

# Public Administration and Management @ Unisa

A guide to preparing for  
career opportunities



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***The information in this publication is correct as of 10 December 2025. Visit the Unisa Counselling and Career Development [downloads page](#) to check for updates.***

*Please check the Unisa qualifications webpage (<http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications>) regularly for updates related to available qualifications and the admission requirements to study.*

## How will this brochure help you?

- It will help you to explore the broad range of opportunities related to public administration and management.
- It will help you to identify different job titles related to public administration and management.
- It will help you to understand what you need to plan your career in the public administration and management field.
- It will enable you to identify qualifications related to public administration and management at Unisa.

## What problems do you want to solve

“Don’t ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems they want to solve. This changes the conversation from who do I want to work for, to what do I need to learn to be able to do that.”

*Jaime Casap, Google Global Education Evangelist*

One way to think about your career is by focusing on the **problems you care about**, not only on job titles. This shifts the question from “*What do I want to become?*” to “*What do I want to contribute?*”

### Activity

1. Write down some problems or challenges you care about — in your family, community, South Africa, Africa, or the world.
2. Think about how you might contribute to solving them.
3. Ask: *What skills or knowledge would I need to prepare myself for that role?*

**Example:** You may want to address the challenge of improving urban infrastructure and service delivery in growing cities. Think about the different individuals who can contribute to

solving this challenge: city planners, public administrators, project managers, policy analysts, community engagement officers, and government officials.

As a public administrator or manager, you may coordinate programmes to improve housing, sanitation, or transportation services. A policy analyst might research and recommend evidence-based strategies for sustainable urban development. A community engagement officer could involve residents in decision-making, ensuring services meet real community needs. Meanwhile, city planners and project managers oversee the implementation of infrastructure projects, and government officials allocate resources and ensure accountability.

Together, these roles demonstrate that building sustainable, well-functioning cities requires collaboration across multiple disciplines and that your background in public administration and management positions you to make a meaningful impact on communities and public service delivery.

## **Understanding public administration and management**

### **Before you start: Why choose public administration and management?**

Before considering pursuing this field of study, here are some basic questions you can ask yourself:

- Why are you interested in studying public administration and management?
- Where does your interest come from?
- Where are you hoping to be in five years? In ten years?
- What opportunities are you hoping to prepare for by completing a qualification in this field?

# What is public administration and management?

Public Administration and Management is the study of activities in the public sector. It includes topics such as health, protection, education, housing and the environment. The Unisa syllabus is new and relevant to the challenges facing South Africa at national, provincial and local government spheres, while due cognisance is also taken of international developments and how these may influence government and related issues. The modules are designed to equip the student with knowledge as well as practical and academic skills.

## Skills needed for a career in public administration and management

- Organisation skills
- Data gathering
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking and analysing
- Listening
- Budgeting and finance
- Time management
- Project management

## Opportunities in public administration and management

Opportunities in the public sector are broad and depends on the level of government as well as the government department. The subjects you combine with public administration would shape your job opportunities in this field, to some extent.

For example, the Bachelor of Administration (BAdmin) degree enables you to combine public administration with subject such as decision sciences, economics, accounting, business management (human resource management, marketing, strategic management, purchasing management), industrial and organisational psychology, and transport economics and logistics, preparing you for opportunities related to the application of these fields of study in the public sector.

The Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree enables you to combine public administration with Human Science-related subjects such as politics, social sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology), languages, and communication science, preparing you for opportunities related to the application of these fields of study in the public sector.

## Job opportunities and work environments

### Possible job titles

- Activist/lobbyist
- Administrative officer
- Budget and reporting manager
- Communication coordinator
- Communications practitioner
- Compliance officer
- Development economist
- Finance manager
- General accountant
- General manager (public service)
- Government relations manager
- Human resource practitioner
- Human settlements practitioner and manager
- Immigration officer
- Lecturer (university)
- Local authority manager
- Local government officer
- Monitoring and evaluation practitioner
- Non-profit administrator
- Policy advisor
- Policy analyst
- Policy and planning manager
- Procurement manager
- Programme or project administrator
- Programme or project manager

- Project development specialist
- Provincial officer
- Public administration officer
- Public affairs researcher
- Public outreach officer
- Public policy analyst
- Public sector consultant
- Researcher/ research manager
- Senior government manager
- Senior government official
- Social security assessor
- Supply chain practitioner
- Supply chain manager

## Possible work environments

- Quasi-autonomous government institutions, such as research institutions, universities, development agencies and state-owned enterprises
- International affairs organisations (United Nations, African Union, Southern African Development Community)
- Municipal (local government) affairs (e.g. municipal manager, water and electricity supply, roads, town planning, parks and recreation)
- National Affairs (e.g. education, health, commerce, law enforcement, defence, finance, transport, environmental affairs)
- Provincial affairs (e.g. tourism, nature conservation, education, health)

## Further resources

- [Public Service SETA Career Guide](#)
- [Learner Career Guide Public Service Sector](#)



## Exploring and researching careers

Making informed career decisions means going beyond what you already know. Career research helps you explore opportunities in public administration and management, understand what employers are looking for, and identify the steps you can take to prepare yourself.

### Try this:

Here are some simple activities to help you explore opportunities in public administration and management. Choose 2–3 to start with:

1. **Online search**

Search “career in public administration and management South Africa” or “entry-level jobs related to public administration and management” and make a list of the qualifications and skills mentioned.

2. **Occupational information websites**

Visit the South African Department of Higher Education and Training’s [National Career Advice Portal](#). Search for specific job titles and read about work activities, skills, and job outlook.

3. **Job search portals**

Check portals like [Indeed](#), [Career Junction](#) or [PNet](#). Type in specific job titles to see which employers are currently hiring and the requirements.

4. **LinkedIn**

[Search for Unisa alumni](#) who studied public administration and management to see where they work. What career paths do they follow?

5. **AI tools**

Use ChatGPT or Google Gemini to ask: “What are emerging careers in public administration and management in South Africa?” Compare the results with what you see on job portals.

6. **Talk to others**

Set up an informal chat with someone working in the field or at an organisation you are interested in to learn more about their career journey and daily work.

7. **Attend a careers fair**

When Unisa or professional organisations host career fairs, look for employers related to public administration and management. Prepare 2–3 questions to ask them about entry routes into the profession.

## 8. Join a professional organisation or network

- [South African Association of Public Administration and Management](#)

## 9. Volunteering

Look for volunteering or vacation work opportunities. Note the skills you develop through these experiences.

For more detailed steps and extra activities, see our [Career Research brochure](#).

# Preparing while you study

Many students believe that a degree will lead directly to a specific job. In reality, your career path is shaped by more than your major. It is also about the **skills you build, the experiences you gain, and how you prepare along the way**. While you study, there are many things you can do to get ready for opportunities.

Your degree is one part of your career journey. By building skills, gaining experience, keeping a portfolio, and investing in your confidence, you'll be better prepared for opportunities during and after your studies.

## Develop your transferable skills

Your studies give you subject knowledge and valuable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, working independently, and adapting to new situations. Reflect on what you're learning and practise explaining these skills in ways that employers will understand.

### Activity

- List three skills you've strengthened this year and one example of how you've used each.
- List three skills you intend to strengthen and how you plan on doing so.

## Build a career portfolio

A portfolio helps you keep track of your achievements, experiences, and goals. Include your skills, certificates, volunteering, work experience, and career ideas. Over time, this will become a powerful tool for applications and interviews.

## Useful resource

- [Unisa Career Portfolio](#)

## Gain experience (volunteering or part-time work)

Getting experience outside your coursework helps you explore fields of interest, build networks, and develop workplace skills. Volunteering is especially valuable when done responsibly and with respect for the community.

### Think about

- Which organisations could benefit from your skills?
- What could you gain in return (skills, networks, insights)?
- How will this experience link to your career goals?

## Enhance your employability

Employability means your ability to get, keep, and grow in fulfilling work. Today's careers are flexible: people change jobs and industries often, and success can mean many different things. You can boost your employability by:

- Managing your personal brand (how others see your professionalism).
- Developing job search skills (CVs, cover letters, interviews, networking).
- Exploring flexible career paths and lifelong learning opportunities.

## Useful resources

- [Unisa Prepare for Job Opportunities](#)
- [Counselling and Career Development YouTube channel](#)
- [PNet Grad Pack](#)
- [GradNext](#)

## Grow your self-confidence

Believing in your ability to succeed is just as important as skills and knowledge. Low self-confidence can hold you back from studying effectively, applying for opportunities, or connecting with others.

### Ways to strengthen your confidence

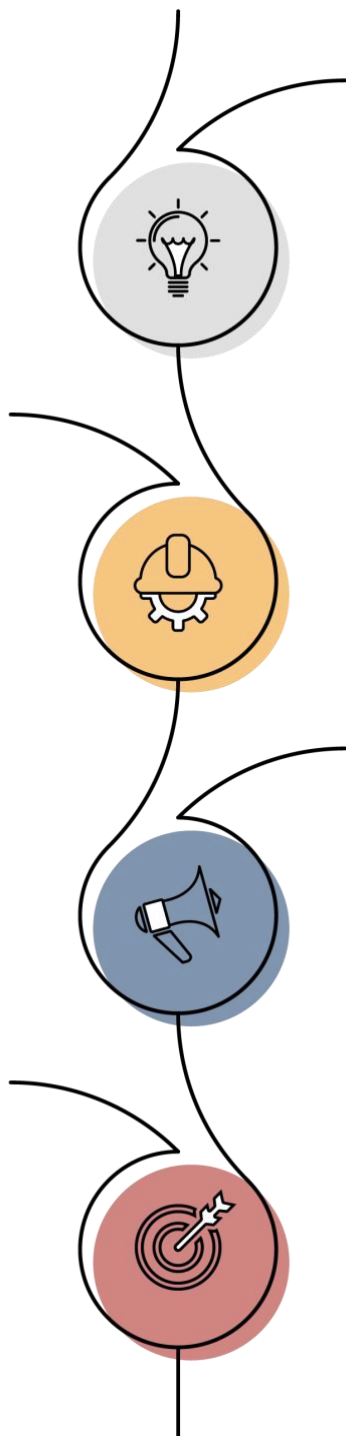
- Focus on your strengths and successes.
- Ask for help when needed: it's a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Practise self-talk that encourages growth instead of fear.

Remember: confidence grows with action. The more you try, the more you'll believe in yourself.

## Your roadmap to success

Embarking on a career journey while studying can feel exciting and overwhelming. This roadmap will guide you year by year, helping you to stay intentional, informed, and adaptable.

*Careers are rarely straight lines. Think of this roadmap as a flexible guide: you can move between stages depending on your opportunities and goals.*



### **Year 1: Explore and build foundations**

- Reflect on your interests, strengths, and career goals.
- Research career paths linked to your qualification.
- Plan your modules and think about postgraduate options.
- Identify key employability skills to develop.
- Create a basic CV and LinkedIn profile.
- Join a student or professional organisation.

### **Year 2: Grow and gain experience**

- Focus on excelling in your studies.
- Apply for internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work.
- Attend workshops, webinars, or conferences.
- Gain certifications (if relevant).
- Expand your professional network.
- Update your CV and portfolio with new experiences.

### **Year 3: Refine and specialise**

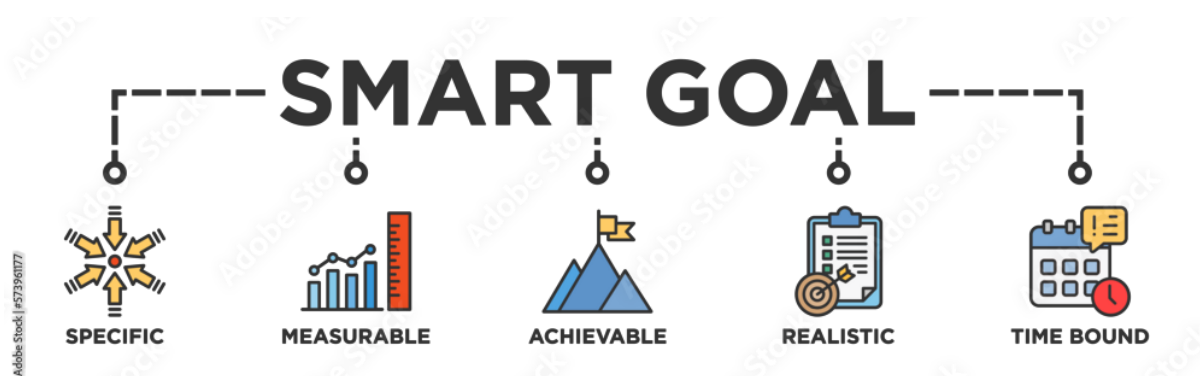
- Revisit your career goals and explore specialisations.
- Connect with alumni and seek mentorship.
- Strengthen your professional presence (LinkedIn, portfolio, personal website).
- Practise with mock interviews and improve communication skills.
- Contribute to professional discussions online or at events.

### **Final Year: Launch your career**

- Start an intentional job search (LinkedIn, job boards, company websites).
- Tailor your CV and cover letters for each application.
- Practise interviews and refine your elevator pitch.
- Attend career fairs and networking events.
- Evaluate and negotiate job offers with guidance from mentors.
- Commit to lifelong learning and professional development.

## My career learning plan: Next steps

Your next step is to plan how you will get the information that you still need to make optimal career decisions. Use SMART goals to help you plan your career research.



**S – Specific:** What exactly do I want to find out?

**M – Measurable:** How will I know I've done it?

**A – Achievable:** Can I realistically do this step?

**R – Relevant:** Does this help me make better career decisions?

**T – Time-bound:** By when will I do it?

**What career questions do I still need answers to?**

My career question	What steps will I take?	By when?	Who/what can help me?	Done?	What's next?
E.g. What jobs can I do with a degree in public administration?	Search LinkedIn profiles of Unisa public administration graduates	15 Oct	LinkedIn, Alumni page	Yes	Connect with 3 alumni

Career planning is not about having all the answers right now. It is about staying curious, setting small goals, and building momentum.

# Study opportunities at Unisa

## Undergraduate qualifications

### College of Economic and Management Sciences:

- [Bachelor of Administration \(98315 - BAD\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Administration in Human Settlements Management \(90016 - HSM\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Business Administration \(98316 - BBA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce \(98314 - GEN\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce in Public Procurement Management \(98767 - PPM\)](#)
- [Diploma in Local Government Finance \(90083\)](#)
- [Diploma in Public Administration and Management \(98203\)](#)

If you do not meet the admission requirements for the undergraduate qualifications in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, then you will need to explore the option of applying for a Higher Certificate offered in the College of Economic and Management Sciences. Completing a relevant Higher Certificate programme will enable you to meet the requirements for a diploma or degree.

### College of Human Sciences:

- [Bachelor of Arts African Languages and Public Administration \(99311 - APA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Archives and Records Management and Public Administration \(99311 - AMP\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Communication Studies and Public Administration \(99311 - CSA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Development Studies and Public Administration \(99311 - DPA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts English Studies and Public Administration \(99311 - EPA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Information Science and Public Administration \(99311 - IPA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Linguistics and International Politics \(99311 - LIP\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Linguistics and Public Administration \(99311 - LPA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Music in History and Society and Public Administration \(99311 - MHP\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts Psychology and Public Administration \(99311 - PPA\)](#)

- [Bachelor of Arts Sociology and Public Administration \(99311 - SPA\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Arts in Government, Administration and Development \(99301\)](#)

Visit the Unisa website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications> for more information about the admission requirements for these degrees.

## Postgraduate qualifications

### Postgraduate diploma

- [Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration \(98208\)](#)

### Honours degrees

- [Bachelor of Administration Honours in Public Administration \(98449\)](#)

### Master's and PhD

- [Master of Administration in Public Administration \(98581\)](#)
- [Master of Public Administration \(98651\)](#)
- [Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration \(90024\)](#)

Read more about the Research Focus Areas [here](#).

## Frequently asked questions

### I did not complete mathematics at matric level – can I study public administration and management at Unisa?

If you do not meet admission requirements for the undergraduate qualification in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, then you will need to explore the option of applying for a Higher Certificate offered in the College of Economic and Management Sciences. Completing a relevant Higher Certificate programme will enable you to meet the requirements for a diploma or degree.



# Counselling and career development services at Unisa

The Unisa Directorate for Counselling and Career Development offers career, academic, and personal counselling services to Unisa students and the broader community. You can talk to a counsellor about:

- **Career decisions.** I am not sure which career path to follow; I don't know which qualification would be best; I want to change my career direction...
- **Career information.** How can I find out more about a career in ...
- **Employability.** How do I market myself to employers? How can I look for work? How can I compile an effective CV? How do I go about networking with others? How do I put together my career portfolio? How can I meet potential employers? How can I improve my interview skills?)
- **My studies at Unisa.** How can I get started with my studies? How do I plan my studies? How can I study more effectively? I don't feel motivated to continue with my studies... I feel worried about preparing for/ writing the exams. I failed my exams – what now? I need to improve my reading/ writing/ numeracy skills
- **Personal issues and mental health.** How can I have better relationships with others? How can I cope more effectively with issues that impact my studies?

## Contact us

- Send an email to [counselling@unisa.ac.za](mailto:counselling@unisa.ac.za).
- Make an appointment to see a counsellor:
  - [In-person at a Unisa Centre](#)
  - [Online \(on MS Teams\)](#)

## Further self-help resources for career, academic and personal development

Our website: [www.unisa.ac.za/counselling](http://www.unisa.ac.za/counselling)

Our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/unisacareers](https://www.youtube.com/unisacareers)