

Launch of Africa's first design thinking institute

How do we design new ways of tackling poverty, new ways of innovating new products and services, new ways thinking about the stuff that bugs us, the stuff that really matters? These are the kinds of challenges that drive the creative pulse of The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design Thinking at UCT, commonly referred to as the d-school which officially launches at the university's graduate school of business Breakwater Campus in Cape Town on Thursday, March 9.

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The d-school was founded in Cape Town in August 2015 with funding and academic support from Professor Dr Hasso Plattner, cofounder of global business software company SAP AG. It is the first and only academic institution on the African continent which offers academic training and capacitation in design thinking to university postgraduate students and the private sector.

The speakers at the launch include Director of the UCT Graduate School of Business [Mills Soko](#); d-school director [Richard Perez](#); director of the Potsdam d-school [Uli Weinberg](#); and Professor [Mugendi M'Rithaa](#), professor of industrial design at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Professor Soko has a rich background in political economics as head of policy and legislative research in the National Council of Provinces. He is a research associate of both the South African Institute of International Affairs and the Institute for Global Dialogue.

Prior to his appointment to the d-school, Richard Perez spent three years as a director at the City of Cape Town where, he pioneered innovation as a strategy and management tool to advance the creation of effective human-centred development models. Before his city experience, Perez spent 10 years as a partner and director in XYZ industrial design. Perez is an industrial design engineering Masters-graduate from the Royal College of Arts in London, who also holds an engineering degree and a MBA from the University of Cape Town.

After 25 years of innovation work in the field of film and 3-D, of this - 13 years as professor at the University of Film in Babelsberg - Uli Weinberg leaped at the opportunity to visualise innovation in an even greater way as the director of the Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking in Potsdam.

Speaking at Berlin's social innovation conference, the [Vision Summit](#), about the future of society last month, Weinberg explained the evolution of design thinking in a nutshell: "From IQ to WeQ thinking," emphasizing the fundamental importance of creative collaboration across disciplines and cultures.

Dr Mugendi K. M'Rithaa is a Professor at the Department of Industrial Design, Faculty of Informatics and Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). Educated in Kenya, the USA, India and South Africa, he has a keen interest in socially responsible design with respect to majority world contexts.

- **Applications open for Semester 2: Foundation Programme in Design Thinking at d-school Afrika** 20 Jun 2025
- **Design Dialogues in-person event** 12 May 2025
- **How a human-centred design approach is changing STEM teaching** 6 May 2025
- **D-school Afrika at UCT launches 3 innovation programmes for students across Africa** 24 Apr 2025
- **Accessibility and growth mark innovation in 2024** 23 Jan 2025

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The Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at the University of Cape Town are the leaders of excellence in design-led thinking on the continent. We offer courses in design-led thinking with a focus on solving real-world problems for students, professionals and organisations.

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