

# The UCT Law Postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Studies

Be part of a **new generation of judges** on the **African continent** who are **practically and theoretically** grounded in the art of **judging in a constitutional democracy**.

## Why do a postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Studies?

This is Africa's first postgraduate qualification in judicial studies, offered by Africa's leading university. The diploma offers access to cutting-edge knowledge from diverse faculty members, ensuring professionals are up to date with new issues in law.

## What is the University of Cape Town's postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Studies?

This one-year full-time (or two-year part-time) qualification is offered by the University of Cape Town's School for Advanced Legal Studies, under the Faculty of Law. Working with the **Judicial Institute for Africa**, UCT Law offers this programme to professionals currently serving as judges and magistrates, and to those earmarked for the judicial track.

The diploma provides a specialist qualification in judicial studies, ensuring that participants are exposed to concepts, developments, debates, and discussions in the judicial space across the continent. It consists of four courses: two core courses and two electives, all taught in short blocks.

**Core course convenors:** Emeritus Professor Hugh Corder; Former Chief Justice Mathilda Twomey; Justice Oagile Dingake; and Justice Lillian Tibatemwa

**Curriculum:** The curriculum comprises two compulsory courses and two elective courses and consists of 120 credits

**Admission requirements:** In addition to a basic qualification in law, applicants are required to demonstrate appointment as a judicial officer (judge, magistrate, or equivalent) or the potential for such appointment in the foreseeable future by including a letter of reference from an appropriate official

**Duration:** One year, full-time or two years, part-time

**Format:** Hybrid with both block and online teaching

**Cost:** Approx R90 000 (2024 fees)

**Please note:** 2025 fees have not yet been determined; for an approximate cost, add 6% to the 2024 amount

**How to apply:** Head over to the UCT Law Faculty's School for Advanced Legal Studies website to find out how and where to apply [www.sals.uct.ac.za/sals/applying/forms](http://www.sals.uct.ac.za/sals/applying/forms)

**Scholarships:** A limited number of tuition scholarships will be available

**Short courses:** No time to do the full diploma now? Our electives are also offered as short courses and credits can go towards the diploma at a later stage. Contact us to find out more



## COMPULSORY COURSES

### Judicial Skills and Practical Jurisprudence

This course equips participants with the skills needed for case and court management, including analysis, fact finding, decision making, judgment writing, and the use of technology. Judicial codes of conduct will be examined and applied to practical scenarios, and theoretical discussions in applied jurisprudence will deepen understanding and emphasise the importance of independence, accountability, and impartiality to arrive at a fair outcome, irrespective of complexity.

### Judging in a Constitutional Democracy

This course equips participants as judicial officers in a constitutional democracy, especially in the context of developing nations in Africa. Participants will learn to navigate the obstacles and polycentric issues of broad constitutional law, and the following items will be canvassed: separation of powers; constitutional deference; balancing judicial independence, impartiality, and accountability; contrasting discourses on forms of rights protection; judicial activism and 'overreach'; benefits and dangers of 'lawfare'; engagement with different theories of interpreting the law, and developments in judicial review of administrative action; and concepts of administrative justice and openness of public governance.

## ELECTIVE COURSES

### Practical Approach to Evidence Law

This course, using application of principles to real-life situations, comprises an advanced study of evidence law and its application in courtrooms. This will equip judicial officers to navigate evidentiary issues in trials, including the roles of the judicial officer as a trier of fact and law, and evidentiary matters arising in civil, criminal, quasi-criminal, and constitutional cases. Various sources of evidence will be considered to understand common difficulties and controversies related to witness competence, compellability and reliability, unconscious bias, admission of new evidence technologies, as well as problems in admitting hearsay evidence.

### Practical Court Processes

This course will equip judicial officers with theoretical and practical skills to manage proceedings in a manner that encourages access to justice, creates an environment for the best delivery of evidence from witnesses, and promotes public confidence. Participants will learn how to manage a courtroom, from trial preparation to judgment and post-judgment. The course examines the role of judicial officers and court systems in dispute resolution and in ensuring fair hearings, and equips participants to navigate unprepared legal practitioners, unrepresented litigants, trials in absentia, working with interpreters, and handling media and public interest in high-profile or political cases. Participants will be introduced to the use of technology in court rooms, including case management software, online filing, virtual hearings, and closed-circuit television.

## Regional Instruments, Courts, and Cases for Judicial Officers

This course provides a working knowledge of regional law in Africa as constituted in multilateral instruments and regional case law. Through identifying components of regional law on the continent as an integrated whole, participants will engage with the subject from various dimensions, starting with the legal instruments setting up a selection of regional economic communities and institutions. The course examines jurisdictional scope of regional courts and key provisions of regional instruments for intra-African commerce (particularly the African Continental Free Trade Agreement) and examines domestic enforcement of regional court judgments.

## Law and Technology for Judicial Officers

Participants will develop a deeper understanding of technology and the ethical, legal, and regulatory issues in the digital realm; and of how judges can approach technology-related adjudication. Contextualising international best practice against African developments in this field, the course offers theoretical knowledge and practical experience in assessing court technologies, and looks at how these might facilitate speedier and cost-effective access to justice. Areas of substantive information technology law include: electronic contracts, electronic evidence, cybercrime and cybersecurity, data protection, consumer protection online, e-commerce and tax, jurisdiction, electronic communications, IP in the digital realm, liability of internet service providers, and rights and freedoms online. These topics are discussed against a common framework that allows judicial officers to understand how technologies (including Artificial intelligence, the blockchain, social media) have developed, inherent problems, and regulatory challenges.

## Environmental Law for Judicial Officers

This course builds an understanding of the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic challenges facing the Earth and, in particular, Africa. Participants examine how, through use of the law, judicial officers can assist in regulating, managing and resolving these challenges. Participants develop comprehension of the origins, nature, scope and ambit of environmental law; an understanding of the concepts, principles and mechanisms characteristically reflected in environmental law; and an appreciation of how these concepts, principles and mechanisms could inform, shape and influence their work.

## Independent Research Paper

Participants develop research and writing skills in a chosen area of law. The course enhances participants' abilities to work independently while under expert supervision, to be better-positioned for judgment-writing. Some research papers could be worthy of wider publication.



## CONTACT

Further information about applying to the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Law for this programme can be found on the **Faculty's School for Advanced Legal Studies website at [www.sals.uct.ac.za](http://www.sals.uct.ac.za)**

**The Faculty Office can be contacted on [law-studies@uct.ac.za](mailto:law-studies@uct.ac.za), and the Postgraduate Administrator in the Faculty Office can be reached on [clare.richfield@uct.ac.za](mailto:clare.richfield@uct.ac.za)**

**For queries related to JIFA, please contact [vanja.karth@uct.ac.za](mailto:vanja.karth@uct.ac.za)**

