

Full-time Research Masters (MPhil) Advert
Authorial Identity Development within the Health Sciences

The [FHS Writing Lab](#), situated within the Department of Health Science Education ([DHSE](#)) in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town, invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for a full-time (2 year) research masters (MPhil) in Health Science Education commencing in 2020.

The Masters programme in DHSE is the only full-time research masters programme in Health Science Education in the country. The programme includes intensive support that will enable you not only to successfully complete your degree, but also prepare you to undertake doctoral research in the future.

Background to the project

Writing centres have become a common feature of higher education institutions, playing an important role in supporting student engagement with disciplinary discourses, literacy practices, and knowledge production (Avery and Bryan, 2001; Daniels & Richards, 2011; Graves, 2016). In South Africa, writing centre scholarship and practice has been strongly influenced by the New Literacy Studies perspective of writing as a contextually-situated social practice (Gee, 1990; Lea and Street, 1998; Street, 1984, 1995; The New London Group, 1996), and the transformative ideology (Lillis & Scott, 2007) of the academic literacies approach (Lea & Street, 1998), which aims to empower student writers (Pemberton 1994) to use their own knowledges and literacies to contest academic norms and contribute to new forms of thinking and representation in the academy (Muna et al., 2019).

Given the dominance of the written mode within higher education, the need to engage critically with academic writing practices, and the challenges of enacting a transformative approach, is particularly important (Clarence and Dison, 2017; Esambe and Mkonto, 2017). Notably, a transformative ideology necessitates a focus on authorial identity development (developing the *writer*), rather than text product development (developing the *writing*).

Recently, Cheung et al. (2018) identified five domains and two sub-domains inherent in authorial identity. This framework reflects current understandings from the literature (Pemberton, 1994; Pittam et al., 2009; Archer, 2010; Cheung et al., 2017), and represents a substantial contribution as it coalesces these notions into a cohesive framework, providing a target towards which pedagogical interventions can be orientated. What has yet to be determined is whether this framework is valid in the South African context; the relationships between domains; and how to operationalise domains for the design of contextually appropriate and transformative pedagogical activities.

MPhil Research Project

Understanding the conceptual domains inherent in authorial identity, the relationship between domains, and how each domain can be operationalised for the development of targeted pedagogical interventions, is fundamental to enacting a transformative approach to supporting and enabling students' development as writers within the academy. Recent work by Cheung et al. (2018) provides a useful starting point, however their work derives from academic perspectives in a Northern context across a wide variety of disciplines. Therefore, the focus of this research would be to similarly explore the domains of authorial identity, but from a Southern perspective, with a refined disciplinary focus (the health sciences), and a wider group

of stakeholders (undergraduates, postgraduates, and academics). From within an interpretivist paradigm, the research will use qualitative methodology (such as focus groups and interviews) to explore stakeholder perspectives and experiences of authorial identity development. The data will be thematically analysed to firstly, identify the domains of authorial identity (which may differ from those identified by Cheung et al.); secondly, to clarify the relationships between domains; and thirdly, to operationalise domains to enable their use in targeted pedagogical strategies.

Funding

This research is supported by a UCT University Research Council (URC) grant that includes running costs and a student bursary of R100 000 pa, renewable for a second year based on satisfactory progress.

MPhil Admission Requirements

- A Postgraduate Diploma in Health Profession Education or equivalent. In the absence of a PG Dip HPE, applicants will be considered on the basis of their portfolio of experience and qualifications;
- Demonstrated competence on the TOEFL test for applicants who do not hold a degree from an English medium university and/or who are from a country where English is not the official language
- Reliable and continuous computer access and internet connectivity.
- Students may be required to attend an educational research methods course and other coursework as appropriate to the topic of the dissertation, depending on their prior knowledge and experience.
- Students registering for the first year of masters in 2020

Applications

Interested individuals are invited to submit:

- A cover letter
- A full academic CV in which you highlight educational courses, workshops and/or conferences attended, presentations given;
- An expression of interest statement in which you outline your interest in this research area

Application should be submitted to Dr Natasha Muna (PI) at Natashia.muna@uct.ac.za by the 29th of February 2020