

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Discipline of Psychology



**Master of Arts in Clinical
Psychology**

**Guide for Applications
2026 for 2027**

Introduction

Thank you for taking an interest in our Wits Masters Programme in Clinical Psychology. The Discipline of Psychology, located in the School of Human and Community Development in the Humanities Faculty, offers a number of different masters programmes, several leading to professional registration as a psychologist. The Clinical Psychology training programme enjoys an excellent reputation at national level and offers training of an international standard. We offer both theoretical and practical training input and aim to train competent clinicians who are theory driven practitioners. The programme is linked to a very good internship training circuit, with guaranteed internships attached to all of the 12 training places available.

The Clinical Masters training programme comprises three main elements: a year of theoretical and applied training offered full-time at the university; the completion of a clinically orientated research study and report; and a full-time internship of a year's duration at sites in the greater Johannesburg area. The theoretical orientation of the Wits programme is psychodynamic with an emphasis on object-relational and interpersonal perspectives, however, much of the intervention is offered from an integrated perspective drawing upon a range of psychotherapeutic models and modes of intervention. Close supervision of applied work is a particular strength of the programme. Close attention is paid to clinical ethics and multicultural sensitivity throughout the teaching and applied aspects of the programme.

Upon completion of all the academic and internship requirement the Professional Board of Psychology (under the auspices of the Health Professions Council of South Africa) requires that Clinical Psychologists complete a year of paid community service in order to register as an independent practitioner.

This booklet provides information on application procedures, selection procedures and details about the MA Clinical Psychology programme.

Application Procedures

Application Closing date: 1st May 2026

Dates for selection week: 24th July to 31st July 2026

Please check all application requirements at:

<http://www.wits.ac.za/shcd/psychology/academic-programmes/masters/master-of-arts-in-clinical-psychology/>

1. Departmental application form:

Please complete the departmental application form by clicking this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfE2N_OkeKSYB7Zlqe0qYGdle0C1mKvTkz0dDTTr0R025pv0A/viewform?usp=publish-editor

2. Referee reports:

In addition to your application, please choose two referees from people acquainted with your academic and/or professional performance. Choose people who have an understanding of the needs of the profession. Ask them to click the link below to complete their report to arrive **before** the closing date.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=jJAbS4JVd0O6B6NtZeNJNL3yCfNVfB9PreiuWk7UTz5UNkE3MDQ1VDRSNU1VSzRINEEzQUNWWk9NWC4u>

3. University application form:

Please apply online through the Wits Student Enrolment Centre in addition to completing the departmental application forms.

<https://www.wits.ac.za/postgraduate/applications/>

Incomplete or late application forms will not be accepted, nor applications sent to the faculty.

Application queries can be directed to Lauryne.Lokothwayo@wits.ac.za or by telephoning (011) 717 4541. Those applicants invited to selection week will be notified via email by early July 2026.

Selection Procedures

Applicant information is collated and assessed for the selection process. Given the large number of applications into the programme, selections are based on scrutiny of the documentation supplied. Potential candidates should also note that because of over-subscription a large number of students who meet the faculty minimum criterion for entry into a masters' degree (65% average for Honours psychology degree) may not be offered a place on the programme. The selection of candidates is based on academic performance, the overall quality of the application (including suitability to train as a clinical psychologist) as well as consideration of equity, diversity and social redress. The weighting of these aspects is to some extent dependent upon the nature of the applicant pool in any given year. The demographic information requested in the departmental application form is collected in order to serve, in part, as a basis for evaluating applicants' potential contributions to diversity in the course. This information also assists the selection committee to assess the applicant's performance relative to levels of (dis)advantage.

Note: The information you provide in this application may be independently audited to evaluate its accuracy. Knowingly providing false information will be grounds for permanent exclusion from all postgraduate degrees in Psychology at Wits. Please also take note of the courses required by the HPCSA to have been completed before selection into the Clinical Masters program is granted (note: students who have studied Psychology at Wits University would have completed these requirements).

Staff members from both the School of Human and Community Development and the Internship training centres participate in the selection of candidates. Staff are bound by the graduate selection policy guidelines of the School of Human and Community Development. The procedure is as follows:

1. The Selection Committee of the Discipline of Psychology initially screens all applications with regard to a number of criteria, including importantly, academic suitability. An overall mark of 65% in the Honours degree is considered a minimum pre-requisite for entry into a masters' programme by the Humanities Faculty. Depending on the size of the pool of applicants it is not uncommon for the Discipline to offer interviews only to those applicants who have obtained an Upper Second (70% and above) for their Honours degree. During the initial paper screening process the best applicants (in terms of their overall application, including referee reports, as well as in terms of their academic marks) will be invited to attend selection week. Unfortunately, due to the high number of applicants, it is not possible to invite all applicants to selection week.
2. Successful applicants from this stage are invited to attend a selection week, in which they will participate in a series of interviews and other selection procedures (see below).
3. Selection processes are conducted by a panel of psychologists involved in the training of candidates.
4. At the end of the selection week a joint meeting of selection staff determines the successful candidates. A possible 12 candidates are chosen and a short-list of further potential candidates is identified.
5. The selection panel's recommendations are then presented to the Head of School of Human and Community Development (in consultation with other relevant staff) for final approval. Students are notified soon after the final candidates have been approved.

Acceptance of candidates is provisional. In the case of applicants who do not yet have their Honours results at the time of selection but are provisionally accepted for the course, the confirmation of their acceptance will depend, in the first instance, on their Honours results. Additionally, final confirmation of the candidature of each trainee is dependent upon submission of a suitable research proposal by mid May of the first year of training.

The selection process is conducted by staff members from the Wits Department of Psychology and supervising psychologists from psychiatric internship sites. Selection criteria include:

- Strong academic record
- Research aptitude
- Relevant experience
- Appropriate personal qualities and interpersonal skills
- Ability of the candidate to add diversity and value to the Masters class

The selection panel takes all of these criteria into account and will be looking for all round balance and/or all round potential. The panel understands that the selection process is gruelling and endeavours to make the experience as constructive as possible.

Good mental health is considered important for this particular vocation. It is for this reason that we strongly encourage anyone who has had an admission for a mental illness to allow at least two years to pass before application. The course is demanding both intellectually and emotionally and it is important to allow sufficient time for resolution of mental health issues before training as a clinical psychologist.

Selection week

Please read this section if you are invited to selection week. Please note that all selection activities will take place in-person in 2026.

Welcome to the Wits University Clinical Psychology Masters selection process. We realize that you have made considerable effort to get here, and hope that the experience will be a positive one, whether you are selected or not. The aim of this information sheet is to demystify the selection process, make it as transparent as possible, and to minimize the anxiety that inevitably comes with being assessed. Of course, as the selection of applicants for the profession of clinical psychology needs to be rigorous, you may well find some or all of it both challenging and discomfiting. We understand this and will make as many allowances for this stress as possible. Panel members will treat you with courtesy and consideration at all times.

Your invitation to this selection process means that you have satisfied our basic minimum prerequisite criteria for entrance into the course. Please bear in mind, however, that having reached this stage of the process does not guarantee the success of your application. The number of applicants we can accept is unfortunately limited to 12 because of limited internship posts and the intensive staff demands of the training. Consequently, not being selected may not reflect your suitability for further psychological training, merely that in the selection panel's estimation other candidates among this year's applicants were considered to be more suitable.

The timetable for Wits selections will be available shortly before selection week begins and will be emailed to candidates invited to selection week.

The selection process

The selection process will take place over seven days, and will be conducted by a large selection panel. The panel consists of 14-20 members, comprising Wits psychology staff involved in the M. Clin. program, as well as supervising psychologists from the various internship sites where Wits-trained interns are placed. The large panel increases the fairness of the selection process.

Those candidates invited to selections will also be invited to an orientation session where the process will be explained and where applicants will have the opportunity to ask questions.

The selection process comprises a number of assessment tasks or activities. These activities are as follows (subject to change):

1. Equity questionnaire

Each applicant will be sent an equity questionnaire to complete before selection week begins. Applicants cannot attend selection week if they have not completed this questionnaire.

2. Individual interviews (first two days of selections)

Each applicant will have two interviews with two different pairs of interviewers from the selection panel. Each of you will thus be interviewed by four people. These interviewers will independently rate your response to their questions on a numerical scale and independently formulate an impression of your general suitability for clinical training. Each interviewer will have read the documents in your application, and the questions asked of you will be both general and tailored to specific information contained in your application documentation. The aim of these interviews is to get a general impression of who you are and some idea of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the profession of clinical psychology in South Africa. These questions will relate to your personal/educational background, your motives for wanting to pursue clinical psychology training, related formal/informal experience in some facilitative interpersonal role, and generally how you see yourself. The scores assigned to you in these interviews – along with the scores deriving from the other assessment exercises – will be calculated, and you will be assigned a rank relative to the other applicants.

2. Written exercise

You will be asked to undertake a written exercise and to hand this back to the selection panel. This exercise is aimed at assessing your ability to interpret case material from a psychological perspective, and to express your understanding of the case in a clear and concise written formulation. There is no ONE correct understanding of the case material, and different people may identify and emphasize different aspects of the case. Your ability to think about research will also be assessed.

After having assessed your performance of the above tasks, the selection panel will exclude applicants whose scores are significantly lower than the others from further participation in the process. Those applicants who will proceed to the next stage of the selection will be notified via email.

3. Individual role-play & panel interview

A useful practical means of assessing applicants' potential for engaging with people in a facilitative-therapeutic way is through a role-play exercise. This will take the form of a simulated initial consultation with a "client" (a member of the selection panel) who will briefly outline some personal issue of concern to him/her. Your task is to engage with the client, facilitate productive discussion of his/her concerns, and to make whatever verbal interventions (questions, observations, reflections, etc.) you feel might be appropriate in the limited time available. A short panel interview usually follows the role plays. This exercise will take place in front of the selection panel and members will independently assess your performance.

4. Group exercise

Engaging with people in a group context makes different demands on one than interacting individually with them. Much of the clinical training takes place in groups

and students have to conduct group and family therapy. For these reasons your participation in a small group context will give us some indication of how you respond to the demands of this type of engagement. You will be allocated to a small group of approximately six people. The group will be given a task involving the free discussion of an assigned topic. Once again, panel members will individually rate applicants based on their impressions of your involvement in this task.

5. Panel interview, role-play and group process recalls

The panel may decide that further assessment of particular individuals is called for. This typically involves a small percentage of the applicants and takes place on Thursday or Friday. If you are recalled for this purpose you will be notified in advance about what is expected of you and what time you will be needed. Please note that we call back people only where we feel we would benefit from further information. Please do not try to interpret what it means if you are or are not called back! It does not give an indication of whether or not you have been accepted for the course.

At this point all the various scores assigned to you by panel members in the various exercises will be tallied and your overall score will determine your ranking in relation to the other applicants. On the last day of the selection process these results will be discussed by the panel, and the twelve most promising candidates will be selected, while an additional 5 to 8 applicants will be short-listed for inclusion should any of the first twelve decline their places on the course. The names of those candidates chosen and short-listed must be ratified by the Head of School of Community and Human Development before the list is released. Once this has occurred the list of successful applicants will be posted on the website and applicants will be notified via email to inform them whether their applications have been successful or not. We will post these results as soon as possible, but we cannot guarantee when this process will be concluded.

Feedback and debriefing

It is obviously disappointing not to be selected after participating in such a process. Most applicants will, however, find themselves in this position. For those who require it a member of the M. Clin. training team will provide a group debriefing session to discuss issues arising from unsuccessful applicants' exclusion.

Please contact Lauryne.Lokothwayo@wits.ac.za (011 717 4541) should you have any queries.

Programme Overview

Aims of the Programme

Firstly, to produce clinical psychologists competent to assess, diagnose, and provide psychotherapy to a range of people suffering from a range of psychological disorders. Secondly, to ensure that these psychologists can plan and execute research projects broadly apposite to the field of clinical psychology. These aims are achieved through intensive didactic input and supervision, and assessment of applied clinical work, together with regular supervision of research progress.

The activities students are involved in include the following:

- Attending formal didactic lectures, seminars and workshops
- Attending case conferences and presenting case work
- Reading and learning prescribed and recommended literature, and discussing this in the relevant forums
- Gaining familiarity with various assessment instruments, their scoring and interpretation
- Assessing clients and making management decisions based on assessments
- Providing a therapeutic service to appropriate clients
- Writing and maintaining case notes of therapy sessions
- Writing essays, assignments and reports
- Writing up and formally presenting a psychotherapy case study
- Sitting written/oral examinations
- Attending individual and group supervision of assessment/therapy cases
- Presenting written transcriptions of therapy sessions
- Receiving and responding to performance appraisal feedback
- Attending your own, personal psychotherapy
- Finding an appropriate research topic and submitting a research proposal
- Consulting a research supervisor on a regular basis
- Interacting formally/informally with other class members
- Discharging limited administrative responsibilities assigned to you
- Maintaining professional conduct in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the SHCD and the Professional Board for Psychology
- Accessing and using library and other reference facilities

Core programme competencies

In order to successfully complete the programme, students should demonstrate the following core competencies:

1. The ability to comprehend and discuss theoretical material germane to the programme aims.
2. The ability to apply relevant theory to the practical tasks of psychological assessment and psychotherapy.
3. A capacity for professional, ethical and constructive engagement with patients, fellow students, and members of staff in relation to the programme activities.
4. The ability to facilitate an adequately therapeutic interpersonal process with patients.
5. The ability to plan and execute a research report under supervisory guidance.

Program outcomes

Outcome 1: The qualifying student is able to diagnose psychological disorders and provide a reasoned explanation for how these disorders originate.

Students complete an intensive psychopathology and psychiatry module in which they learn about the nature, prevalence, and aetiology of a spectrum of psychological disorders.

Outcome 2: The qualifying student is competent to choose, administer, score and interpret a variety of psychometric assessment instruments and procedures, and to use this data to aid in diagnosis and treatment planning.

This is accomplished through exposure to assessment instruments, skills and procedures, application of said instruments in formal practical assessment of patients, and assessment of student's applied and theoretical knowledge by means of written reports.

Outcome 3: The qualifying student is able to plan and implement psychotherapeutic interventions aimed at alleviating psychological disorders.

Students are exposed to a comprehensive psychotherapy module addressing the theory and technique of psychotherapy in a variety of settings.

Outcome 4: The qualifying student acquires professional presentation and communication skills.

Students conduct case conference presentations, facilitate seminar discussions, and submit written assignments and psychotherapy and assessment reports.

Outcome 5: The qualifying student displays awareness of the ethical dimensions of his/her work, and is able to conduct him/herself according to a professional code of ethical conduct.

Students are taught and assessed on their knowledge of the ethical code of conduct of the Professional Board for Psychology, as well as having to apply their minds to ethical issues arising in their clinical practice, and in ethically problematic case studies.

Outcome 6: The qualifying student displays a high degree of self-awareness and understanding of how his/her personality influences his/her response to the demands of clinical practice.

Students are assisted in obtaining their own personal psychotherapy during the course of their training. In addition, supervisors challenge them to examine the role played by their own psychology in their clinical decision making, interventions, and response to supervision.

Outcome 7: The qualifying student shows research competence.

Students are required to plan and implement a research project, using acceptable scientific methodologies, and to dialogue the results of their research with professional literature in the field.

Outcome 8: The qualifying student is able to work in a multiculturally sensitive manner.

Throughout the course students are encouraged to think about and engage with the multiple ways in which culture informs psychological difficulties and interventions and to intervene in ways that are sensitive to these aspects of client and clinician identities.

General Program Rules

1. The Masters program in Clinical psychology extends over a period of two years. The M2 (internship) is viewed as a continuation of the M1 year and the appropriate degree is conferred only after completion of the internship, together with the other formal requirements of the course (case studies and research project).
2. The degree must be completed within a **THREE YEAR** period as specified by the HPCSA.
3. Successful completion of the M1, M2, and community service year leads to full registration with the HPCSA as a Clinical Psychologist, **providing the student writes and passes the Professional Board examination.**
4. These rules must be read in conjunction with the rules published in the current Wits University Calendar.
5. All students must register with the HPCSA as student psychologists in the M1 year. A student who is not registered as a student psychologist may be denied permission to visit hospitals/agencies in the M1 year.

In the M2 year, the student will register with the HPCSA as an intern psychologist. A student who fails to register as an intern psychologist before the commencement of his/her internship will not be allowed to commence with the internship until such time as registration has been effected.

6. Students are required to complete all the compulsory coursework, as well as their research report, before embarking on the internship.
7. The final mark for the qualification is calculated as the weighted average of the individual modules (see below for detailed information).
8. Students must obtain a passing mark for each of the core modules. Failure to do so will preclude the student from completing the training.
9. Acceptance for the internship (the second year of study) will also be refused if a student has not shown satisfactory progress in the dissertation or fails any of the course modules in the first year.
10. The internship will only take place in an institution registered to train clinical psychologists.
11. The program is full-time and students are expected to be available every week day (excluding university/religious holidays) for the entire working day.
12. Students may be excluded from the program at any time on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic progress, ethical misconduct, and/or behaviour considered to be inappropriate for professional psychology practice.
13. Students are expected to be in their own personal individual psychotherapy for the duration of their M.Clin training, *regardless of whether they have been in psychotherapy before*. Such therapy should be with a senior therapist whose orientation is consistent with the exploratory insight-oriented approach of the Wits training. For those students who cannot afford professional psychotherapy rates,

a number of therapists have agreed to see trainees at reduced rates. Please speak to the program coordinator in this regard.

Progress Evaluation

Students' performance is monitored and assessed continuously throughout the year. Staff members involved in training meet regularly to discuss students' progress, and standardized evaluative criteria (both qualitative and quantitative) pertaining to the various aspects of the program are employed in assessing their response to the program learning outcomes.

Module Descriptions

The following are offered in 2026, and may be modified in 2027:

1. Psychotherapy

Students receive training in the microskills necessary for practice as a psychotherapist, in a range of psychotherapeutic methods and focus areas, in group and family therapy, in play therapy and intensive input on psychodynamic psychotherapy.

2. Psychological Assessment

The course covers a range of aspects pertaining to psychological assessment including clinical observation, history taking, specialized interviewing, intellectual, personality, neuropsychological and pathology testing, report writing and making professional recommendations

3. Research

Students receive intensive input on how to conceptualize a research study and how to prepare and write up a research proposal. Research ethics and academic writing skills are also covered. This course is then supplemented by ongoing individual/group supervision with a research supervisor on an identified project written up in the form of a final research report. This research report is due towards the end of the M1 year.

4. Psychopathology

Students are exposed to a broad range of disorders, examining symptoms, classification, differential diagnosis and treatment. The course is complemented by case conferences and ward rounds. Understandings of psychopathology are also incorporated into supervision of cases.

5. Community Clinical Practice

Students work in a community clinic, dealing primarily with traumatic stress cases and with a range of community mental health problems. Initial training is given in conceptual models of assessment and treatment in contexts in which intervention is of necessity flexible and short-term in orientation. Close attention is paid to multicultural dynamics and also to working with other complementary networks and social services.

6. Theory in Practice and Context

This course covers a range of perspectives on the early development of psychological health and difficulties. Although the essence of core theories is covered in general, the primary focus is on how developmental understandings can contribute to an enriched understanding of psychopathology and interpersonal dynamics, as well as application of psychoanalysis to social and contextual issues.

Internship

During the second year of the course, students are required to work at one of the intern placement centres. Internship placements are an integral part of the Wits training programme and successful completion of a Discipline-approved internship is necessary for the award of the degree. Placement is at the discretion of the internship team based on student preference lists. The Discipline will endeavour to help students obtain appropriate internships wherever possible.

Unsatisfactory intern progress

Where interns are not making satisfactory progress, a joint decision by the training centre and the university can result in a reprimand, a warning, an extension of the internship or (under exceptional circumstances) termination of the internship.

Remuneration

Intern psychologists are usually paid a salary during their internship year if they are South African citizens.

The Research Report

A central requirement for the degree is a research report which presents research in an area related to clinical psychology. Students will be invited to a summer school where they will start to prepare for their research. Each student will be assigned a supervisor, who will help the student to prepare a research proposal for approval by the Discipline and by the Faculty of Humanities. The student will then conduct the research. The final research report should be approximately 30 000 words in length. Students will be informed of the procedures and processes they will be expected to adhere to. We expect our students to complete their research by the end of their first year of study.

Financial Information

Financial Commitments

During the course of the year students need to make provision for a number of expenses, for example audio and video recorders, various books and photocopy material, printing of assignments and personal psychotherapy fees.

Financial Aid & Scholarships

For more information about funding and scholarships:

<https://www.wits.ac.za/study-at-wits/financial-aid-and-scholarships-administration/>

Fees

Information obtainable from: <https://www.wits.ac.za/study-at-wits/student-fees/>

Accommodation

Information obtainable from the Student Accommodation Office:

<https://www.wits.ac.za/accommodation/>