

MPHIL IN AFRICAN AND SOUTHERN URBAN STUDIES

Dual Master's degree with the Urban School of Sciences Po, Paris

1st cohort: Jan 2027



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



AFRICAN CENTRE *for* CITIES

OVERVIEW

The African Center for Cities (UCT) and the Urban School of Sciences Po (Paris), two highly rated institutions in Urban Studies worldwide, are launching a new dual master's degree program to begin in January 2027.

The dual master's draws on synergies between the two universities in cutting-edge interdisciplinary training in urban governance and urban policy. It provides students with the enriching experience and on-the-ground training in two dynamic global cities. Students spend their first semester in Cape Town, the second year in Paris, and return to Cape Town for the final semester of the programme.

The African Centre for Cities (ACC) is a leading interdisciplinary research hub focused on the dynamics of urbanisation in Africa. Bridging urban studies, planning, and development practice, the ACC addresses key issues such as sustainability, urban inequality, infrastructure, and governance. It is internationally recognised for producing engaged scholarship that combines critical theory with applied, grounded research. Deeply rooted in the African urban context, the ACC fosters innovative thinking on inclusive urban futures and actively collaborates with city governments, civil society, and global institutions to influence policy and practice.

The Urban School of Sciences Po is committed to training professionals who will imagine, lead, and manage the future transformation of cities. It is renowned for its emphasis on urban governance, comparative political economy, and urban policy analysis. The Urban School is committed to an interdisciplinary

approach to social sciences (including politics, sociology, economics, law, history, urban planning, and geography) in the context of urban transformation, climate crisis, smart cities, housing, public space, infrastructure, and mobility.

The Master in African and Southern Urban Studies offers a unique opportunity to engage critically with the dynamics of urbanisation from the perspective of the Global South, with a strong focus on research. The programme combines rigorous academic training and applied learning in Cape Town and Paris — two urban laboratories facing complex development challenges.

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The programme provides advanced interdisciplinary training in Southern urban theory and everyday urban life. Drawing on grounded, context-rich research and the vibrant intellectual environment of both institutions, students are placed at the intersection

of theory, policy, and practice. They also have the opportunity to pursue fieldwork, internships, or capstone projects during their time in Cape Town and Paris.

Students in the programme will acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand the dynamics of urban governance, spatial transformation, and development policy through a comparative and context-sensitive lens, grounded in the realities of the Global South.
- Contribute to the design and implementation of inclusive, just, and sustainable urban policies, informed by critical theory and practical experience in two distinct metropolitan environments.

ACADEMIC JOURNEY

Students begin the programme in Cape Town in January with the first semester of the **Master of Philosophy in Urban Studies specialising in Southern Urbanism** at the African Center for Cities. At Sciences Po, students will be enrolled in the first year of the two-year Master's programme "Urban Governance, Policy and Planning", "**Governing the Large Metropolis**" stream, offered at the Urban School. Finally, during the last semester, students return to UCT to complete both coursework and a research component, culminating in the submission of a master's dissertation. The courses from this final semester can be followed online, to allow students to deep-dive in field work.

During their group projects and learning expedition (at Sciences Po) and research (at UCT), students will work, both individually and collectively, in real professional situations. This professional immersion will encompass diverse sectors, including urban planning, urban services, transportation, real estate, housing, sustainable development, and smart cities, among others.

Providing all course requirements have been met, students will graduate after two years with both master's degrees, one granted by UCT and the other by Sciences Po.

COURSE STRUCTURE

SEMESTER 1 AT UCT	SEMESTER 2 AT SCIENCES PO	SEMESTER 3 AT SCIENCES PO	SEMESTER 4 AT UCT
Jan - Jul 2027	Aug - Dec 2027	Jan - Jun 2028	Jul - Nov 2028
Urban Everyday (APG5108F) 20 credits	<u>Governing the Large Metropolis coursework</u>	<u>Governing the Large Metropolis coursework</u>	Curating Urban Regulation (APG5089S) 20 credits
Urban Theory (APG5109F) 20 credits	Research track	Research track	Urban Studies Minor Dissertation (END5130W) 60 credits
City Research Studio (APG509XF) 15 credits	Co-supervision across UCT & Sciences Po	Co-supervision across UCT & Sciences Po	

AFTER THE MPhil

Continue from MPhil to PhD

The programme has been designed to act as a bridgehead for those who wish to continue with a PhD and academic career. The MPhil provides both the theoretical and methodological tools essential for PhD-level work.

Continue from MPhil to practice

Your field of professional expertise augmented by the theoretical and methodological foundation obtained through the programme can be applied in a wide range of opportunities for research, professional practise and consulting in urban related fields.



CORE COURSES

CITY RESEARCH STUDIO (CRS)

The City Research Studio is the cornerstone of the MPhil programme. It is a year-long compulsory course that runs alongside the core and elective modules. CRS is designed as a learning context in which you will experiment with multiple forms of urban knowledge, expertise and research methodologies beyond the conventional classroom setting. It is a laboratory space where the students and faculty will learn to walk, see, smell, touch, embrace, explore and reimagine the city through intimate engagements with the aim of exploring and understanding the city.

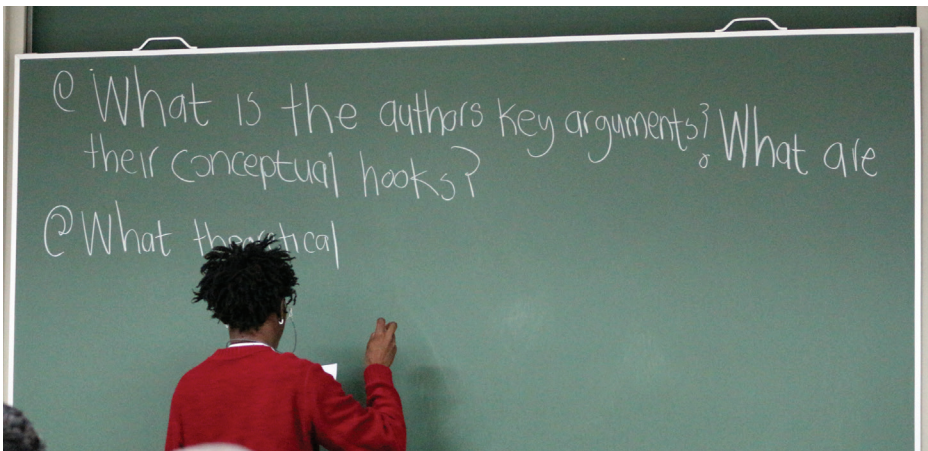
URBAN EVERYDAY

The Urban Everyday approaches urban studies through literature grounded in everyday practices central to the dynamism that shapes African and Southern city

contexts and their transformations. The course reflects on the productive tensions in and between structural forces (the state, capital etc.) with ordinary forms of agency (citizenship, collective movements, and ordinary acts of encroachment) and thinks through the ways the everyday locates and disrupts theorising Southern cities.

URBAN THEORY

The course sets out with the contention that urban theory is in crisis because it is not able to account for the diversity and innate complexity of urban worlds, especially as it manifests in the global South. The empirical basis of this contention is briefly explored before students are engaged to learn the craft of theoretical analysis and construction. Key urban theory works from the traditional canon and the Southern counterpoint will be explored to equip



students to read critically, and ultimately be able to locate contemporary urban theory debates in a geo-historical context and place their own positionality within such a conceptual landscape.

CURATING URBAN REGULATION

The central question of this course is this: What does critical policy look like from the vantage point of African cities? It seeks to offer answers to this question through a design thinking methodology that investigates space and politics and what alternative modes of regulation are possible (given, for instance, constant technological innovation) and necessary (given the multiple and intersecting crises

of access to water, food, housing and other basic needs). Students will be equipped to map, interpret and devise regulatory modes and practices of urban intervention that are capable of addressing the most pressing problems of our cities and transforming the places where people live.

THE MINOR DISSERTATION

The pinnacle of the MPhil is the minor dissertation. To graduate, students must complete a minor dissertation of 25 000 words maximum. It is the chance to conduct original research, engage in fieldwork, put methods into action and experience the satisfaction of producing original writing under supervision.

FACULTY TEAM



PROF EDGAR PIETERSE

Edgar Pieterse is the founding director of the ACC. He teaches City Research Studio (CRS) 3 and Curating Urban Regulation



DR ANNA SELMECZI

Anna Selmeczi is a senior lecturer at ACC and convenor of the MPhil in Southern Urbanism. She teaches CRS1 and Urban Theory



PROF NANCY ODENDAAL

Nancy Odendaal currently holds the University of Basel-UCT Professorship in Urban Studies. She teaches CRS2



GEETIKA ANAND

Geetika Anand is a doctoral researcher in the EGS department and an ACC Research Associate. She co-teaches CRS1



DR LAURA NKULA-WENZ

Laura Nkula-Wenz is a lecturer and researcher at ACC. She teaches the Urban Everyday course



DR NOBUKHOSI NGWENYA

Nobukhosi Ngwenya is an ACC Research Associate. She co-teaches CRS3 and Curating Urban Regulation



APPLICATIONS

REQUIREMENTS

This dual degree programme is open to candidates worldwide with a diversity of backgrounds (Bachelors in Social Sciences, Architecture, Engineering, etc.). It is intended for aspiring professionals interested in public or private sector careers with an international perspective.

HOW TO APPLY

Candidates to these dual degree programs apply directly on the [Sciences Po website](#) (online application only).

CONTACTS

African Centre for Cities Course Convenor

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Urban School of Sciences Po Academic Advisor

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NB DATES TO DIARISE

01 October 2025:
Applications open

29 March 2026:
Application deadline

January 2027:
Classes start in Cape Town

Postgraduate Funding Office
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International Academic Programmes Office

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+ 27 (0)21 650 2822 / 3740

ABOUT AFRICAN CENTRE FOR CITIES

Established in 2008 and rooted at the University of Cape Town, African Centre for Cities (ACC) is one of the leading knowledge centres conducting meaningful research on how to understand, recast and address pressing urban crises z particularly on the African continent.

Since most urban challenges — for example, food security, climate change adaptation, economic inclusion, cultural vitality and tolerance — are inherently interdisciplinary and spatially layered, ACC nurtures the co-production of knowledge favouring and cultivating critical Southern perspectives.

Through its research, ACC develops imaginative policy discourses and practices to promote vibrant, just and sustainable cities. This purpose has become all the more pertinent with the adoption of Agenda 2063 at a pan-African level, which chimes with the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development. Thus, a lot of the research and capacity development work seeks to foreground the urban dimensions of these new political horizons, embedded in an epistemic commitment to Southern solidarity and theory building.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN STEERING COMMITTEE

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