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UCT joins forces with French university to launch first dual degree programme in Africa

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has launched a groundbreaking collaborative dual degree programme with French university Sciences Po, marking a significant milestone in academic cooperation between Africa and Europe.

This innovative partnership will provide students with a unique opportunity to earn two Master's degrees – one from UCT and one from Sciences Po – in an internationally recognised and prestigious dual-degree programme.

The new programme is a result of years of collaboration between UCT and Sciences Po, which dates back to 1997 when the first memorandum of understanding was signed.

This marks Sciences Po's first-ever collaborative degree offering in Africa.

Signed during a visit by UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela to Sciences Po on 21 March 2025, the agreement aims to train experts capable of meeting global challenges in governance, public policy and sustainable urban development.

"UCT's partnership with Sciences Po is a testament to the growing importance of African higher education on the global stage," said Professor Moshabela. "By establishing this programme, UCT reaffirms its commitment to shaping the future of global education, advancing academic excellence and promoting cross-cultural exchange that empowers students to lead in an increasingly interconnected world."

The dual collaborative degree covers two Masters programmes:

- **Governance and International Relations:** A partnership between the Paris School of International affairs and UCT's Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance.
- **Urban Studies:** A partnership between Sciences Po's Urban School and UCT's African Centre for Cities.

The programme will span two years, with students completing one year of study at each institution. The first year will take place at UCT, followed by a year at Sciences Po in France, with students returning to UCT to complete their final semester.

Professor Moshabela added: "It has been a long journey, with the teams working on this since 2023 – over a period of two years. I commend the teams, including the deans and administrative staff in the two faculties, as well as the support teams in the Office of the Registrar, the International Academic Programmes Office and the Research Office.

"Our UCT team engaged with their counterparts on countless occasions and visited France a couple of times, while the Sciences Po team also visited us a number of times. In those engagements, they managed to resolve the technical glitches that make the design of dual degrees difficult, making it a milestone for UCT to reach this stage," said Moshabela.

Luis Vassy, Sciences Po's President, said: "With the signing of this dual degree, we have taken a decisive step forward, giving this collaboration a new dimension through a programme of excellence in social sciences, at the crossroads of Europe and Africa."

The joint admissions process for the programme will open in September 2025, with the first cohort of students set to begin in February 2027. The universities aim to enrol 20 students annually from diverse socio-cultural and geographical backgrounds, with three full-time scholarships available through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme.

The launch of the programme has been made possible by the recent awarding of a €120 000 grant by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supporting the broader strategic goal of developing academic collaborations between France and Africa.

This collaboration reaffirms UCT's position as a leader in international education and a hub for innovative partnerships that have a lasting impact on higher education in Africa and beyond.

At the signing ceremony, South African Ambassador to France, Nathi Mthethwa, warmly congratulated both universities on the excellent partnership that has been strengthened on Human Rights Day in South Africa.

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