



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR A POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP AT THE D-SCHOOL AFRIKA, UCT

The University of Cape Town invites applications for a Postdoctoral Fellowship based at the Hasso Plattner School for Design Thinking – the [d-school Afrika](#). The d-school's main purpose is to positively impact society, and to support participants in our programmes *create positive, impactful change within their spheres of influence*. The d-school offers a range of programmes to both UCT staff and students, as well as to organisations in civil society, the public sector and the corporate sector.

The school is in a period of growth with a particular focus on developing a relevant and contextualized practice, located in place. Included in this is the goal to build a transdisciplinary and robust research and development programme which will be led by staff based in the d-school's Learning and Discovery Lab – 'the Lab'.

The Lab stream of the d-school focuses on 3 clusters of activities:

- *Knowledge building and research development.*
- *Creating opportunities for dialogue and reflective praxis.*
- *Building learning and development collaborations with a wide range of partners.*

The postdoctoral fellow will report to the Research Manager of the Lab. They will also be mentored and supervised by the Lab's Lead researcher and other researchers and staff where relevant. The Fellow will be linked to several research and development projects driven through the Learning Lab.

Research Area: Design Complexity & Wicked Problems in Afrika

Wicked Problems in Afrika explore how design can engage complex, interconnected challenges that are shaped not only by multiple systems and stakeholders, but also by particular historical, political and colonial legacies. It frames design as a relational and adaptive practice within complexity - one that makes relationships visible, brings diverse knowledges into dialogue, and enables iterative intervention - while critically questioning whose knowledge and assumptions shape how problems are defined and addressed.

The expected activities and contributions include, but they are not limited to:

- Research design, data gathering, and analysis.
- Demonstrating a growing understanding of the design thinking field and the role of research in the work.
- Contextualizing design thinking from an Afrikan perspective
- Participating in d-school meetings, activities, and gatherings.
- Handling administration work linked to the projects where appropriate.
- Collaborating with the d-school's streams e.g. programmes and shared services.
- Representing the d-school where appropriate on campus and more widely
- Meeting with the Research Manager and Lead Researcher at regular intervals.
- Contributing to d-school teaching programmes when appropriate (through teaching and research).
- Contributing to building d-school partnerships related to the research area.
- Active participation in d-school programmes.

Requirements:

A PhD in the Humanities is preferred, although not a requirement for the position. Additional postdoctoral experience is desirable; however, as per the regulations for postdoctoral scholarships, the candidate needs to be within five years from the date of award of their PhD for the duration of their PDRF at the d-school. They may not have held substantial a full-time permanent academic or professional post award of PhD. Applicants need to show an awareness of multi/trans-disciplinary research and development. Knowledge of design thinking or associated fields will be an added advantage. The research work is mainly qualitative, but it is preferable that applicants have experience of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The appointment is for a two-year period, subject to satisfactory progress. The current PDRF funding R474,144 per annum tax free. The appointment must comply with the University's approved policies, procedures, and practices for the postdoctoral sector, and is subject to the rules and approval of the University of Cape Town. We are limiting the application to South Africans and looking at the designated groups of black (broadly defined) and female candidates.

Interested candidates must send:

- a CV,
- a letter of motivation stating why we should consider you for the post including what relevant experience you bring, max 2 pages,
- two letters of recommendation with contactable references

We do realise that design thinking is a specialist field and that there might not be a lot of experience at this level; applicants thus need to make a strong case for what they will bring to the role. Please compile the above mentioned documents into 1 combined PDF file to Sipe Mfenyana (Sipe.Mfenyana@uct.ac.za) by 16 October 2026. All candidates will be notified of their application outcome. Please use the following format in the subject line: YOURNAME, D-SCHOOL Postdoc 2027. Any queries can be sent to Sipe.Mfenyana@uct.ac.za

The expected starting date of the Fellowship is mid-January 2027 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The University of Cape Town reserves the right to:

- *_disqualify ineligible, incomplete and/or inappropriate applications.*
- *_change the conditions of award or to make no awards at all.*