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UCT's d-school is one of eight global pioneers in design thinking

The Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking at the University of Cape Town (UCT) has been recognised together with eight other global institutions as pioneers of design thinking, for doing things differently and for moving education forward in innovative, interesting and important ways.

The award acknowledges institutions that are cutting edge in their work and make a significant contribution to teaching new approaches to solving global problems, supporting the knowledge economy, creativity and new approaches to solving old challenges.

The Hasso Plattner Institute for Design Thinking, or d-school as it is more commonly known, was established in 2016 at UCT. The school is supported and funded by Hasso Plattner Foundation. The d-school is based at UCT and is one of three in the world. The other two are based at Stanford University in the US and the University of Potsdam in Berlin, Germany.

The d-schools collaborate on innovative approaches, using design thinking to help students collaborate across disciplines to solve problems faced by corporates, governments or NGOs. The d-school brings global knowledge and expertise to bear on local socio-economic challenges.

"The two other d-schools operate in developed countries. The complexity we face locally, and on our continent, as an emerging market with diversity in culture and history makes for a unique opportunity to understand and develop new applications of design thinking. Plus, it's an opportunity for us to contribute to understanding and resolving the complex socio-economic challenges of our region," said Richard Perez, the director of the d-school.

The recognised institutions cover a range of creative disciplines. The National Institute for Design in India, for example, was commended for using design as a tool for improving the quality of life in India. Kyoto Seika University in Japan focus on the changing culture of the popular Manga comic book with a long and complex history in early Japanese art. Other institutions focus on gaming, music, animation, photography and graphic arts.

"We're in good company. These are leading institutions driving change in the creative economy, bringing innovation and collaborative solutions to everyday problems. I'm delighted that the d-school is recognised for using design thinking to address socio-

economic issues with our partners in academia, business, NGOs and government. We live in an increasingly complex world, with challenges that will rarely be solved through the lens of a single discipline," said Perez.

Students are taught to "embrace ambiguity, experimentation and failure." Perez considers the disruptive, pioneering nature of the d-school as one of its best attributes, and "the changes in each student's thinking" as one of its great achievements. Perez and his team also run courses with undergraduate programmes, where they introduce design-led thinking to both students and tutors. "We teach students to design the right thing before they design it right," said Perez.

The eight institutions have been selected by WeTransfer, a free cloud based file transfer service to exchange creative ideas for great things to happen. WeTransfer has supported new types of creative education like [The University of the Underground](#) founded to democratise access to public institutions and support unconventional research that challenge culture and knowledge through free masters courses using a design thinking approach. The institution have been selected in collaboration with [Lecture in Progress](#), a free platform providing advice, insight and inspiration for the next generation of creatives.

ENDS

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