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The Algorand Foundation partners with UCT to develop the UCT-Algorand Fintech Innovation Hub

The [Algorand Foundation](#) is partnering with the University of Cape Town to establish the *UCT-Algorand Fintech Innovation Hub* (the Hub). This initial five-year partnership is supported through the Algorand Foundation Grant Program with a USD 2.6 million (R37.5 million) grant and will support UCT in establishing, running and operating the Hub.

The innovation hub will have three pillars:

- Rigorous academic research on blockchain, central bank digital currencies, privacy, cyber security, and digital inclusion will make meaningful contributions on the forefront of current knowledge.
- Hands-on support for student-led startups with a uniquely African focus will help translate the latest academic research into non-commercial, open source projects and commercially viable startups contributing to the overall Algorand and fintech ecosystem.
- A thought leadership platform for ongoing communication with policy- and law makers and the financial services industry will accelerate multidisciplinary engagement.

The Hub at UCT is a pilot project for the Algorand Foundation's [Algorand Centre of Excellence Programme](#) which was launched in October 2021 with a budget of a total value of 100M Algo token for the next 10 years. The ACE programme invites proposals from multidisciplinary centres which advance research and support applied education in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space. In collaboration with faculty members from the School of Economics and the Departments of Computer Science, and Information Systems, the Hub will act as a catalyst for fintech innovation at UCT.

This exciting partnership will create a pilot for the Algorand Centre of Excellence programme at UCT within its School of Economics, housed within the Faculty of Commerce. UCT is home to the only dedicated Master's programme in Financial Technology in Africa.

UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng said: "The partnership with the Algorand Foundation is crucial in enabling UCT to continue striving to produce graduates who are not merely going to seek a place in the employment space but who are themselves going to create employment opportunities through the companies they are going to start. Furthermore, having an African focus as part of the three key pillars of the programme enhances UCT's endeavour to not only be the best in Africa but the best for the continent."

According to Jason Lee, Algorand Foundation COO, the grants programme serves as "the perfect platform and opportunity to support projects that will enrich the Algorand ecosystem and help provide education on the transformative power and opportunity that blockchain technology can offer everyone. Partnering with UCT supports our goal of global blockchain education, inclusion and participation which will help deliver tangible results in the areas of rigorous academic research, support for start-ups in Africa, and a thought leadership platform."

School of Economics Associate Professor Co-Pierre Georg, the Director of the Hub, explained: "The sustained success of our Master's in Financial Technology means that we are producing some of the country's most sought-after graduates. But the main goal of our programme is to enable students to start their own companies and we already had several startups successfully launching their journey from our programme. With the grant from the Algorand Foundation we can take this to the next level and create a truly transformative environment that empowers students to launch their entrepreneurial journey."

The Hub will also be the home for an extensive research programme on central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) in Africa.

"Over 80 central banks globally are currently investigating new forms of digital money, including the South African Reserve Bank and the Central Bank of Nigeria. The Algorand-UCT fintech innovation hub will accelerate our ongoing research in this area and advise government and private sector participants on how to best manage the digital transformation of our existing payments infrastructure. CBDCs are among the most exciting applications of blockchain technology and provide a huge opportunity for the continent," added Georg.

UCT is ranked as the leading research university in Africa, while Cape Town is one of the largest technology hubs in Africa with several well established fintech companies – in particular for remittances – and a thriving startup scene.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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