



ory and remembering of our senses

significance • values • conservation • adaptation • authenticity • policy  
preservation • restoration • development • change • consultation  
redress • place • memory • identity • heritage • culture

# Master of Philosophy in Conservation of the Built Environment



2025 Information Brochure



The MPhil in Conservation of the Built Environment is an exciting inter-disciplinary programme. The programme aims to equip graduates with a strong intellectual foundation, and the necessary professional skills, to work in the field of built environment conservation and in heritage resource management.

The programme is situated in a contemporary South African and global context, in which conservation practices intersect powerfully with the politics of spatial transformation, urban change, social justice and development. This requires a thorough technical and legal understanding of heritage resource management; but beyond this, the ability to engage critically with the relationships between conservation, heritage, transformation and sustainable futures.

The programme is designed for professionals working in the private sector, government and civil society. People whose work environment encounters the impacts of change: to the historic built and urban environment, to places of intangible heritage, and to cultural landscapes. It aims to enable graduates to practice effectively in the field, supported by a thorough understanding of contemporary debates and issues in heritage and conservation, the legal frameworks, and the critical and analytical tools that apply to the management of change. The programme teaches academic rigour in research and critical thinking, and practical application in communication, engagement and writing.

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme is structured over two years, designed to allow working professionals to combine work and study. It is composed of six course modules scheduled across 18 months (one each academic term) and concludes with a research project, in the form of a mini-dissertation, undertaken in the second semester of the second year. Each of the six course modules takes a particular focus, and begins with a five-day block intensive study week in Cape Town. This dynamic component includes lectures and seminars with leading academics, professionals and activists working in heritage, conservation and the built environment. Site visits provide a real-world opportunity to unpack and discuss the issues, complexities, nuance and contradictions that accompany heritage practice.

Each study week is followed by independent work, supported by regular online group and one-to-one sessions. The programme explicitly offers a space to bring individual work and experience into the learning process, and the opportunity to apply the theory learned to professional practice, heritage resource management, or further research.

# ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

## CAREER FIT

The programme is designed to suit working professionals and recent graduates looking to expand career opportunities:

- Extend existing knowledge-base and skill-set
- New and/or more specialised career path

### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

*Architect, Landscape Architect, Town Planner, Urban Designer, Archaeologist, Lawyer, Urban Geographer, Social Historian...*

### MANAGEMENT

*National, Provincial & Local Government, Heritage Estates, Museums, Public Sites...*

### ACADEMIA & EDUCATION

*Research, Teaching, Publication...*

### ADVOCACY

*NGO, Researcher, Special Interest, Activist...*

*Cover page images include student site visits to UCT, Salt River, Castle of Good Hope, District 6, Iziko Slave Lodge (2019-2024)*

# PROGRAMME CONTENT

## STRUCTURE (block release)

6 courses over 18 months; plus  
mini-dissertation over final 6 months

- 1 x course module per academic term
- Each course starts with a 5-day block week in Cape Town
- Includes independent work on course assignments

## YEAR 1: 4 courses

Semester 1 | Term 1

**INTRODUCTION TO CONSERVATION**

Semester 1 | Term 2

**CONSERVATION IN TRANSFORMATIVE CONTEXTS**

Semester 2 | Term 3: Centre for African Studies

**CRITICAL ISSUES IN HERITAGE STUDIES**

Semester 2 | Term 4

**WORKING WITH HERITAGE RESOURCES**

## YEAR 2: 2 courses + research project

Semester 1 | Term 1

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

Semester 1 | Term 2

**CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE**

Semester 2

**RESEARCH REPORT**

**Supervised mini-dissertation**

### **APG5080F Introduction to Conservation (20 credits)**

This is the foundation course introducing the theory and practice of conservation of the built environment. It reviews the origins and evolution—local and international—of the ideas that inform attitudes to conservation. It covers the major policies and legislative frameworks that shape current practice, and the complexities of heritage and conservation in postcolonial and decolonial contexts.

### **APG5074F Conservation in Transformative Contexts (20 credits)**

This course places the practice and theory of conservation in the context of transforming contemporary environments. It explores the relationships and tensions between conservation and future-oriented spatial and social change through a range of discourses and disciplines involved in conservation.

### **ASL5203S Critical Issues in Heritage Studies (Centre for African Studies) (24 credits)**

This course challenges fixed thinking about heritage and where it is located. Placing emphasis on power, culture and social relations, it draws attention to how heritage value is produced and negotiated, and aims to unsettle the assumptions about heritage that are often taken for granted.

### **APG5081S Working With Heritage Resources (20 credits)**

This course brings together the historical, legal and theoretical frameworks covered in the previous three modules to develop a hands-on understanding of how these shape conservation practice. It applies the ideas of critical assessment to real world heritage resources through practical case studies.

### **APG5078Z Research Methodologies (20 credits)**

This course guides the process of developing an academic research proposal for the mini-dissertation. Using qualitative research methodologies and the case-study approach of the social sciences, a research subject is selected, research questions are refined and methodological strategies worked out. The end product forms the basis for the Research Project of semester 2.

### **APG5077F Conservation and Development in Practice (20 credits)**

This course brings together the practical understanding and critical thinking learned in the previous courses, testing it in a real-world context. Approaches to balance development and conservation, identify heritage-based considerations, and apply legal frameworks are practiced. It also provides the opportunity for detailed analysis of the site, place or environment chosen for the mini-dissertation.

## APG5071S Research Project (60 credits)

Students undertake a supervised research project on a conservation-related topic selected in the Research Methodologies course, resulting in a 25 000-30 000 word mini-dissertation. This is nominally a second semester course, but students can begin work as soon as the research proposal is approved and ethics clearance received.

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The programme is multi-disciplinary, and welcomes applicants who have a four-year Bachelors or Honours degree (NQF level 8) in a relevant area of study. These include built environment disciplines such as architecture, planning and landscape architecture. Also the humanities, social sciences, arts, archaeology, law, urban geography and others. You may also apply if you have a three-year degree (NQF level 7) and five years' relevant work experience; or, in a special case, any other relevant qualifications or experience that qualify you for entry. Study is conducted in English and some fluency is essential. If you would like to apply but have questions, please contact the programme administrator or convenor.

## HOW TO APPLY

Complete the online application process at: <http://applyonline.uct.ac.za>

In making your programme selection, choose:

- Faculty: Engineering and Built Environment
- Masters: MPhil By Coursework and Dissertation (60 research 120 coursework)
- Programme: Conservation of the Built Environment (Programme Code: EMO27APG05)

Please attach the following documents with your application:

- Current CV
- Certified/stamped copies of your university degree/s (certificates or transcripts)
- Letter of motivation explaining the reasons for your interest in the MPhil CBE programme, what you hope to gain, and how you hope to apply it.

Applications for 2025 close on 30 November 2024  
Applications for international students close 31 August 2024

# YOUR UCT APPLICATION

## CONTACT INFO

Please contact us if you would like to apply, but need further information, or if you would like to talk to us in person about anything related to the programme or your application.

Programme administrator: Mcebisi Mdluli  
email: [mcebisi.mdluli@uct.ac.za](mailto:mcebisi.mdluli@uct.ac.za)  
Tel: +27(0)21 650 2374  
Programme convenor: Wendy Wilson  
email: [wendy.wilson@uct.ac.za](mailto:wendy.wilson@uct.ac.za)

## APPLICATION INFORMATION

[UCT Online Applications](#)

“How to” information: [Submit application](#)  
[2025 Directions for Postgraduate Applicants](#)

## LINKS TO UCT INFORMATION

[UCT main website](#)  
[UCT Architecture, Planning and Geomatics](#)  
[MPhil Conservation of the Built Environment](#)  
[UCT Applications, Fees & Funding](#)  
[UCT International Students Office](#)  
[MPhil CBE Facebook page](#)  
[MPhil CBE on Instagram](#)