

Master in Public Administration / MCom in Public and Development Management

Admission requirement

The Master in Public Administration and Mcom in Public and Development Management programmes accepts students that have successfully completed a BAHons, BAdminHons, BComHons, BEconHons, BComHons degree with Public and Development Management or related CESM study field, or a BPublic Administration or PG Dip in Financial accountability degree with an average of at least 60%. Additional proof of academic writing and research ability (e.g. a prior academic research report or a research proposal) must accompany the application.

Duration, offering type and starting date of programme

Duration: One year, full-time; two years, part-time; with block sessions and interactive online sessions for the Coursework and Thesis option.

Starting date: Normally late February or early March.

Classes commence online on TEAMS, followed by a compulsory in-person contact session in May.

Programme's mode of delivery

This programme offers two options.

The first option is the structured-option, where the student completes three 30-credit modules and a *delimited* research thesis. The modules that are offered differ each year to respond to emerging needs in society, the expertise offered by SPL staff and students' expression of interest.

With the research-only option, a more *substantive* research thesis is completed.

Students may focus their thesis research on a public sector topic that is relevant to their own learning and context, and which offers a contribution to ongoing discussions and deeper shared understanding on the topic. The programme offers assistance in preparing and defending a research proposal at a colloquium. Students must successfully pass the colloquium to continue with a research topic.

Registration for the 100% thesis option requires prior approval of your research proposal by the MPA/MCom programme head.

Modules

Module choices vary per year, with admitted students voting for preferred modules on offer. In 2023, the following electives were put forward as possible module offerings:

- Anti-Corruption Studies
- Advanced Programme and Project Management
- Capita Selecta: Deriving maximum value from technical assistance
- Comparative and Contemporary Public Management Studies
- Development Strategies: Integrating Political and Economic Governance

- Developmental Local Government a global perspective
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Brief descriptions of the content and focus of these modules are included below.

Questions about the programme can be directed to Ms Riana Moore at djam@sun.ac.za or the programme head Prof Babette Rabie at brabie@sun.ac.za.

Anti-Corruption Studies

School of Public Leadership strongly advocates that the fight against corruption is our collective responsibility as it is an insidious enemy that hampers growth, development and progress. In light thereof, this inaugural module on the Masters Programme titled Anticorruption Studies focuses on our critical need to understand and interrogate the historical perspectives, nature, scope, scale and consequences (including social, political, economic, technological and cultural considerations and influences) of this scourge amidst constitutional, legislative and global imperatives and tapping into our critical and innovative minds to brainstorm, conceptualise and reflect on these formidable challenges and seek pragmatic anti-corruption strategies to promote morally ethical cultures and accountable public leadership. In critiquing this scholarship, we delve into case studies from South Africa and the Continent and have invited distinguished national and international scholars and practitioners to share their experiences, highlight best practices, learn lessons and through the learning outcomes of this stimulating module contribute to sound public administration and governance.

Advanced Programme and Project Management

This module is aimed at exploring with participants how to use programme and project management applications together with other tools and practice guidelines in uncertain and dynamic settings in order to enhance their ability to deal with the challenges of their work. These work-related challenges can be regarded as complex operational and tactical management, whereby challenging strategic objectives as defined by the executive are translated into appropriate institutional delivery frameworks. The overarching objective is to equip participants with selected programme and project management applications and skills in such a manner that they can apply it to a real and complex work situation, and understand the benefit, and have the ability to utilise the applications in the interest of their particular beneficiaries and society as a whole towards achievement of immediate outputs and to support sustainable outcomes.

Capita Selecta: Deriving maximum value from technical assistance

Public sector organisations define strategy to implement their mandate and objectives. Strategies are then implemented through programmes and projects. The resources for implementation may be purely internal - own staff, budgets, and equipment. Alternatively, especially for innovative or complex initiatives, it is common in South Africa for public sector programmes and projects to draw in external expertise. The institution may directly hire consultants, or technical assistance may be

provided via a donor or a national institution. Donor funds, grant money or own revenue may foot the bill - leading to various accountability arrangements and sometimes multiple strategic agendas. The timesheet may be submitted; the reports signed off; the system built and installed; the staff trained; and the money spent and accounted for. But was it worth it?

When done well, external technical assistance can be of lasting benefit to the institution - boosting the capacity of its staff; improving the quality of its decisions and processes; or delivering an eye-opening piece of research that becomes the catalyst for positive change. On the other hand, all too often, things quickly return to the status quo. A pilot project generates excitement but goes no further. Deliverables gather dust. Over time, public servants become sceptical of yet another expert outsider demanding plenty of their time and offering to solve government's problems, or yet another capacity building programme; and the auditor-general starts to question why so much money is being spent on consultants. At the same time, donors and others claim that much was achieved and more assistance is warranted.

This module explores how to derive optimal value from technical assistance programmes (including the direct procurement of service providers); and how to use evidence to answer value-for-money questions and inform decisions about further assistance. It is aimed primarily at the public sector officials who are tasked with overseeing or managing technical assistance programmes in the recipient institution. It would also benefit donors and national institutions that run technical assistance programmes; as well as those who consult or provide technical assistance to the public sector, or expect to do so in future.

Comparative and Contemporary Public Management Studies

Public management in the developed world takes for granted legal and regulatory systems, public schools, healthcare and social security for the elderly, roads, defence, diplomacy, and heavy investment by the state in research, particularly in medicine (albeit for diseases mainly afflicting the wealthy). In much of developing world, states lack the capacity to raise taxes or deliver services and the contract between government and the governed - imperfect in rich countries - is often broken or altogether absent in poor countries. The absence of state capacity - that is, of the services and protections that people in rich countries take for granted - is one of major causes of poverty and deprivation around the world. There are different ways to build state capacity and strengthen the social contract beyond the western public management and policy frame. The guiding question then is whether we arrive more easily at good public administration if we realize that there are different contexts and thus, potentially at least, different ways to achieve objectives, as well as legitimately different goals. This module introduces participants to different paradigms of public administration: Chinese, Western, Islamic (Ottoman Empire), Indian, Latin American (Brazil, Bolivian), and African (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Botswana, Uganda and South Africa). The module questions the universality of Western knowledge and state building discourse that has historically underpinned colonial domination and exploitation. The coexistence of different worlds and alternative non-derivative institutional pathways alerts to ways of overcoming the tyranny of precondition and prescription. Consequently, the course explores the differences between paradigms, the various reasons for them, including the changing regional and international landscape. Studying the various paradigms and their associated innovations will equip participants to better tread the policy management needle related to both building state capacity and establishing/repairing the social contract. Various academics and development practitioners of developing and emerging economies - the global south - will present and host sessions thereby anchoring and enriching the learning and teaching experience. Learning and dialogue will be facilitated through case studies, grey and short secondary literature, group discussions and presentations.

Development Strategies: Integrating Political and Economic Governance

Modernisation theory, structural adjustment, new public management, good governance, public value, networked governance, and the multitude 'best practice' models - all mainstream approaches to development - appear increasingly incapable of addressing today's economic, health and climate crises and emergencies. Not only are old problems - war, famine, pestilence - occurring in new ways (witnessed with Covid, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the China-American trade war, to name but a few), the rate at which events happen - without borders, in/formal, ill/legal - has drastically accelerated thereby rendering the present development challenge more dynamic, intertwined, and unpredictable. Without a complex understanding of the nature of these challenges, public policy will end up with the same old techno-bureaucratic fixes that have led, in the first place, to the current cul-de-sac. The frontier challenge for development strategies is to move beyond the prescriptions of economically 'sound fundamentals', 'good governance' and 'best practice', spotlighting instead the interactions between economic, political and social relations and constraints. This module introduces learners to institutionalism - a general approach to governance and social science - that concentrates on institutions (defined by rules, norms, and social structures) and studies them using inductive, historical, and comparative methods. The module exposes learners to orthodox (the West, United Nations) and unorthodox/heterodox (China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Russia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Botswana, Rwanda, Mauritius (tbc)) development strategies. The analysis and interrogation of the relationship between ideology, money and social power together with its influence and impact on policy reform, state-building and statecraft is central to decoding orthodox and heterodox strategies. This module straddles a variety of disciplines including public and development administration, critical development studies, economic history, political economy, political science, sociology human geography, and climate science. No formal training in macro- and or micro-economics is required to read for the module. Various academics and development practitioners of developing and emerging economies - the global south - will present and host sessions thereby anchoring and enriching the learning and teaching experience. Learning and dialogue for the module is facilitated by videos, podcasts, grey and short secondary literature, group discussions and presentations.

Developmental Local Government a global perspective

Developmental Local Government aims to improve communities' lives, ensure meaningful public participation and commit to sustainable service delivery. This module is aimed at local government officials and managers responsible for implementing the principles of developmental local government. Although Developmental Local Government has a sound Constitutional underpinning, it often lacks practical interpretation and application.

This module will provide practitioners with a global perspective on developmental local government and will be a hands-on and practical exposition of subject matter to promote developmental local government as a holistic concept. In analysing the Medellin case study the student will explore what South African practitioners could learn and apply from "Medellin's 20-year journey from the most violent in the world in 1992 (Pablo Escobar era) to the most innovative in 2012". The module would furthermore explore Santander's (Spain) efforts to use smart technology to further the three aims of developmental local government.

The module maintains both a theoretical approach to the systems for implementing developmental local government and a practical perspective through comparative case study analyses. The module specifically focuses on developmental local governance principles, integrated development

planning, performance management systems and municipal finance and accounting as systems for effective developmental government.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The importance of evidence to inform strategic decisions has never been as emphasised as in recent years. The unanticipated impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic required immediate and drastic decisions, often in the context of limited evidence that has been rigorously tested. This crisis also brought a big set-back against the achievement of the 2030 SDG goals, resulted in vast, global economic set-backs in both the public, private and voluntary sectors, whilst closing of international borders and the scramble for vaccinations emphasised the politically contested, complex environment that complicates decisions on right and wrong.

This module regards M&E as strategic management functions that enable managers to attain development results by providing information for move defensible, value driven planning, implementation and accountable deliverables. Whether the focus is on immediate term challenges such as delivering services or improving the lives and livelihoods of citizens, medium term challenges like the public fiscal crises or rebuilding the state following State Capture, and longer term challenges like averting global warming and other threats to our existence, M&E plays an important role in generating and assessing evidence to inform decisions. M&E systems informs financial, strategic and operation decisions during the design, implementation and retrospective evaluation of interventions.

The module objective is to equip students with the knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes to enable them to take the lead in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies, programmes and project. The module covers key concepts in monitoring and evaluation, such as definitions, programme theory of change, approaches to evaluation, results-based M&E systems, institutional arrangement options for a public sector environment, indicators for performance measurement and considerations related to the design, implementation and reporting of evaluations.