The BCom Focus Area in Information Systems Management

Information Systems Management (ISM) is the subject in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences which unlocks the world of Informatics (often also known as Information Systems) for BCom students. ISM may be included in a number of BCom configurations from the second year onward. Students thus have the opportunity to study Informatics in relation to the challenges posed by the business world.

The Focus Area in ISM within the context of the BCom degree takes this further. The Focus Area offers students the opportunity to lay a foundation during their undergraduate BCom studies for a professional qualification in Informatics. Just like lawyers, medics and engineers, informaticists are not professionally fully qualified after 3 years. One reaches that level only after completion of an Honours degree. The Focus Area, apart from accommodating general BCom interests in the field of Informatics, sets students up for professionally orientated postgraduate studies in the field.

For what does the 3-year Focus Area in ISM prepare me?

The 3 year Focus Area in ISM establishes a platform of generic knowledge of Informatics. On this platform students may build in one of two ways. They may continue with postgraduate studies with the aim of qualifying at a professional level. Or, they may specialise in alternative academic subjects or business applications in which Informatics plays an essential role, utilising their generic knowledge of Informatics to enhance their primary field of interest. Examples of such areas are: Logistics, Quantitative management, Human Resources, Supply Chain Management, Marketing and Organisational Communications.

As for the professional dimension, because informatics impact fundamentally on the way we live, work and play, there is no end to the number and variety of work opportunities for informatics professionals. Given the variety, and the fact that new work configurations emerge daily, it is customary to refer to them simply as “knowledge workers”. Recently a few more descriptive concepts to describe knowledge work as a profession have entered our vocabulary. The Americans like the concept “Software Engineer”. In 2004 they published a professional description, known as SWEBOK. You may read more about this on http://www.swebok.org. Since then, and with more international involvement, the concept of “Business Analyst” has been introduced. In this case too, a ‘body of knowledge’ exists. Read more on http://www.theiiba.org/am. Lately the notion of “Business Intelligence” has become popular.

There is a good reason why a single name for the profession is not self evident. Unlike other professions, an informatics professional hardly ever repeats the same routine. In every new context new parameters apply. As a consequence every system is designed uniquely. Yet, a modern economy is totally dependent on information systems. Thus you will find an informatics presence everywhere, from the small cafe on the corner to the biggest corporate, but the actual work done varies to such an extent that a single job description is impossible.

It is, thus, neither feasible nor desirable to train students for clearly identified employment settings. What the Focus Area does, however, is to mediate such generic knowledge (of hard, soft and organisational systems) that students will be competent to analyse every situation with confidence, and to apply their own initiative in a demonstrably professional way.

The two largest ‘consumers’ of information systems are big corporates and the state. In Africa we find ourselves at present at the dawn of an era in which informatics needs and opportunities will grow quite fast in both spheres. Up to now companies have not fully explored the benefits of sophisticated systems, and the general infrastructure was below par. From mid-2009, however, the picture changes quickly – and many new doors open for those with solid knowledge of Informatics and a healthy imagination.
The structure of the Focus Area

Please note an important entry requirement: at least 40% in Mathematics in the NSC.

**Basic Level (first year) (120 credits)**

**Compulsory Subjects**

**Electives**
One of the following:
- Afrikaans and Dutch; English Studies; French; Geo-environmental Science; German; Industrial Psychology; Philosophy; Political Science; Public and Development Management; Sociology; Supply Chain Management; Xhosa

**Intermediary Level (second year) (at least 128 credits)**

**Compulsory Subjects**
Information Systems Management 212(8), 224(16), 262(8), 254(16)

**Electives**
At least 80 credits from three of:
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management / Financial Management 214(16) and Investment Management / Logistics Management / Marketing Management / Quantitative Management

**Advanced Level (third year) (at least 120 credits)**

**Compulsory Subjects**
Information Systems Management 314(18), 324(18), 364(18), 354(18)

**Electives**
- Modules from the following to make up at least 120 credits
  - Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management / Financial Management / Investment Management / Logistics Management / Marketing Management / Quantitative Management

**Specialist Level (Honours year) (120 credits)**

**Industry Training**
Selected modules of the ORACLE CURRICULUM
Selected modules of the SAP UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME

**Academic Topics**
- The Knowledge Economy
- Theory of Organisation
- Decision-making
- Systems Theory and Cybernetics
- Advanced Web Design with PHP
- Internet Technology and Web 2
- Advanced Database design
- Systems Analysis and Design with UML
- Project Management
- Advanced JAVA
- Computer systems security
- Computer Forensics
- Data mining
- Artificial Intelligence
- Knowledge Management
- Visualisation
- Electronic Business and Government

**Research**
A systems design project (if possible in conjunction with industry)
An academic research project emanating in grand essay

**How do I continue with Post-Graduate studies?**
A major in ISM leads to the Honours, Masters and Doctorate in Socio-Informatics. To continue with the Honours a minimum average of 60% in the third year, and 65% in ISM is required. Read more: [www.sun.ac.za/Informatics/Postgraduate](http://www.sun.ac.za/Informatics/Postgraduate)

**How else do I have access to Informatics at SU?**
Read also the brochure: The Programme in Socio-Informatics or go to: [www.sun.ac.za/Socio-Informatics](http://www.sun.ac.za/Socio-Informatics)