General introduction

My name is Dr. Elmo Pienaar and I will be your appointed supervisor for the degrees and courses mentioned in this document. I introduce myself shortly in the last section.

Thank you for your inquiry related to these courses. I’m excited about them. What they are about is in a way what I’m about as a person. Perhaps you already know but will otherwise learn to appreciate just how important our own narratives are to all we do... in the academic space and work environment. Judging by your interest it may be that we share related concerns, and, on some pointsfragments of our story.

These courses are about bringing together different worlds, some of which include:

- Spirituality and organisations (or business)
- Theory and practice
- Life narratives and academic work
- Research (your research) and professional life (such as through the consulting relationship)

Perhaps you are interested in making the journey from the one end of the continuum above to the other. Could it be that you are a minister considering inroads into the corporate environment? Conversely you are coming from a business background and desire to link what you do to the personal meaning or spiritual aspect of your life. Perhaps you’ve been part of the corporate environment for quite some time and you have become interested in pursuing a professional practice in facilitation, coaching, or corporate counselling.

To various degrees the above are all possibilities. However, none of these courses is a substitute for you taking responsibility for your own future. Yet it may aid in that direction. What is certain is that these courses are unique. To paraphrase one prospective student: These courses are aimed at those who have a sense of the need in society and the public space to bring different worlds together.

Document overview

This document should not be seen as a replacement for information on the University of Pretoria’s website. Its purpose is merely to ensure that you are on the right track as early as possible. As such it will also not go into every detail.

The content of this document is also available on my website: http://www.elmopienaar.com/masters-ma-or-doctorate-phd-degree-in-practical-theology-focus-on-organisational-studies/

This document is divided into several sections.

Section 1 and 2 provide information on the degrees that act as the academic host for our interesting interdisciplinary offering.
Section 3 offers a short description of these courses and gives technical information for when you decide to enrol.
Section 4 is on selected reading material.
Section 5 points in the direction of fees and funding matters.
Section 6 references the application process.
Section 7 has something to say about accommodation.
Section 8 provides additional links that you might want to follow.
Section 9 shortly answers questions that have arisen from conversations with people such as you.
Section 10 offers a snapshot on me as your supervisor.

For your convenience this list of contents:

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Section 1: Relevant degrees: MA, PhD
The degrees MA Practical Theology and PhD Practical Theology (with our focus being organisational studies) are situated in the Faculty of Theology and are conferred by the University of Pretoria upon successful completion.

Degree/ Course content
These degrees and courses nurture inquiry and practice on the intersection between Practical Theology and Organisational Studies. As such the content of this document and the degrees in question do not fall within the usual areas one might find in Practical Theology such as pastoral therapy, youth ministry, or liturgy.
The broad field of Organisational Studies include many areas. To mention a couple, one’s focus might be directed at Organisational Development, Leadership and Management, Organisational Behaviour, and Organisation Theory and Design.

While the above forms the context of inquiry (the ‘intersection’ between Practical Theology and the organisation), the aspect of ‘interaction’ is also very important. Ways of interacting with and within the organisation include facilitation (also a critical metaphor for our work), coaching, corporate counselling, and research.

Furthermore the matter of spirituality is of importance to both the inquiry on the intersection and in the interaction. Topics such as and related to ‘spirituality at work’ and the ‘spirituality of the organisation’ are encouraged.

When speaking of spirituality we treat this from a practical point of view and so your own story (extending also beyond spirituality) serves as a form of grounding for these courses. It is this practical aspect (a practical theological accent) that makes our inquiry amount to more than what spirituality’s treatment would in the disciplines of Religious Studies Anthropology, Sociology, or Psychology.

**Nature of studies**

Postgraduate studies of this nature often allows for very independent work. The description of full time studies is misleading in the sense that with some courses there are no classes scheduled on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis.

Our contact consists of roughly four small group meetings scheduled during the year as will be discussed. Regardless of the value found in the input from the ‘scientific community’ (here, meaning all master’s and doctorate students), for some students one on one contact will be the norm. Still, for others online collaboration is the only feasible means to study. Note, however, that online collaboration is compulsory for all postgraduate students. It involves matters such as post updates on your research where applicable, doing guest posts, online community participation, and dissemination of your research.

**Nature of the degrees**

A PhD in particular but also often masters degrees (in our case the MA courses) are regarded as ‘research degrees.’ It involves knowledge-creation. On the other hand ‘professional degrees’ are aimed at a persons’ work life. It mostly involves knowledge-intake. Note that as per the Higher Education Qualification framework all postgraduate degrees should eventually be research degrees. Professional degrees therefore, per definition, are intended for undergraduate level. Some postgraduate masters professional degrees still exist (for instance, degrees in psychology and engineering).

It is the independent nature of research degrees that makes possible the kind of flexibility that many students desire. Professional degrees that are at this stage still placed on masters level, or will perhaps always, are loaded with a tremendous amount of knowledge that needs to be digested, so to speak.

While all masters, doctorates or PhD degrees are situated on an advanced level, one way of understanding the difference is that research degrees eventually provide the content that students in professional degree programmes learn about (irrespective of them being undergraduate or postgraduate professional degrees).
A research degree therefore offers the opportunity for a person to become an expert, a specialist, in some or other field of choice. In our case, our research degrees are very much so relevant to your professional career because it takes matters of practice into consideration. For me it is important that any professional engages in his or her career with thorough academic grounding.

**Section 2: Relevant degrees: MPhil & MTh**

**MPhil Degree (Applied Theology)**

The degree MPhil in Applied Theology resides within the Faculty of Theology and is conferred by the University of Pretoria upon successful completion.

The MPhil is a master’s degree that serves as a bridging degree. It allows students coming from a non-theological background to, after successful completion at a certain level, enrol for the above mentioned MA degree in Practical Theology. In other words, a theological background is not required to enrol for the MPhil programme. A relevant undergraduate degree from another discipline is advised. The first phase of the MPhil programme serves as required undergraduate education, the second phase places the student on an honours level. From here it becomes possible to continue with postgraduate MA studies in Practical Theology.

The content of the MPhil degree (in Applied Theology) is dealt with at length in another document. The following remarks highlight one or two aspects that are of particular interest to those who inquire about these courses specifically for its focus on Organisational Studies.

**Course rationale**

The rationale of the MPhil programme is that students who venture for the first time into theological currents need to be exposed to broader theological concerns. As such the course offers theological content informed by several disciplines in theology. One of these disciplines is Practical Theology (where the focus of Organisational Studies fits). Others, to mention a few, include Systematic Theology (Dogmatics & Ethics), Missions Studies, and Biblical Studies (Old and New Testament).

Even though the MPhil is very much structured around theological content we will start our journey around the theme of Organisational Studies here. Rest assured that learning, for instance, about the Pentateuch (The first five books of the Bible) has a lot to offer you in terms of how organisational culture leads to canonizing policies and procedures. We can discuss the links at length and maybe you would be interested to eventually do a PhD on the ‘Psalms of an Organisation – a form of Practical Philosophy.’ This does not exist by the way, but who knows, it could be your doctorate title.

**Nature of studies**

It consists of prescribed material, scheduled contact days, assignments, and a mini dissertation.

**Focus of studies**

Students are allowed to focus more on one particular subject or discipline than others. Indeed it will be expected of students (by me) to focus on Practical Theology since Practical
Theology is superbly positioned to deal with our focus of Organisational Studies. It is highly advised (by me) that the required essay or research report in the second phase of the MPhil relate to the kind of subject material that would otherwise have been dealt with in the degrees mentioned in ‘Section 1.’

Keep the following in mind as you peruse the document relating to the MPhil studies. If you already have the appropriate formal theological background BA (Honours) in Theology, or MTh, you do not follow the MPhil route.

**MTh**

An MTh degree (that specialises in Practical Theology) leads into a PhD in Practical Theology. The only routes to an MTh degree are through the BA (Honours) in Theology, the BTh, and the MDiv programme.

For theological BA (Honours), students who wish to specialise earlier in Organisational Praxis they might wish to enrol for the MTh ‘bb’ and not the MTh ‘aa’ leading through the MDiv programme.

In their specific MTh degree (the ‘bb’ type MTh) they will have one subject (Practical Theology) and then do a dissertation.

**Section 3: Concise and technical degrees overview**

In view of your application (website link elsewhere) herewith the relevant course codes (Please note “The online application system is not intended for use by students presently registered and studying at the University of Pretoria”).

**MA Practical Theology (Research based) – Code 06257051 (Module in year book: PRT 894)**

If an MPhil does not apply to you, this is the MA you should enrol for. If needed, as will be discussed, you can change to the MA ‘course work’ programme (This change is possible only in the first year of your master’s study).

- It requires writing a full dissertation.
- In conjunction with an appointed supervisor a relevant theme is proposed which should be approved by the department and the ethics committee of the university.
- The dissertation counts towards the full mark of the degree.
- While there is no official course work that will add up to your final mark, selected topical reading may be set as requirement by me as your supervisor.
- Duration of studies is a minimum of 1 year, extending up to 3 years.
- Usually requires any one of the following for admission:
  - MPhil (Applied Theology) with a pass mark of 65%.
  - BA (Honours) in Theology, preferably having specialised in Practical Theology (Although the specialisation is at this stage for our purposes less of a requirement). A pass mark of 65% is required.
  - (Please note that the MTh, with the required pass rate leads directly into a PhD)
MA Practical Theology (Has a tuition/coursework component) – Code 06257052 (Modules in year book: PRT893 & PRT 803)

- It also requires writing a dissertation but is seen as in-part fulfilment of the degree.
- Supplementary evaluation takes place either through assignments, oral examination, or through some other means as deemed relevant by the supervisor.
- Duration of studies is a minimum of 1 year, extending up to 3 years.
- Requires any one of the following for admission:
  - MPhil (Applied Theology)
  - BA (Honours) in Theology, preferably having specialised in Practical Theology (Although the specialisation is at this stage for our purposes less of a requirement. The motivation to the admissions committee following regulations is that there is no formal body of literature in Theology on undergraduate level that could have led to our unique field of study). A pass mark of 65% is required.
  - (Please note that the MTh degree leads directly into a PhD)

This latter mentioned MA degree (Code 06257052) has two components (Course Work and Research). There is also an aspect of Professional Development that is dealt with in the Course Work

1. Course work relates to
   a) the discipline of practical theology as such and typical themes of interest to this particular degree (e.g., spirituality in the workplace, servant leadership and so on),
   b) Organisation Theory and Design,
   c) Professional Development (as it relates to facilitation, coaching, and corporate counselling).

2. Research is a core part of this degree. A student can do research on any matter related to the broader context. Naturally it must involve an inquiry related to the intersection between organisational studies and practical theology (including, for instance, coaching, the spiritual organisation, or corporate counseling).

3. The professional development aspect (relating to coaching, facilitation, etc) will be dealt with as part of the course work. It is important to note that at this stage practicum (in other words, the actual practice of these) is not a formal requirement of the degree. Students are encouraged to approach their work environment or set up a private practice in this regard. Separate from the degrees in question I am willing to guide you in this.

PhD Practical Theology (Research based) – Code 06265051

- It requires writing a full dissertation based on original research contribution.
- In conjunction with the supervisor a relevant theme is proposed which should be approved by the department and the ethics committee of the university.
- The dissertation counts towards the full mark of the degree.
- Duration of studies is a minimum of 2 years, extending up to 4 years.
- Requires any one of the following for admission:
  - MA in Theology, Practical Theology, Pastoral Family Therapy (Pass mark of 65%)
  - MTh
• While the research is the only formal evaluation the aspect of 'unofficial' course work similar to the course work for the master's degrees above (Code 06257052) still apply as per the expectation of me as your supervisor.
I have noted that the courses (excluding here the MPhil programme) have three components, namely, a) Course Work, b) Research, and c) Professional Development. The table below sets out two of these.

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<td>PhD Practical Theology</td>
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Reiteration on ‘Professional Development’: At this stage practice opportunities relating to the professional modalities, which include coaching, facilitation, consulting, and corporate counselling are not dealt with in the degrees. It is not an admission requirement but on a Masters or Doctorate level we assume that you are already involved in the practice of, for instance, coaching. If not, I will explore such possibilities with you and link you to the respective professional bodies.

There is, however, room for treatment of these professional modalities at length in the research component. This is part of what I hope to see some students do. Should you choose to do research on a matter that either incorporates or deals specifically with coaching (spiritual, executive, performance, etcetera), facilitation, or corporate counselling you will undoubtedly acquire specialist knowledge. As such the degree will add to your professional development as a coach, facilitator, or corporate counsellor.
**Section 4: Selected reading**

The library of the University of Pretoria has all the books and articles you will need to conduct the literature aspect of your research (particularly relevant to research-only degrees that exclude official course work).

For course work there is selected reading across a diverse range of disciplines. We discuss this some more once you have enrolled. You will not necessarily have to buy all the works referenced on the reading list since the selected reading is also topical in nature. This means that from the reading list that will be provided you might want to buy a selection of books and consult the library for those selected reading topics concerning books you do not buy.

Prescribed books are also reserved in the library and as such, as a student, you can affordably photocopy the material in question.

**Section 5: Cost of tuition, fees, and funding**

Cost of tuition fees can be found on the UP website. Students who have enrolled successfully are automatically considered for a UP postgraduate bursary (appreciation to NEFSAS for these bursaries). The faculty approves these bursaries from NEFSAS as a matter of formality.

Although as a postgraduate student you are considered automatically for these kind of bursaries it is not a given that it will be awarded. First order priority goes to PhD students, then MA (Research), then other kind of master’s degrees. In the beginning of the year there may be a percentage of funds available still in which case, should you enrol now, you might still be eligible for. Please note that this is a process that is entirely out of my hands. There may also be other evaluation criteria than the ones above.

Follow the link for relevant information and other forms of potential bursaries:

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=20666&language=0

(All postgraduate links on the above page are relevant to you)

Another ‘out-of-the-box’ possibility that I would highly advise is for students to approach their employees for financial support. To benefit the organisation the student might need to undertake a work based research project. It has to be accounted for in a research proposal that is acceptable to the university and the employer.

**Section 6: Application**

To enrol, follow the online application process (accept for international students who should email me if they’re interested). At present the online application system will indicate that you are past the cut off date and the enrolment is only possible May 2014. This is not relevant to us, so do complete the process online. The client services centre (CSC) does not provide hard copy application forms although they might receive it in cases where prospective students downloaded the application forms online.

For general application information as well as online application, follow the links below:

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=34
http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=21037
Follow the link on how to track your application:

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=19352&language=0

**Important:** Be sure to attach/upload all the documents required otherwise your online application might not processed by the system.

Neither faculties, academic departments, nor their administrative and academic staff handles processes related to application, fees, and funding. The faculties’ administrative staff is well informed. Should you wish to clear up your understanding or want to know if you are on the right track they will be able to assist. You can contact or email Mrs. Roos in this regard on +27 (0)12 420 4053 and via email rina.roos@up.ac.za (Also provided at the end of the document).

Remember that your application goes through various stages in a general evaluation process. Things such as whether you have the relevant degrees to be admitted to the programme you apply for are considered. At this stage you have only had to pay a small administrative fee with your online application. Once you have submitted your application the internal evaluation process takes a while. It also makes it much less cumbersome should you want to inquire about bursary or funding opportunities if you could get the application done with as soon as possible.

**Section 7: Accommodation**

The principle of supply and demand makes it very difficult to secure formal accommodation. ‘Formal’ here meaning accommodation such in ‘TuksDorp’ that relates particularly to postgraduate and international students. See this link:

http://web.up.ac.za/res.asp?ipkCategoryID=3475

Candidates from universities with whom UP has exchange student programmes are preferred. Students coming from the ranks of UP are also preferred.

For general accommodation:

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=20
http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryId=2930#stay

**Section 8: Additional links**

General information on postgraduate studies at UP

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=7313
http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=16101&subid=16101&ipklookid=1

Information related to international students

http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=92
Yearbook information relating to all the faculties

- [http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=1797&sub=1&parentid=33&subid=16101&ipklookid=1](http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=1797&sub=1&parentid=33&subid=16101&ipklookid=1)

This document is also available from my website. From there you can contact me or subscribe to stay up to date with developments.

- [http://www.elmopienaar.com/masters-ma-or-doctorate-phd-degree-in-practical-theology-focus-on-organisational-studies/](http://www.elmopienaar.com/masters-ma-or-doctorate-phd-degree-in-practical-theology-focus-on-organisational-studies/)

## Section 9: Questions

These are some of the questions that I have been asked:

**Are these courses professionally relevant?**
Since these courses prize ‘interdisciplinary inquiry’ and ‘practice orientation’ they are relevant to professional life. The onus rests with the student, however, to demonstrate the student’s expertise in his or her work environment towards furthering his or her professional career. On successful completion I will, in my capacity as supervisor furnishes you a document that verifies the course work component. For this reason, even though in some instances the course work is not a University requirement, it is important for me that you commit to it.

**How is Practical Theology different than Religious Studies?**
Practical Theology encourages participation and personal connection. It is per excellence an interdisciplinary field, such as the case with Organisation Development. Religious Studies are coincidently not strictly speaking a theological endeavour. It involves a focus ‘on’ and not a focus ‘from.’

**Are these courses about preaching the gospel or converting people?**
The aim of Practical Theology as an academic discipline is not on converting people. This is even less so the case considering our focus being organisational studies. While personal aspects of our stories do significantly come to the fore it also holds true for students from other religious persuasions.

**Will these degrees help me in my church?**
I can confirm this gladly. However, our focus is not the church or any other religious group. Our primary audience is the public arena, and at that, organisations not, congregations... although some would say that congregations are also organisations.

## Section 10: Short introduction to Dr. Elmo Pienaar

Dr. Elmo Pienaar is a ‘fellow’ of the University of Pretoria and in this capacity a member of the Department of Practical Theology with the Faculty of Theology. Running parallel to the fellowship he has also been awarded a commonwealth executive MBA scholarship.
He obtained his MA & PhD in Practical Theology (2003 and 2005). He is the director and facilitator of two continuing education courses, namely, the Advanced Course in Personal and Corporate Coaching and Leadership & Management – The narrative way.

He served for a while on the COMENSA* ethics committee (* Coaching and Mentoring South Africa) and is a current committee member of the South African chapter of the IAF (International Association of Facilitators). He is one of the official peer mentors for ministers from the Eastern Transvaal synod of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Dr. Elmo Pienaar has had significant involvement in both the ministry and the business environment. He is the founding member and owner of several entrepreneurial companies and a founding director of a recently formed company ‘Telling Outcomes’ that focuses on Organisational Culture.

He enjoys journeying with people and families from time to time in his private practice in coaching and counselling. Nothing gives him as much pleasure as being an involved father for his two sons Estiaan and Luan, aged 5 and 3.

**Closing**

Good luck for this important decision. I hope to see you soon. You are welcome to contact me on +27 (0)82 410 7645 or subscribe to my website at [www.elmopienaar.com](http://www.elmopienaar.com) (from where you can also email me)

For specialised administrative assistance:

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<td>+27 (0)12 420 6347</td>
<td><a href="mailto:doris.mokgokolo@up.ac.za">doris.mokgokolo@up.ac.za</a></td>
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