



GTAC LAUNCHES BURSARY PROGRAMME FOR MASTERS IN ECONOMICS



Public Economics
Winter School 2017

2017 sees the first intake into GTAC's annual bursary and internship programme for students taking a Master's in economics. Part of GTAC's public economics capacity building initiative, the bursary programme aims to attract young economists to public economics, and to the public service as a career.



Shahid Khan

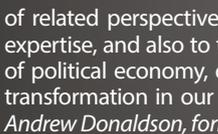
"Our public economics capacity building initiative is one of GTAC's flagship initiatives. Within it, the graduate bursary programme is designed to address, specifically, the current skills gap in public policy and public economics." *Shahid Khan, Acting Head of GTAC*



Andrew Donaldson & Michael Sachs

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"The potential for growing the public economics capacity building initiative lies in its strategic partnerships, locally and internationally. The initiative will be implemented in partnership with participating South African universities. And there is interest from Oxford University, for instance, and the Ottawa School of Governance, to strengthen existing partnerships with GTAC." *Subethri Naidoo, Head of GTAC Strategy, Management and Communications*



Andrew Donaldson, former Acting Head of GTAC

"In welcoming our first group of graduate bursary holders, GTAC is not just affirming that public economics has to be taken seriously, we are also signalling that it is time to hear from the next generation of South Africa's economists. Public policy relies on three central advisory pillars—law, economics and science. And in each of these great spheres there is room for many fields of special expertise, sometimes very narrowly and precisely construed. But in economics, there is also the complexity of integrative and society-wide challenges—and the need to draw on history, social theory, financial analysis and a diversity of related perspectives. Our hope is to contribute to a range of specialist areas of economic expertise, and also to that larger project of promoting public discourse and the understanding of political economy, development and social change. This is an opportunity for renewal and transformation in our academies, in the National Treasury and in South African public policy." *Andrew Donaldson, former Acting Head of GTAC*

"A solid public finance system needs a strong foundation in a community of well trained professionals committed to public service and the values of our Constitution. GTAC's bursary programme helps build this community." *Michael Sachs, Deputy Director General, Budget Office*

GTAC's bursary programme complements Treasury's other bursary, internship and skills development programmes. National Treasury bursaries and internships are available to students in a wide range of fields, including accounting, computer science, human resources management, social policy, and many others. The GTAC bursaries are only for post-graduate economics students, and their curriculum must combine coursework and a research project in public economics specifically.



Dondo Mogajane

"I welcome this first cadre of GTAC bursary holders to the Treasury family. I am confident that they will bring value to Treasury and the public sector more generally through their hard work with us." *Dondo Mogajane, Deputy Director General, Public Finance*

"The GTAC graduate bursary programme is a valuable way to get young people to think of the National Treasury as a possible career option." *Julia de Bruyn, Chief Director, Public Finance*

"This is a fantastic initiative—giving bright economics graduates this opportunity through such a rigorous selection process bodes very well for the future." *Ian Stuart, Chief Director, Budget Office*

"The National Treasury of the future will be shaped by who we appoint now and in the near future. A graduate programme to show our best young economics graduates and post-graduates that public finance offers many opportunities for self development and making a difference in the lives of our people is therefore not only essential but critical." *Wendy Fanoë, Chief Director, Intergovernmental Relations*

A WORD FROM OUR DONORS



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GTAC's bursary programme is supported by Global Affairs Canada, which leads the Canadian government's international development and humanitarian assistance.

"We have been impressed with the public economics training programme, and it is great to see South Africa's public service continuing to attract top talent. Strong public economics is essential to achieving Canada and South Africa's shared objective of supporting inclusive economic growth and reducing inequality in South Africa. We are proud to partner with the National Treasury and GTAC to support this programme." Julie Shouldice, Head of Cooperation at the Canadian High Commission in South Africa

MEET THE STUDENTS

Cassandra Dunstan, MCom, University of the Witwatersrand

Cassandra chose economics over marketing for her Honours degree, though she had them both as a double major. She classifies herself a philanthropist, and believes that economics can help society, the less fortunate in particular. Her research was on the demand and supply side determinants of food security in a sample of eight countries, looking at access and availability. "The knowledge base on the determinants of food security is limited and not common," says Cassandra, which is what prompted her investigations. She is still refining her Master's question, but it will be on food security. "It is a humanitarian crisis that over 700 million people do not have access to nutritious food while roughly 1.3 billion tonnes of food is either lost or wasted every year." Cassandra hopes her research will make South Africans more aware of the first Millennium Development Goal—which is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. "The National Treasury and GTAC is the perfect place to nurture my desire to make a positive contribution to society."



Singita Rikhotso, MCom, University of the Witwatersrand

The applicability and relevance of economics in people's day to day lives is what made Singita want to study further after her undergraduate degree in economic science. Her Honours research was on the determinants of financial inclusion. "Africa is lagging behind when it comes to financial inclusion," says Singita. "Finance has great potential to eliminate prevalent inequalities." Her Master's research is likely to examine the possibility of increasing income tax while maintaining efficiency. She is interested in understanding the extent to which South Africa can rely on a progressive tax system. "I am passionate about achieving efficiency and equity as well as eliminating socioeconomic discrepancies." Singita sees the public sector as the most rewarding way she can contribute to society and make a difference. "I believe that public economics can be done right to have a positive impact in the lives of individuals and communities, and ultimately the whole nation—and I want to be part of that."



Valentia Lerato Monaisa, MPhil Industrial Policy, University of Johannesburg

Valentia is a feminist with a passion for economics, social justice and public service. "My work ethic was instilled in me by my hardworking mother," she says. Valentia's Honours research assessed whether or not corporatocracy had influenced the carbon tax policy reform in South Africa. "I chose this question because it speaks to the integrity of democracy, public institutions and policy makers. Identifying influence is important because it allows us to manage it and ensure sovereignty in our country's governance." Her Master's research is in industrial policy from a gender perspective. "Industrial policy in South Africa is gender neutral, but neutral doesn't always translate into fairness." Valentia believes that gender inequality in South Africa does not get as much attention as it should. "Young, educated and talented people like myself need to be in the public sector to find solutions for the many issues South Africa faces. Working for the public sector will allow me to use my skills in ways that benefit a large proportion of our population."

Asanda Ntunta, MCom, University of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch University

“Working for the Treasury has been my dream,” says Asanda, “and the bursary takes me a step closer to that dream.” Asanda wants her economics and other skills to benefit society as a whole, hence her choice of the public sector to kickstart her career. But also, she says: “I have discovered that there are more opportunities in the public sector for a young, aspiring economist like me compared to the private sector.” Asanda chose economics for her Honours degree because she believes economics knowledge can be applied in very practical ways. She was motivated by a lecturer to pursue public economics in particular. Her Honours research looked at equity and affordability in healthcare in post-apartheid South Africa. “The South African government is spending a higher proportion of GDP on healthcare compared to other middle income countries, but we’re not getting the desired healthcare outcomes.” Asanda took part in the health reform and social security theme at last year’s Winter School. This fired her interest further, and her Master’s research will be on user satisfaction in the healthcare system. “If the challenges in healthcare can be overcome, many other areas will be positively impacted—directly and indirectly.”



Thulebona Mhlanga, MA Politics, University of Johannesburg

“I am intrigued by policy—the impact that good or bad policy can have on people’s lives.” Thule’s Honours dissertation explored South Africa’s land reform policy and its impact on the national economy, asking questions about policy changes that might yield better results for the land redistribution system. While working for the BRICS desk, Thule was fascinated by member states’ idea of establishing a BRICS credit rating agency as an alternative to the current big five. Her Master’s research will explore the prospects of such a credit rating agency for African countries and how it will improve the credibility of the BRICS formation. “My vision is to see Africa integrate into a powerful region that can extract and leverage on its resources using its global partnerships and trade relations.” Thule wants to contribute to changing the perception of public servants and the public sector. “Growing up, I looked up to public servants that changed the dynamics and the history of their countries. Role models such as Minister Gordhan and the former Public Protector have made me yearn to serve this country with courage and integrity.”



Natalie Ballantine, MCom, Stellenbosch University

“I cannot look at the world and not see the applicability of economics and get excited about how it can be used,” says Natalie. Her Honours research examined the impact that chronic poverty has on the growth of a child, and was based in an informal settlement near Stellenbosch. Natalie wants to continue this work, perhaps looking at what the characteristics are of households that are able to transition out of chronic poverty. “If in the long run I can be doing research and making decisions that impact communities, I will know that my degree has been worth it. I am looking forward to being exposed to people with a country on their hearts when they make decisions.”



Julius Pain, MCom, University of Pretoria

Julius seized the opportunity that an Honours degree provides for a curious individual like himself to think creatively and share ideas on controversial topics. It is this creative thinking that led to his Honours research on whether firms in the South African labour market have above normal bargaining power when determining wages. How firms determine where to establish their production facilities could serve as the basis for his Master’s research question. “I assume that at some stage firms will find it cheaper to move their production facilities from cities to small towns close to their main markets. What might be the consequent economic influence on small towns?” Julius believes research like this could help to better formulate economic policy. And that working in the public sector will provide him with the opportunity to work on projects that could make a difference to the lives of all South Africans. “In the private sector, the end goal is profits. In the public sector, improving the lives of others is the end goal.”

MEET THE MENTORS

Each bursary holder will have a mentor in Treasury. Here is what the mentors have to say to the students.

Catherine MacLeod, Economic Policy

“Economic policy allows me to combine two of my favourite things: figuring out how things work and the chance to make things happen. My team’s work gives us the chance to influence and better the lives of ordinary South Africans. Working at National Treasury is what you are willing to make it. We have a relatively flexible process and hierarchy—so if you are driven, you can take the work far. We are often given very high levels of responsibility at an early stage. This is a huge growth opportunity—even when it can feel a bit daunting.”



Hayley Reynolds, Tax Policy

“Our Deputy Director General, Ismail Momoniat, always tells us: ‘Your career is too important to leave to someone else.’ This is important. I began my career as an intern in a unit I quickly discovered was not dealing with what I was passionate about. If you happen to be placed in an area that is not aligned to what you imagined, explore your options. Find out about other divisions, find out where you would be best placed to learn and contribute. Don’t be afraid to take on new roles and responsibilities that may even scare you—that is how you will grow.”



Mbali Buthelezi, Public Finance

“Public Finance deals with all aspects of resource mobilisation and allocations, as well as expenditure management in government. I have been part of the Treasury since my first year at university as one of the bursary students. When I graduated, I came to work here as an intern; and I’ve continued to make my way up the ranks. There are many opportunities in Treasury, but you need hard work and determination—that is the culture of the organisation. We as your mentors are here to offer you support in your Master’s research, but also any other support you may need to ensure that you don’t walk this road alone.”



Mpho Legote, Tax Policy

“Within tax policy, my area of focus is on indirect taxes, which is particularly interesting as it is mostly about behavioural issues. How can one use the tax instrument to discourage or provide incentives for a particular behaviour? I joined National Treasury in 2007 as an intern. Within six months I became a budget analyst. A year later, I was a senior economist. Five years later, I was appointed a director. My advice is: show dedication to your work, take the initiative (ask questions), share your ideas (your input is valuable), and commit to your self-development.”



Steven Kenyon, Intergovernmental Relations

“In IGR we work across a very broad range of policy areas. We deal with difficult policy questions and difficult stakeholders. Focusing on the issues rather than the politics and the people is more productive. If you are patient and persistent you can make big changes through your work in National Treasury. The organisation provides an environment in which junior staff can gain exposure and experience. And hard work and talent tend to be recognised and rewarded. This sets you up for opportunities within the Treasury and outside.”



Trinish Padayachee, Fiscal Policy Analysis

“The role of fiscal policy is to manage government’s finances in a manner that fulfils government’s redistributive role in the economy. The work requires problem solving skills, and there is a lot of exposure to other Treasury units. When I joined the National Treasury in 2009, I benefitted from a similar mentorship initiative that made my transition into the institution much easier. For many of us, like you, Treasury has been our very first job, and I can relate to how simultaneously scary and exciting that may be. I’ve now been here long enough to have the tools to mentor and guide you, but not so long that I’ve forgotten what it’s like to be in your shoes.”



Vukile Davidson, Financial Sector Policy

“In the Financial Sector Policy unit, I have the opportunity to contribute to setting the terms of how the financial sector will operate, domestically, regionally and internationally. Moreover, working on policies to mitigate the effects of a financial crisis requires one to imagine the world not as it exists, but as it could be. This conceptual creativity is challenging and rewarding. I left the banking sector because of my desire to do something I felt was an important contribution to society. Having been here for five years, I am—ironically—better placed to return to that sector than if I’d stayed. However, the nature of your work at Treasury makes it difficult to leave.”



Elements of the GTAC bursary programme



Sanitha Naidoo

The programme offers a maximum of 10 bursaries every year to South African graduates with Honours degrees in economics to study for a Master's degree in economics at any South African university. The current bursary is R150,000 per year for two years. Apart from the funding for their degrees, bursary holders are supported by GTAC and Treasury in many other ways.

Vacation work

Bursary holders will likely be given vacation work in Treasury while they are studying.

"The success of the bursary programme will depend on how well we can integrate their vacation work stints into our core business and expose them to all aspects of work life in the various divisions (from the routine to more exciting tasks)." Julia de Bruyn, Chief Director, Public Finance

"The vacation work during my academic breaks will provide a foundation for my two-year internship, helping me to get familiar with the processes and work of GTAC and Treasury." Asanda

Internships

After graduation, bursary holders will be eligible for a two-year internship in National Treasury or possibly in provincial Treasuries.

"In the internship we will have the opportunity firsthand to learn how the different Treasury directorates work and how they interact with one another." Julius

"I am excited to experience economics hands-on. I am eager to be part of an institution that is at the forefront of improving the welfare of South Africans citizens." Cassandra

"I will get first hand training and experience. Working at the Treasury has been one of my aspirations." Valentia

Individual mentoring

Students and mentors have recently been matched based on profiling and observation. Their first face to face meeting is expected to take place in the week before the Winter School. GTAC will provide a training workshop for the mentors before that meeting.

"Our emphasis on the relationships is that they are individual and organic. The main roles of a mentor are to give advice, open up networks, and help the mentee navigate a large system. How these particular mentor-mentee relationships are going to work will evolve." Sanitha Naidoo, GTAC Senior Advisor, Public Economics Capacity Building.

Mentors are likely to have limited input in the first academic year of a student's Master's. They will be able to guide students to refine their research questions from a practitioner's point of view, and lead students to data sources. In the second year, mentors will provide introductions, networking and support in Treasury.

Group support

"GTAC will be providing a safe, nurturing space for the students as a group," says Sanitha Naidoo. "We'll bring them together probably twice a year. They'll be learning soft skills like managing conflict, giving and receiving feedback, and having courageous conversations. And they'll be working on a group project for the 2017 Winter School. We are also exploring a digital platform for them to interact on."

A rigorous selection process

Invitations to apply for the bursary were distributed through economics departments to all South African universities offering post-graduate degrees in economics. GTAC received 56 applications by the August 2016 deadline. 26 students were shortlisted for the next round, which comprised a writing assignment based on Chapter 3 of the National Development Plan and technical competency questions in interviews. The final round was an interview with four GTAC and Treasury panellists, and comprised primarily technical competency questions. The final selection of the six top students was made through a scoring process. To confirm and conclude the process, the students underwent psychometric assessments to verify their professional styles and personal values.

Towards the end of the process, GTAC was asked to interview Thule Mhlanga, a Treasury intern in International Relations Regional Economic Policy, who has an Honours in Public Management and Governance. Thule specifically wanted to benefit from the additional support that the bursary programme will provide. GTAC has gladly accepted her into the group without the financial support of a bursary.

THE WINTER SCHOOL



Public Economics
Winter School 2017



Duncan Pieterse, National Treasury
Academic Coordinator, 2017 Winter School



GTAC's Winter School is another important component of its public economics capacity building initiative. At last year's inaugural Winter School, over 150 students and young economists had mutually fruitful engagements with National Treasury staff, academics and international public policy experts; and government departments used the space to engage with each other. The media took the Winter School presentations and discussions as an opportunity to cast a spotlight on some aspects of economic policy, public economics and development challenges in South Africa and globally.

For the 2017 Winter School, GTAC is looking at ways to embed the very intensive learning that happens over the five days of the school and to increase informal networking opportunities, among other responses to the feedback from 2016. Another priority is to build GTAC's partnerships with academic and research institutions. The longer term objective is that the Winter School curriculum becomes an accredited module in Honours economics programmes in South African universities.

"The Winter School is the perfect environment for exchanging ideas. I am looking forward to valuable discussions on important policy issues from an exciting mix of individuals." Julius

"I am expecting to see more young students who aspire to being economists in the public sector, to network with the different delegates, to get to know the research gaps in my field—and most importantly to be inspired." Asanda

"The Winter School will inspire young and upcoming economists to join the public sector. It will bring forth ideas on how to solve some of South Africa's pressing issues, including the tertiary education crisis and the youth unemployment rate." Cassandra

"At the Winter School, I would like get more educated on public economics as I am not an economics major. This will help me carve my path to becoming an international political economist." Thule

"I will be networking with industry experts, academics and other students. I am hoping for an addition to the themes this year, maybe focusing on climate change and the green economy?" Valentia

"I am looking forward to being exposed to more of what the Treasury actually does. I hope to increase my understanding of public economics from the best practitioners in the field." Singita

Watch the video on the 2016 Winter School: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30Dd4REWxME&feature=youtu.be>

GTAC is preparing to accept more than 300 delegates to the 2017 Winter School, following the same rigorous application process as last year.

Applications for the 2017 Winter School will open during April. Application forms will be available on the GTAC website, and alerts will be sent to post-graduate economics coordinators at all universities. The application forms will provide detailed requirements and stipulate the selection criteria.

Applications for 2018 GTAC bursary

The closing date for applications for 2018 is 21 August 2017. Applicants should submit to PEGraduateprogram@gtac.gov.za the following: a copy of their ID, an up to date CV, certified copies of their full academic record and proof of academic degrees, and three reference letters (two academic and one personal). To qualify to apply, applicants must meet the following criteria: be a South African citizen, hold an Honours degree in economics (by March 2018), have achieved at least 65% in their Honours degree, be fluent in English, and be interested in pursuing a career in the public service.