Master of Urban Design

PROGRAMME INFORMATION 2026

UCT school of architecture, planning & geomatics

FOR PROGRAMME INFORMATION:

- Located with the Post Graduate programme of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics, at the University of Cape Town.
- +180 credit course Level 9 NQF
- 1 year full time *or* 2 year extended programme
- Interdisciplinary in nature
- Design-research (min 75% studio orientated) taught programme
- Positive impact on the 'design of African cities'
- Socially aware urban designers capable of practicing in diverse places across the African continent and in global cities.

FOR APPLICATIONS:

Minimum admission requirements:
See UCT Handbooks and search for Engineering and Built Envrionment Postgraduate Handbook. The minimum requirements for entry into the Master of Urban Design Degree Programme are a **SAQA NQF Level 8 Certificate**, minimum Honours or Master level graduates in **Architecture, Landscape Architecture, or Planning** from any recognised institution approved by Senate, with a preferred min GPA 65%. Any application will be reviewed on portfolio submission/interview. MUD is a taught design degree and students are expected to be on-campus in Cape Town.

Application requirements:
The process of application is for entry to MUD is via UCT online application with Plan Code APG12; Programme Code EM030.
The online application will direct students to submit the following:

1. **Degree certificate and transcript:** A digital copy of your latest university transcript and degree certificate(s). *You will be requested to courier a certified copy of your original university results transcript. Please be sure to send this to the Admissions Office.*
2. **Curriculum vitae:** this should include personal details, interests, travel or work experience and all degree information at an international level (and status of degree).
3. **Letter of motivation:** submit a statement in your own words (approximately 750 words) of why you are attracted to the urban design field at UCT, and what you hope to do with your qualification. This letter, with the portfolio, provides an important opportunity for you to give the assessment panel an understanding of who you are. It is advisable to undertake some research on urban design about the profession and to reflect on this in your letter of motivation.
4. **A portfolio of design and creative work:** Portfolio requirements are less than 20Mb in size and in PDF - no page limit, but be strategic and clear about your role on the project. The key elements are to show a design ability / competency, and you are encouraged to show design process, development and thinking behind your creative work; your personal approach to design / urban context, including your inspiration (in photography, art, design, sketch book etc). It is necessary to include your responsibility of design projects and/or design role within projects in the portfolio, dates or timeframes worked on the project and potential outcomes / lessons. It will be important to show hand-drawn and digital (GIS, Illustrator, AutoCAD, sketch-up etc.) drawings and an approach to 3-dimensional modelling and 3-dimensional spatial thinking. You can include your own academic writing that has been evaluated at your previous institution of study/ relevant research work or material that clearly illustrates your approach/interest (please do not send the whole thesis, but a selection of strategic writing that is relevant). This portfolio will be assessed by a Selection Committee.
5. **SAQA Certificate** for international students, showing minimum NQF level 8 for entry.
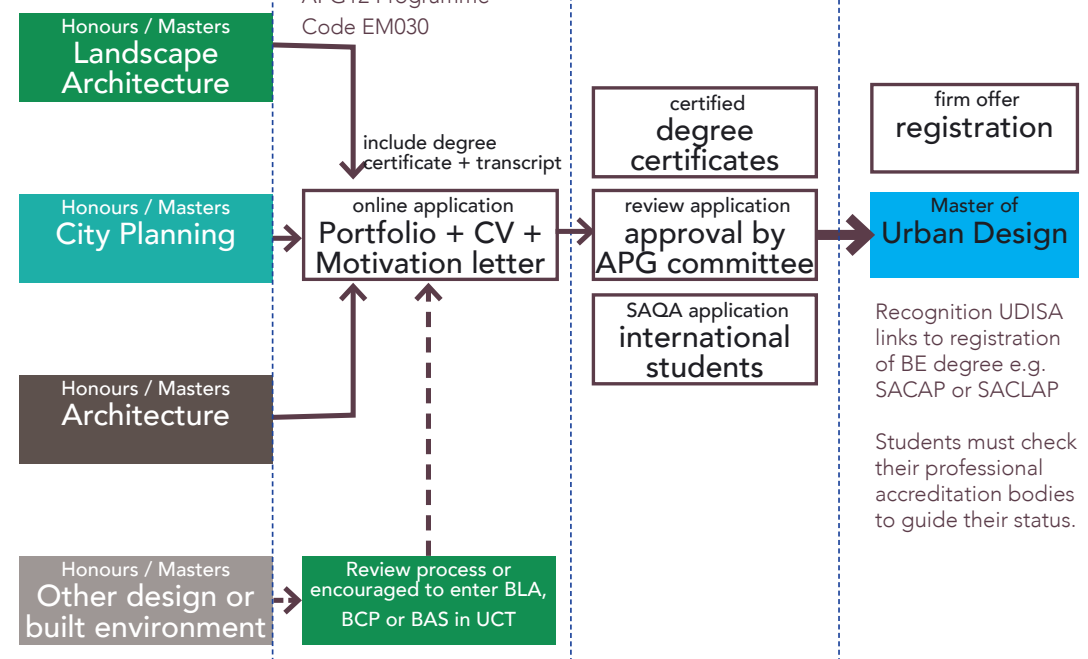
PG honours/masters

- Honours / Masters **Landscape Architecture**
- Honours / Masters **City Planning**
- Honours / Masters **Architecture**
- Honours / Masters **Other design or built environment**

Online Application
APG12 Programme Code EM030

include degree certificate + transcript

online application **Portfolio + CV + Motivation letter**

Review process or encouraged to enter BLA, BCP or BAS in UCT

Review Application

certified **degree certificates**

review application **approval by APG committee**

SAQA application **international students**

MUD Programme

firm offer **registration**

Master of **Urban Design**

Recognition UDISA links to registration of BE degree e.g. SACAP or SACLAP

Students must check their professional accreditation bodies to guide their status.

For non-design related applications:

Please take note that applicants holding non-design, but related Bachelor (Honours) degrees (NQF Level 8), will be required to undertake a **design related degree** in APG e.g. Honours in Landscape Architecture (BLA) or Planning (BCP) or Architecture (BAS) with preferred exit degree minimum 65% GPA/interview.

The Bridging Courses offered in APG are seen as additional design courses for students entering MUD, but are no longer an option for entry to MUD with no NQF level 8 design degree background.

Master of
Urban Design

**PROGRAMME
INFORMATION
2026**

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION:

General application information:
Mr Mcebisi Mdluli on email: mcebisi.mdluli@uct.ac.za

For specific course information, contact the Course Convener:
Dr Kathryn Ewing on email: kathryn.ewing@uct.ac.za

For more information see the APG website:
http://www.apg.uct.ac.za/apg/urban-design

UCT
school of
architecture,
planning &
geomatics

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

The deadline for international applicants is 31 August 2026.

In addition to the above, if students have not attended a South African University prior to application, you must supply a SAQA NQF Level Confirmation Certificate to validate your previous degree / university is a minimum NQF Level 8. You must include this certificate in your portfolio package.

Successful international applicants are strongly advised to apply for a study visa immediately after receiving an offer to avoid delays. International students must factor visa processing times (minimum 6 – 8 weeks) as well as International Student Clearance with the IAPO, within timelines for registration. International applicants are therefore strongly advised to submit completed applications well before 31 August to ensure registration for the following year. The International Programmes Office can be contacted via http://www.iapo.uct.ac.za/.

FOR FEES:

For more information regarding fees, please contact the Fees Offices on +27-21-650 2203 or email fnd-feeeng@uct.ac.za or see http://www.students.uct.ac.za/students/fees-funding/fees/handbook

FOR BURSARIES:

For more information please go to http://www.students.uct.ac.za/students/fees-funding/postgraduate-degree-funding/bursaries-scholarships/merit-awards and http://www.ilasa.co.za/study-opportunities/

MUD STAFF

Urban Design, Programme Convener:
Dr Kathryn Ewing kathryn.ewing@uct.ac.za

Urban Design part-time staff:
Hedwig Crooijmans-Lemmer, Janine Herholdt, Jani Truter, Leigh Maurtin, Lizelle Jackson

Urban Design Admin Support:
Mcebisi Mdluli mcebisi.mdluli@uct.ac.za

2026/2027* CALENDAR AND DATES:

Applicants should please take note the following dates:

01 April 2026	Online applications open
31 Aug 2026	International application deadline for study in 2027
30 Nov 2026	Local application deadline for study in 2027 (SA students only)
Jan 2027	Programme registration
Feb 2027	Programme orientation

all dates subject to change

APPLICATION CHECKLIST:

The following has been included in the online application:

- Digital certified copy of latest university results/transcripts and degree certificate(s)
- Updated CV
- Letter of motivation for urban design at UCT
- Portfolio - follow guidelines for review by committee
- International applicants **MUST** include a relevant SAQA certificate.

Please check your previous degree is an **NQF Level 8** to allow entry into MUD.

Master of Urban Design

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

UCT school of architecture, planning & geomatics

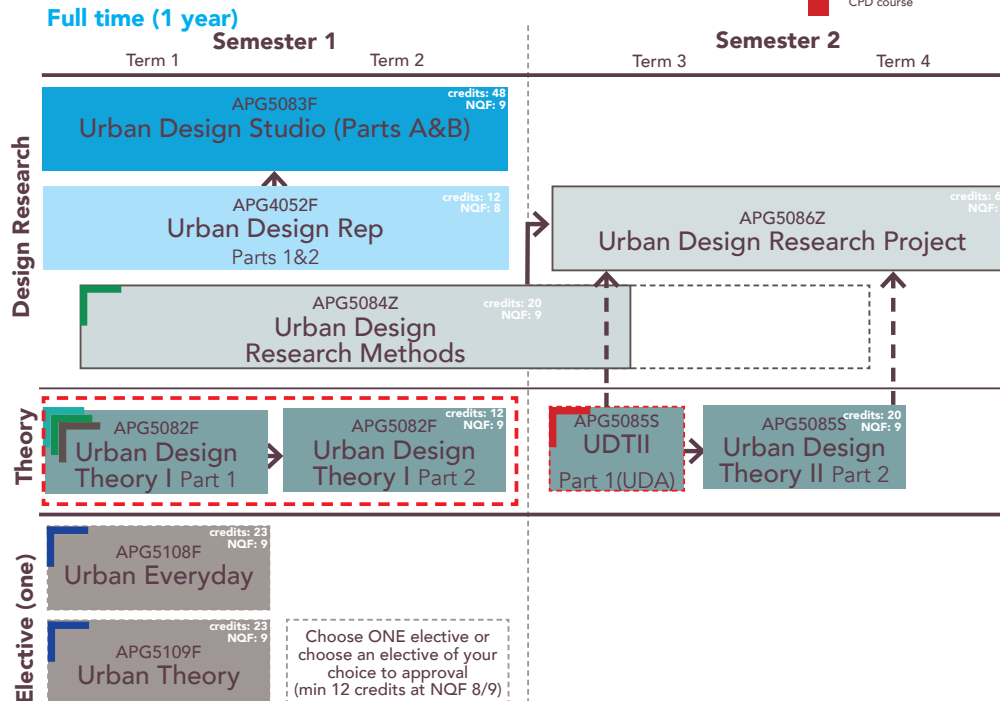University of Cape Town · Universiteit van Kaapstad

FOR PROGRAMME STRUCTURE:
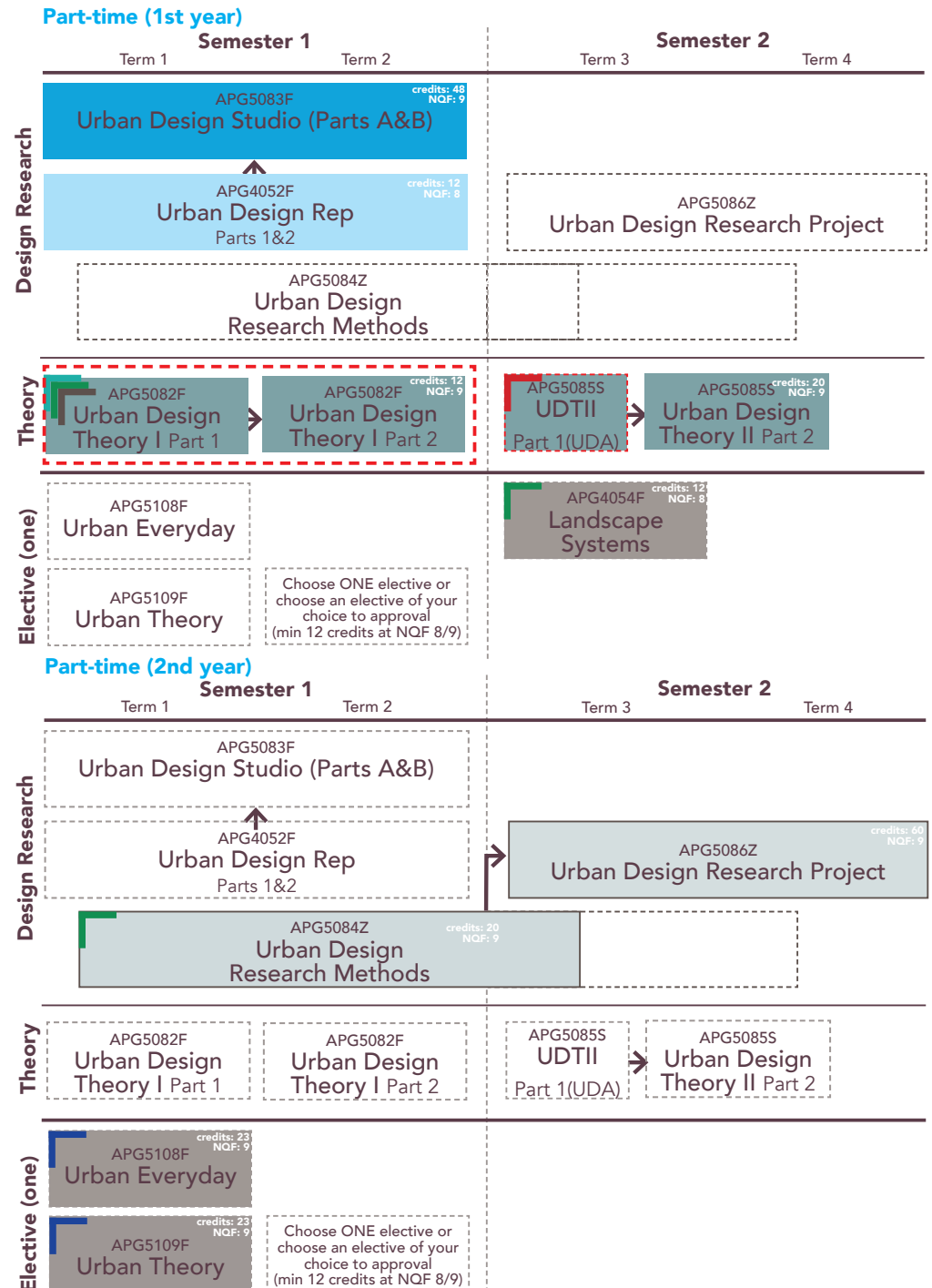
1 Full Time or 2 year Extended Programme:

The focus in the first semester is an integrated Urban Design Studio with Landscape Architecture and City Planning courses. Urban Design Representation is also conducted in the first semester. Urban Design Research Methods takes place in Semester 1 in order to guide the overarching Urban Design Research Project within Semester 2. Urban Design Theory I explores notions of theory and place-making in the global south, touching on historical references. Urban Design Theory II focuses on African cities. Each student must study an elective course.

Key:
- Urban Design students
- Landscape architecture students
- Planning students
- Architecture students
- African Centre for Cities
- CPD course

Part-time (1st year)

	Semester 1		Semester 2	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4

Design Research

APG5083F — Urban Design Studio (Parts A&B) — credits: 48, NQF: 9

APG4052F — Urban Design Rep — Parts 1&2 — credits: 12, NQF: 8

APG5086Z — Urban Design Research Project

APG5084Z — Urban Design Research Methods

Theory

APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 1 / APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 2 — credits: 12, NQF: 9

APG5085S — UDTII Part 1(UDA) / APG5085S — Urban Design Theory II Part 2 — credits: 20, NQF: 9

Elective (one)

APG5108F — Urban Everyday

APG5109F — Urban Theory

Choose ONE elective or choose an elective of your choice to approval (min 12 credits at NQF 8/9)

APG4054F — Landscape Systems — credits: 12, NQF: 8

Full time (1 year)

	Semester 1		Semester 2	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4

Design Research

APG5083F — Urban Design Studio (Parts A&B) — credits: 48, NQF: 9

APG4052F — Urban Design Rep — Parts 1&2 — credits: 12, NQF: 8

APG5086Z — Urban Design Research Project — credits: 60, NQF: 9

APG5084Z — Urban Design Research Methods — credits: 20, NQF: 9

Theory

APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 1 / APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 2 — credits: 12, NQF: 9

APG5085S — UDTII Part 1(UDA) / APG5085S — Urban Design Theory II Part 2 — credits: 20, NQF: 9

Elective (one)

APG5108F — Urban Everyday — credits: 23, NQF: 9

APG5109F — Urban Theory — credits: 23, NQF: 9

Choose ONE elective or choose an elective of your choice to approval (min 12 credits at NQF 8/9)

required credits: @ NQF 8 24
@ NQF 9 156
MUD total credits: 180

Part-time (2nd year)

	Semester 1		Semester 2	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4

Design Research

APG5083F — Urban Design Studio (Parts A&B)

APG4052F — Urban Design Rep — Parts 1&2

APG5086Z — Urban Design Research Project — credits: 60, NQF: 9

APG5084Z — Urban Design Research Methods — credits: 20, NQF: 9

Theory

APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 1 / APG5082F — Urban Design Theory I Part 2

APG5085S — UDTII Part 1(UDA) / APG5085S — Urban Design Theory II Part 2

Elective (one)

APG5108F — Urban Everyday — credits: 23, NQF: 9

APG5109F — Urban Theory — credits: 23, NQF: 9

Choose ONE elective or choose an elective of your choice to approval (min 12 credits at NQF 8/9)

APG 4052F: UD Representation

How do we represent?

...left-over, divided city space;

...activated space "in-between"

SEMESTER 1: Representation matters

COURSE OUTLINE: 12 credits, Level NQF 8

Urban Design Representation is conducted in the first semester. The course aims to develop analytical and presentation skills for use in the urban design studio by exploring detailed representation of the studio project. The objectives are:

- To learn representation of the city through sketching, drawing / mapping using digital tools, including GIS and Adobe (or similar) programmes and other tools of representation, including film, photography and 3-dimensional model building (digital and real).
- To illustrate how urban design demonstrates transformation of the built environment across different scales from metro to neighbourhood to street.

Master of Urban Design — Electives

SEMESTER 1 or 2: Elective Options

COURSE OUTLINE: 12 credits, NQF 8/9

A selection of recommended electives are provided. However alternative electives within other faculties can be reviewed by the Programme Convener for approval. (minimum 12 credits, level 8)*

Code	Elective
APG4052Z	**LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS** (Landscape Architecture) (PART TIME ONLY)
APG5108F	**THE URBAN EVERYDAY** (African Centre for Cities - ACC)
APG5109F	**URBAN THEORY** (African Centre for Cities - ACC)
other*	***APPROVED ELECTIVE OF YOUR CHOICE**

APG 5082F: UD Theory I / ACD

SEMESTER 1: Re-thinking City Design

COURSE OUTLINE: 12 credits, Level NQF 8/9

URBAN DESIGN THEORY / ASPECTS OF CITY DESIGN is conducted in the first semester. The course is about reviewing the typology of cities and urban design through theory and case studies. It aims to investigate the value of city design through considering performance at a local neighbourhood area / precinct scale. A case study located within the Western Cape is used as part of the workshop series co-design process.

PART 1		+	PART 2	
CITIES, SOCIETY & SPACE	A journey to understand urban design process & urban divisions (past & present)		**INTERSECTION OF CITY DESIGN**	The application of theory and revealing city design making and processes through drawing and writing
People City	the human dimension		CITY DRAWN	Interpret, analyse and explore
Ecological City	natural systems			
Changing City	catalytic projects & PT			(Group work) Develop a series of posters
Safe City	neighbourhood upgrading		CITY IMAGINED	Critique, comment and write
[In]formal City	design for social housing			(Individual work) Write a 1 page review poster or reflective essay
Just City	spatial equity & design			

APG 5085S: UD Theory II

SEMESTER 2: Urban Design Africa

COURSE OUTLINE: 20 credits, NQF 9

Urban Design Theory II is conducted in the 2nd Semester. This course relates to critical readings ad discussion focused on urban theory in the local African context and the intersection between urban design and the social agenda. Debates are intended to revolve around themes of the everyday African city: informality, public space, governance and partnerships, inequity and marginalisation and participatory processes.

PART 1		+	PART 2	
urban[design] **AFRICA**	A block week course to understand divisions in two (or more) comparable African cities		*design [urban]* **AFRICA**	a mini-design project to address theoretical application & place-making at the local scale
LILONGWE	peri-urban land & informality		Ecology	[dis]connected systems
WINDHOEK	infrastructure & public space		Heritage	spatial [in]justice
ADDIS ABABA	housing settlements		Housing	[human] settlements
DAR-ES-SALAAM	neighbourhood transformation		Transport	[re]thinking accessibility
MAPUTO	the politics of space		Urban form	spatial [re]structuring

SEMESTER 1: Resilient STUDIO - A

COURSE OUTLINE: 48 credits (A&B), Level NQF 9

Urban Design Studio is conducted in Semester 1. The studio is deeply grounded in the lived experience and everyday reality, giving an evidence-based understanding of how cities work and can be transformed over time. The urban studio focuses the relationship between spatial systems and the social, cultural and political context. Community representatives are part of the engaged action learning process that allows for the work to be solution-based and action-orientated. Knowledge is co-produced through iterative and deliberate learning activities, such as urban walks + social & emotional mapping and urban talks + co-design workshops.

Urban Design Studio PART A (40%) is conducted in the first term and focuses on contextual analysis and the development of design principles.

COMMUNITY LED

GREEN AND BLUE SYSTEMS

COMMUNITY LED AND MUNICIPALITY

SOCIAL PUBLIC SPACE USING INSTITUTIONS

MUNICIPALITY AND PARTNER

CIRCULATION

reference: Chloe Seymour, 2025

APG 5083F:

UD Studio
(PARTS A&B)

SEMESTER 1: Resilient STUDIO - B

COURSE OUTLINE: same as Term 1

Urban Design Studio PART B (60%) continues from the contextual analysis in Term 1 and is conducted in the second term. It focuses on concept and design development, and the creation of an urban design framework, precinct designs and the understanding of 3-dimensional urban design guidelines.

* Studio A & B are subject to change in context and content, depending on year by year funding, research projects and resources.

1 SOCIAL HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SPACE

2 RECREATION AND AGRICULTURAL EDGE

reference: Chloe Seymour, 2025

APG 5084Z:

UD Research Methods

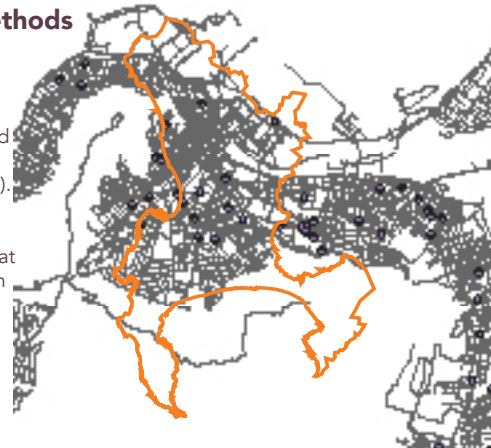### SEMESTER 1: Urban Design Research Methods (UDRM)

COURSE OUTLINE: 20 credits, NQF 9

The course aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills to develop a research proposal (end of Semester 1) for the Urban Design Research Project (UDRP) (Semester 2). This research proposal should include:
- A **clear statement of the research** questions, aims, rationale, including context, background information that will guide the UDRP - upfront engagement and research will be important prior to the mid-term break;
- An **overview of literature and the theoretical framework** for the UDRP;
- **Methodologies** to be used for the UDRP;
- Explanation and connection to **relevance of the topic** relative to urban design;
- A draft **bibliography**;
- A **clear timetable** for your research;
- Completion of the required UCT **ethics forms**.

What makes a good research question?
... link to theory, precedent or practical examples, context specific, city design...

APG 5086Z:

UD Research Project

SEMSETER 2: Urban Design Research Project (UDRP)

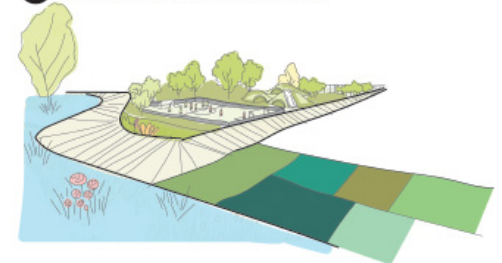**COURSE OUTLINE:** 60 Credits, NQF 9

Urban Design Research Project (mini dissertation) is conducted in Semester 2 and follow on from UDRM. The aim of the research project is to develop and demonstrate integrated research and urban design skills; identify and address a well-defined urban design issue or question in the context of a site; develop an ability to analyse design orientated research findings according to explicit criteria; and to present and support an urban design response to the issue/question raised through appropriate methods of Urban Design inquiry and representation.

The Research Project must be academically rigorous and make a strategic contribution to the discipline of urban design locally and in South Africa / internationally.