

Higher Education Training & Development  
And  
The University Teaching & Learning Office

Cordially invites you to a Seminar

on

**Exceptional Academic Achievement in South  
African Higher Education:  
An emerging socio-political object?**

by

**Dr Nicholas Munro**

School of Applied Human Sciences,  
College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal

**DATE:** Friday, 11 April 2014

**TIME:** 16h00 – 18h00

**VENUE:** LT 6, Main Tutorial Building, Edgewood  
Campus, UKZN

**RSVP Essential**

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**Dr Nicholas Munro**

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**Dr Nicholas Munro** obtained his Bachelor of Social Science degree, Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) degree, and Master of Social Science (Counselling Psychology) degree from the University of Natal in the 1990s. After registering as a counselling psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, he worked in the student counselling and development field between 2000 and 2011, first for the Durban University of Technology, and then for the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Nicholas is currently employed as a lecturer in the School of Applied Human Sciences (Discipline of Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). He has teaching and research interests in the areas of student learning, academic achievement, and undergraduate education. He recently completed a PhD in higher education, the thesis from this forming the basis of the seminar.

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The seminar is structured according to six moves, and is located in the deficit discourses that seem to pervade conceptualisations of student learning and academic (under)achievement in contemporary South African higher education. These deficit discourses are located in a historical-contextual framework which establishes the phenomenon of exceptional academic achievement as an emerging area of inquiry in higher education studies. Whereas the first and second moves in the seminar establish a historical-contextual and theoretical base for investigating exceptional academic achievement in South Africa, the sixth (culminating) move presents an object and outcome where a fragile and homologous space between enabling and constraining environments is theorised. The study informing this seminar was grounded in a sociocultural framework (specifically cultural-historical activity theory) - a framework proposed to enable the dialectical representation of the individual and the collective within the phenomenon of exceptional academic achievement. The third move of the seminar outlines the critical dialectical mixed methodology that was drawn upon in the study. The fourth move presents the data driven findings from the study, while the fifth move presents three interconnected systems of exceptional academic activity, these being constructed and analysed as an outcome of the dialogue between the data, the research participants, the researcher, and the theoretical frame. The seminar concludes with a socio-political object of exceptional academic achievement in South African higher education that is conceptualised as persistently unjust, however prospectively hopeful.