

# BACHELOR OF HEALTH SCIENCES HONOURS IN BIOETHICS AND HEALTH LAW

2025 Brochure

**Steve Biko**  
Centre for Bioethics

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Bachelor of Health Sciences Honours (BHSc Hons) programme in Bioethics and Health Law consists of two parts. Part 1 comprises the coursework component, which entails the successful completion of 4 taught courses. Part 2 comprises the research essay component, which consists of research methods and a written research essay of 8 000 words in length. Part 1 constitutes 50% of the qualification and Part 2 the remaining 50%.

Successful completion of the coursework and research essay will lead to the degree (qualification) of BHSc Hons in the field of Bioethics and Health Law.

## PROGRAMME DURATION

One year, full-time only.

## DESCRIPTION OF COURSEWORK

The coursework component is designed as an introductory module in Bioethics and Health Law and aims to enable the achievement of outcomes related to the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, attitudes and academic skills development of students as bioethicists generally.

The coursework component consists of four courses:

1. Introduction to Bioethics
2. Introduction to Health Law
3. Practical and Applied Health Ethics
4. Ethics in Research

Class attendance is compulsory. Students who miss more than 20% of any teaching block will be required to de-register.

Assessment will take the form of a combination of formal, on-site examination and some take-home assignments which must be submitted by the specified submission due dates. On-site exams will be scheduled during the teaching blocks.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSES

Introduction to Bioethics [1 week teaching block. Attendance required Monday to Friday, full days]

The Introduction to Bioethics block is designed to enable students to analyse and evaluate issues in bioethics within the context of a solid ethical framework. Major theoretical, non-theoretical and other ways of viewing the world will be taught. The course intends to provide a foundational understanding of the relationship between concepts, logic & argumentation and fallacies of reasoning that may then be applied across all other units as well as in daily life.

Introduction to Health Law [1 week teaching block. Attendance required Monday to Friday, full days]

The Introduction to Health Law block covers sources of South African Law, the Constitution, statutory and common law in the context of health. Criminal, civil and family law and their interaction with health will be explored. The National Health Act will be discussed as well as the amendments to the Medicines Control Act. International law in relation to health is included in this unit. Specific issues such as medical malpractice, tort laws, legal aspects of relevant health law and topics such as informed consent, confidentiality and privacy will be addressed. This unit aims to provide a solid legal grounding for decision-making in the area of health law.

Practical and Applied Health Ethics [Sessions 3 times a week for 4 weeks]

The Practical and Applied, Health Ethics block, addresses a number of important issues in bioethics and health law critically and in-depth. Four to five important issues will be focused on each year relating to ethical and medico-legal issues in clinical contexts, reproductive health, policy and public health, resource allocation, genetics, health and human rights, environmental bioethics and others. Students will learn how to apply the ethical theories, ethical and legal principles, and their critical and analytical skills learnt in the foundations units to specific ethical and medico-legal questions.

Ethics in Research [Sessions 3 times a week for 4 weeks]

The Ethics in Research block explains in depth a number of topical ethical issues in research ethics, including what constitutes unethical research, standards of care in a study, authorship guidelines and plagiarism. The role and modus operandi of Research Ethics Committees are outlined. Finally, clearly articulated standards of good clinical practice in research relevant to local realities and contexts are provided. These include obtaining valid informed consent considering specific subgroups, standards of care for trial participants, access to study medications following completion of a clinical trial, issues pertaining to incentives affecting researchers and participants, releasing and publishing research results and the implementation of research findings.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH ESSAY

The Research Essay module is intended to assist students in implementing the principles and methods of research in Bioethics and Health Law and to enable them to develop competence as independent researchers in Bioethics and Health Law by training them in independently producing a research essay. It will cover research projects of an essentially normative and legal nature.

The course will prepare them to produce an 8000-word research essay under the supervision of Centre staff.

Research Methods [2 full day teaching block – full attendance required]

This course will provide students with rigorous training in independently designing, implementing and evaluating research, including research design, sampling procedures and data analysis. It will cover both research projects of an essentially normative and legal nature, as well as empirical projects (qualitative or quantitative) that include a normative and legal element. Students will be trained in every part of the research cycle (question formulation; literature review; use of secondary sources; primary and secondary argumentation; ethical and legal analysis; methodology to collect and analyse primary data), including the writing of reports. In terms of values and attitudes, the course aims to instill in students a commitment to ethical research. The course will prepare them to produce a research proposal suitable to their project, and ultimately a research essay.

COURSE DATES (dates are subject to change; contact the Centre for final dates)

Introduction to Bioethics: February 03, 2025 to February 07, 2025 [full week attendance]

Ethics in Research: February 17, 2025 to March 21, 2025 [thrice weekly]

Introduction to Health Law: April 07, 2025 to April 11, 2025 [full week attendance]

Practical and Applied Health Ethics: April 29, 2025 to June 06, 2025 [thrice weekly]

Research Methods: June 23, 2025 to 24, 2025 [full 2 days attendance]

**Teaching Venue:** PVT Health Sciences Building, Parktown, or as announced.

INTERESTED CANDIDATES FOR 2025 ACADEMIC SESSION ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO APPLY TO THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES POSTGRADUATE OFFICE BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE: September 30, 2024

**Admission requirements:** For admission into this course, a minimum average of no less than 70% in the final year courses of your Bachelors degree or highest degree obtained is required. Depending on applicant numbers, this threshold may be raised to up to 75%, but no higher. Graduates with health sciences, sciences, humanities and/or law backgrounds will be given preference.

*Please note that meeting the minimum entry requirements does not guarantee students a place in this programme.*

▪ Postgraduate Office

(For both South African and foreign nationals PLEASE contact this office for application forms and fees)

2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Phillip V Tobias Building, 29 Princess of Wales Street Parktown, 2193 Johannesburg.

Tel: + 27 11 717 2076

Website: <https://www.wits.ac.za/health/faculty-services/research-and-postgraduate-offices/postgraduate-studies/>

For more information about the Centre and the Bachelor of Health Sciences Honours programme in Bioethics and Health Law course, contact:

▪ **Course Coordinator:**

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