



Master of Science in Addiction Studies

Course overview:

Given the multifaceted, transdisciplinary nature of addiction, the programme of study explores the phenomenon of addictive behaviour from a number of disciplinary positions. The programme recognizes that while addictive behaviour has clear biological foundations, it manifests itself in culturally and socially contingent ways, is subject to different constructions in different societies and is also subjectively experienced as a psychological experience. The programme of study will therefore explore a number of conceptual models that have been developed to examine the phenomenon of addiction and will trace the evolution of the social logic and history of the term addiction. It will explore addiction as a biological, social, psychological construct and also engage with rational choice positions and the influence of human agency. The common cognitive neurological basis of addictive behaviour will be explored in detail. The course will also go beyond the examination of chemical dependency to explore behavioural or activity addictions. Today it is recognized that addiction may exist even in the absence of the ingestion of substances. This increases the scope of the study of addictive behaviour. The programme of study will also engage significantly with advances in evidence-based policy prevention and intervention and examine both national and international legal provisions in the area. The programme will also allow you to follow areas of interest through the selection of electives and through the dissertation. The programme will also be geared towards developing your research skills and producing high quality publishable research projects in the area.

This programme is offered as an interfaculty programme of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery.

Learning outcomes:

You may be expected to benefit from the course programme in a number of ways through a heightened understanding of the issues, significant theoretical and intellectual engagement and the development of skills.

Subject knowledge and understanding:

At the end of the Postgraduate Diploma in Addiction Studies, you should be able to:

- critically engage with the conceptual complexities of the construct of addiction.
- be conversant with the theoretical frameworks developed to explain addiction and the advantages and disadvantages therewith.
- explain brain systems that give rise to cognition and behaviour both in a normal context and that associated with addiction and hence have a better insight on what works in prevention, treatment and reintegration..
- become conversant with national and international legal provisions regulating behaviours which are potentially addictive e.g. gaming, substances, gambling.
- critically evaluate the evidence on effective policy addressing addictive behaviour.
- critically evaluate the evidence on effective interventions addressing addictive behaviour.
- explain the patterns of addictive behaviour as they present themselves in the different periods of the lifespan.
- explain how structural variables such as gender, age, ethnicity etc. impact on addictive behaviour.

Intellectual development:

- develop critical thinking.
- gather and evaluate facts and assumptions about addictive behaviour.
- engage in a reflexive analysis of the complex and often contradictory theoretical positions on addictive behaviour and how they inform policy, practice and prevention.
- develop an evidence-based understanding of addiction.
- develop an evidence-based understanding of programmes in the areas of prevention, treatment and reintegration.
- critically engage with the strengths and weaknesses of different research paradigms.
- relate a research question to a research paradigm.
- discuss key ethical issues in conducting research in the field of addictive behaviour.

Key/transferable skills:

- conduct research independently.

- present and argue your positions on addictive behaviour.
- apply research and theory to policy.
- apply research and theory to practice.

Other skills relevant to employability and personal development:

- synthesise knowledge on addictive behaviour with the competencies developed in a first cycle degree.
- apply an understanding of addictive behaviour to the context of current employment/ further education.

Learning outcomes for M.Sc. in Addiction Studies:

In addition to the above learning outcomes, at the end of the M.Sc. Addictions Studies, following the writing of the postgraduate dissertation, you should be able to:

- become familiar with a specialised area of addiction studies through immersion in the subject matter while writing a dissertation.
- develop a research agenda and more specific research questions and locate your research agenda within a research paradigm.
- critically engage with the strengths and weaknesses of different research paradigms.
- discuss key ethical issues in conducting research in your chosen area within the field of addictive behaviour.
- demonstrate a critical attitude to research.
- design and implement a study effectively.
- use the existent literature effectively.
- collect and analyse data in a scholarly manner.
- arrive at evidence-based conclusions.
- write a dissertation that may be adapted for publication.
- adhere to ethical principles at all stage of the research project.