: 180	

Module descriptions:



Development, Underdevelopment and Poverty (EDSA7905)

This module explores the link between the global development agenda, population growth and sustainable development goals at regional, national and local levels. Students engage with traditional and alternative development theories to consider strategies, mechanisms and approaches for addressing poverty and other development challenges in society.



Applied Development Research (EDSR7905)

This module introduces students to the fundamentals of the research process. It includes the development of a literature review, conceptual framing, key aspects of applied research approaches and research design. The process builds towards development of a research proposal. This module is foundational for the mini-dissertation in the second year. Students must pass this module before being able to register for the Mini-dissertation module (EDSQ7900).



Development and Natural Environment (EDSS7905)

This module considers development from an environmental and social perspective and is underpinned by concern for the relationship between humans and the environment particularly in the context of the climate crisis and the drive for economic growth and development. The module content challenges existing development approaches and develops critical thinking about alternative ways of being and doing in support of sustainable and regenerative development.



Human Settlement in a Developing Context (EDSU7905)

Human settlements are integral to development processes and comprise both physical and social dimensions. The purpose of this module is to develop students' professional knowledge and competencies for policy making and practice in urban development and management. Drawing on a range of case studies and taking a decolonial orientation, students will learn to apply theories and concepts to identify human settlement and development needs, and to think critically about how to address human settlement challenges in a more effective, efficient and sustainable manner and with consideration of their contexts in order to increase the quality of life of those living in urban areas.



Action Learning Project (EDSP7905)

The purpose of this module is to engage students in learning processes that involve practical action and creative problem solving in addressing complex real-world development related issues. The module is designed to teach students through practical action learning processes. Students will work collaboratively with each other and with a community partner/stakeholders/organisation to identify, plan and act towards finding solutions to address particular issues they face in their everyday life and work. The process will be underpinned by reflective processes at individual and collective levels.



Mini-dissertation (EDSQ7900)

This second-year module builds on the foundation of the first-year module Applied Development Research (EDSR7905). The focus of this module is on the development of scientific knowledge through a systematic, objective, logical, organised and critical investigation into specific and contextualised development problems. Students will conduct empirical research to address real-life societal issues that they identify. They will need to demonstrate the ability to apply their conceptual and theoretical knowledge in designing and implementing methods of enquiry aimed at seeking solutions to such problems. The outcome of this module is the compilation of a mini-dissertation.

Who should apply?

This programme is ideal for:

- Individuals who are passionate about addressing development challenges
- Those interested in advancing their careers in the development sector
- Students and graduates aiming to pursue advanced academic studies, such as a PhD
- Adult learners and working people
- Scholars from across Africa are particularly welcome

What is the cost of the degree?

A quote is available on the UFS website [here](#).

Most study material is freely available on the university's online learning platform.

The textbooks (where applicable) are for the account of the student.

How do I apply for this programme?

Applications close at the end of October each year.

Visit the UFS online application site to apply:

 <https://apply.ufs.ac.za/Application/Start>


Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact the Centre for Development Support Office at [cgspostgrad@ufs.ac.za](mailto:cdspostgrad@ufs.ac.za) or call +27 51 401 3812

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