



UCT'S DESIGN THINKING PIONEERS

Over 30 postgraduate UCT students from different academic disciplines are about to embark on a voyage of exploration which will equip them with complex problem solving skills for a world of fast paced innovation and change.

The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design Thinking at UCT launches its design thinking foundation and Advanced Programmes for 2017 on Monday 6 March at the institute's colourful headquarters at the UCT Graduate School of Business' Campus on the Cape Town Waterfront. The semester long courses take place twice a year, two days a week, over a period of 12 weeks.

Design thinking is a methodology - originally mooted in the 1960's - that has its roots in the education of industrial designers. It enables innovation and new outcomes in all fields of human endeavour from tackling poverty to improving government services to developing new human-centric products, systems and services for business and society at large. Founding director of the d-school, Richard Perez explains that the training in design thinking "provides tools, a process, and ultimately a mind-set, that equips practitioners to collaboratively develop human-centric solutions to challenges in contemporary contexts that are dynamic and complex."

When implemented in daily life and professional work, the design thinking tools, methodology and mind-set with which students leave the training, help them to develop a creative approach to

problem framing and solving, and contribute to a culture of innovation.

The d-school was founded in Cape Town in August 2015 with funding and academic support from Professor Dr Hasso Plattner - co-founder of global business software company SAP AG and will officially launch at the Graduate School of Business Breakwater campus on March 9 this year. Professor Plattner initiated and funded the first academic programmes in design thinking at Stanford University in the USA in 2005 and at Potsdam in Germany in 2009. This brought academic rigour to design-led innovation practice.

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Last year the UCT d-school piloted the first academic programme of its kind in Africa with a group of pioneering students who learnt how to creatively confront real world challenges posed by project partners from the corporate, public, NGOs and start-up sectors. UCT's d-school, as it is commonly referred to, is the only dedicated design thinking academic institution on the continent which offers academic training and capacitation in design thinking to university postgraduate students, leaders in government, NGOs and the private sector.

This year's group of foundation and advanced programme students come from a diverse array of countries and backgrounds, ranging in age from 28 years old to 47 years old from South Africa, the Congo, Japan, Italy, Portugal, Botswana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Spain, Egypt and Ghana, Tanzania. Their academic disciplines are even more diverse traversing Educational Technology, City Planning, Law, Social Policy, Economic History, Digital Forensics, Politics, Health, Geomatics, Neuroscience, Architecture, Geology, Geography, Journalism, Business Sport, Chemical Engineering, History and Marketing.

Dr Rael Futerman, programme manager at the d-school says this diversity of cultural and disciplinary backgrounds at the South African d-school makes for rich collaboration which is of great benefit to project partners and students.

For Dr Keneilwe Munyai, another d-school programme manager, the highlight of the course is observing the transformation from when students arrive in the programme to when they leave.

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