

Sacap's higher certificate in counselling and communication skills helps bridge pandemic disruption

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As we move into the second year of life upended by the global pandemic, SA's school-leavers are weighing their limited options. While some will forge onto their chosen tertiary education path, others may be set back by not achieving a bachelor's pass or be uncertain about what they want to study. Travelling and gaining world experience before you make up your mind is off the cards for the time being, and probably for most of 2021. The challenge for these school-leavers is how to make the best of these tough circumstances.



There's currently an increasing focus on short programmes offered by tertiary institutions. The best of these are typically one-year programmes offering an accredited [higher certificate](#) qualification that can improve a student's readiness for tertiary education, make up for a matric without a bachelor's pass and enhance critical skills for success not only in their studies to come, but in their future work lives.

Dr Jaclyn Lotter, Sacap's (The South African College of Applied Psychology) academic dean, points out that parents and young people are anxious that 2021 'doesn't go to waste' as the education sector continues to grapple with how to master continuity during the pandemic. "After the disruptions of last year, which certainly did result in some SA school-leavers underperforming, through no fault of their own, there's a strong urge to move forward this year and overcome the disadvantage of the pandemic," she says. "There will be close scrutiny of options such as higher certificate programmes to not just keep students busy, but to ensure that they have a meaningful education experience that helps them leapfrog over the pandemic years."

In line with its focus on social sciences education, Sacap offers a popular higher certificate in counselling and communication skills. The one-year, nine-module programme, which is available online or on-campus (subject to Covid-19 restrictions), offers practical, work-related skills training set in an applied psychology framework that is relevant to students anticipating careers across all sectors. While it's a notable gateway into the social sciences field, the application of interpersonal skills is equally critical in business, academia, education, medical, tech, science, government and non-government fields. As Dr Lotter puts it: "There isn't an industry in which having a better understanding of human behaviour or the ability to communicate more effectively with others isn't useful."

Is the higher certificate in counselling and communication skills right for you?

If you passed matric without exemption in 2021

You may have set your heart on studying for a degree but matric didn't turn out how you hoped it would. You're not alone. The pandemic wreaked havoc on the education system last year, and the matrics faced the toughest challenges of any generation since World War Two. "Graduating from Sacap's higher certificate this year can not only help you get back on track, but set you off with some important advantages," says Dr Lotter. "You will not only meet the minimum entrance requirements for degree studies around the country, but you will also lay the foundations for good academic literacy, setting you up for success in your further studies. You will also gain critical skills if you rather decide to enter the workforce in 2022."

If you don't feel sure you will be able to succeed at university

Many school-leavers might not feel confident with their ability to cope at a university level given the very disruptive matric year they experienced. Engaging in the higher certificate will give you this year to build confidence and empower you to continue your journey into higher education.

If you wanted a gap year and really don't want to start long-term tertiary studies instead

Dreams of a gap year, especially for those who planned on travelling for self-exploration, are very compelling and hard to let go. It's not easy to just set this aside and dive into tertiary education when you believe you need time and experience before committing to a study/career path. "The higher certificate is a one-year programme that introduces students to psychology and the social sciences," says Dr Lotter. "It gives students a taste for the field of study without a long-term commitment and provides them with a registered qualification and practical skills at the end. Along with Sacap's student-centred approach, it is also a voyage of self-discovery enabling greater awareness and understanding in relation to others as well as a deeper relationship with self."

If you're interested in social sciences but not ready for degree studies

The higher certificate is a gateway to further studies in social sciences, and some credits can even be carried over to Sacap's bachelor of applied social sciences degrees when majoring in psychology and counselling, business management or human resource management.

If you need to improve your communications and interactions with others

"The higher certificate is a great qualification for anyone who wants to develop their communication skills and improve their ability to interact and work with others," says Dr Lotter. "There are key features of this qualification that offer invaluable knowledge and insight to graduates, including communication skills, counselling skills, academic literacy, as well as insight into human behaviour and better understanding of human diversity. Together these areas of focus lay the foundation for better understanding and insight into how people think and behave on an individual level as well as within society at large. The higher certificate develops relevant, useful and practical skills that are both transferrable and invaluable for a graduate's personal and working life, as well as future studies they may choose to pursue."

Webinar: What you can do with a higher certificate pass

Not getting a matric exemption may be disappointing, but it is definitely not the end of the road. Join Dr Jaclyn Lotter, Claire Chester and Praneetha Jugdeo in a live webinar where they will discuss the many advantages that Sacap's higher certificate in counselling and communication skills has to offer matrics. This vocational programme is an excellent bridge to wherever students want to go next. It provides essential skills for the workplace, it also serves as a stepping stone into higher learning, and it readies students for the 4th industrial revolution where communication and collaboration are two critical pillars in being prepared in a digital age.

Join us on 16 February from 6pm to 7pm. RSVP here:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/5416111269218/WN_VEIbcHw9S0iR1D0qrRJA5g

Applications for the higher certificate in counselling and communication skills are now open. Please visit sacap.edu.za to register.

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