

# Post Graduate Studies in Anthropology: Frequently Asked Questions

Thanks for your query about graduate work in Anthropology. We receive a wide range of questions regarding studying anthropology at UCT. Below is a compilation of the most common questions we receive. We hope this will go some way to answering yours. If not, then please send your question to [san-admin@uct.ac.za](mailto:san-admin@uct.ac.za) with a copy of your academic transcript attached.

## Question #1: What are the different post graduate options available in Anthropology?

Graduates proceed through the following academic stages:

- **Honours degree** which is usually one year in duration; then on to a
- **Master's degree** either by coursework or research; and then to a
- **PhD**

In Anthropology we set an admission requirement of **not less than 65%** for your majoring subject which may or may not be Anthropology.

### *Honours in Anthropology*

- is a 1 year degree where you take four courses and conduct a piece of independent research (typically 3-4 weeks of fieldwork) culminating in a dissertation of 10-15,000 words. Of the four courses, two are compulsory and two are electives of your choosing.

### *Masters in Anthropology (by course work)*

- is a 1-2 year degree where you take four courses and conduct a piece of independent research (typically 6-8 weeks of fieldwork) culminating in a dissertation of 25,000 words. Of the four courses, two are compulsory and two are electives of your choosing.

### *Masters in Practical Anthropology (by course work)*

- is a 1-2 year degree where you take four courses and conduct a piece of independent research (typically 6-8 weeks of fieldwork) culminating in a dissertation of 25,000 words and write a report. Of the four courses, three are compulsory and one is an elective of your choosing.

### *Masters in Anthropology (by dissertation)*

- is a 1-2 year degree where you conduct a piece of independent research (typically 6 months of fieldwork) culminating in a dissertation of 50,000 words. This option is ordinarily only available to students with first class passes in prior degrees.

### *PhD in Anthropology*

- is a 3 year degree where you conduct a piece of independent research (typically 1 year of fieldwork) culminating in a dissertation of 80,000 words.

Please see the hand book for entrance requirements:

<https://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/apply/handbooks/Handbook%20B%20Humanities%20Postgraduate%20Studies2015.pdf>

### **Question #2: I didn't make the 65% cut off. I'm really close. Can I still do Honours?**

Here's an anthropological response: "It depends." For applicants with Anthropology majors, it will really depend on our intake. If we are oversubscribed then the answer is probably 'No'. However, we have in the past taken applicants with a 63% or 64% average, so please put in a strong application.

For applicants with little or no Anthropology in their undergraduate degrees, we do suggest the following. Apply for permission (from Faculty) to register as an Occasional Student and take our Second and Third year anthropology courses. If you can obtain a 65% average, then we will consider taking you into Honours in July of the current year or January of the following year. You will then follow a tailored curriculum. For example, one of our current Honours students had a less than strong undergraduate degree in Social Work and Drama. We could not admit him to Honours but suggested the Occasional Student route described above. His transition has been so successful, that we expect to admit him into Masters next year.

### **Question #3: Can I do post graduate studies in Anthropology when I don't have a major in or any Anthropology?**

Yes! However, our postgraduate programmes in the handbook make the assumption that students entering already have an undergraduate major in the anthropology. Were you to be accepted into our programme without or very little Anthropology, we would require you to take a particular set of courses in order to make the transition to the discipline. We will typically tailor your curriculum.

#### **Honours:**

Were you to be accepted into Honours we would require you to take the following courses:

#### First semester

- AXL4401F Ethnographic Research Methods (core for all our postgrads)
- AXL4404F (AXL3400F Challenge of Culture, but in an extended format for Honours degree purposes)

To obtain an aggregate mark for those two courses of at least 65% and to have passed both in order to continue into second semester.

#### Second semester

- AXL4402S Anthropology of Societies in Transition (core for all our postgrads)
- An elective at AXL4400 or AXL5400 level course - although, depending on your mark for AXL4404F, we might require this to be another extended undergrad course (i.e. extended AXL3401S Anthropology through Ethnography)
- AXL4400W, our ethnographic research report course that is a requirement for the Honours degree and that is based on primary ethnographic fieldwork and produces a research report of 10,000 to 15,000 words.

Depending on your results for Honours (min of 65% aggregate), we would then consider admitting you to our Masters programme in the following year.

**Masters and PhD:**

Were you to be accepted into Masters or PhD we would tailor your curriculum according to your academic background. You need to send an email to the Masters convener with a copy of your academic transcript in order for your curriculum to be developed.

If we were to admit you directly into the Masters programme (without doing Honours), we would require you to do a two year degree where we would require you to complete the Honours and Masters level courses and a Masters dissertation (minus the Honours dissertation). However we strongly recommend that students to do both Honours and Masters as you have the advantage of conducting two pieces of research, instead of one.

**Question #4: In my country, my undergraduate degree was four years. Should I register for Honours or Masters?**

At UCT, we require students to have an Honours degree before we accept them into any of our Masters programme. In the event that your undergraduate degree was a 4 year Anthropology degree, we are able to waive that requirement under certain circumstances, and to generate a tailored curriculum to ensure that you would meet the requirements of our degree structure (see above). If we were to admit you directly into the Masters programme (without doing Honours), we would require you to do a two year degree where we would require you to complete the Honours and Masters level courses and a Masters dissertation (minus the Honours dissertation). However we strongly recommend that students to do both Honours and Masters as you have the advantage of conducting two pieces of research, instead of one.

**Question #5: Can I do courses outside of Anthropology?**

You would register in Anthropology and may be permitted to take a single elective in another department unless you are on a specially tailored curriculum in which case your elective choices are curtailed. We generally grant approval if the elective will benefit your research and academic development.

**Question #6: Do I need to have a supervisor before I apply?**

It depends on the degree you are applying for. At Honours level, you will be assigned a supervisor by the Honours Programme convener. At Masters level you can either seek a supervisor in advance of your application or wait until you have settled into your coursework before deciding on supervision. At PhD level it is essential to know in advance of applying to UCT that there is the expertise. As part of the process of admitting you to the degree, staff in Anthropology must weigh up whether the Section has the expertise to supervise in your area of interest. Finding a supervisor for your PhD research is an important decision.

**Question #7: I want to apply however I can't seem to find the application forms on your website. Do you by any chance have a link or copy of the forms?**

Admissions are handled by the central admissions office, not Anthropology. To access the UCT postgraduate application forms, please visit the following webpage:  
[www.uct.ac.za/apply/applications/forms/](http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/applications/forms/)

Decisions to accept or refuse applicants are made by departments but will be conveyed to you by the faculty. You will receive a letter from the faculty advising you of the outcome in due course, but do take into consideration that final results are needed before departments can make decisions and in some instances, the decision will be deferred until undergraduate and Honours results are supplied.

What we can do is look at your transcript and outline the curriculum we would need to develop if you register for the degree in Anthropology. This may require registering for the Honours, or for a transition curriculum or for the Masters but until we have a transcript we cannot say. Once we have done that we will be able to describe what you will need to do and you will then need to make an application through the Central Admissions Office.

**Question #8: I'm in the process of completing my application and I am asked to submit a writing sample and a motivation letter - what are they supposed to entail?**

We are looking to gauge the level of your writing and analytical skills. Therefore the writing sample is most likely a paper/essay you wrote for a course that achieved a good grade or one that you are particularly proud of.

The 1-2 page letter of motivation should indicate the following:

- why you wish to pursue anthropology and not another discipline;
- why you wish to pursue it at UCT and not another university;
- and for our international students, why you wish to pursue it in South Africa and not another country?
- your research and career plans but these are not essential for Honours or Masters.
- For the PhD, you need to describe the project you envisage (the question, a reason for studying this topic, some ideas about methods). While this does not need to be a completed proposal (there is a six month designated period post-registration to work closely with a supervisor to develop the proposal) we do need to be able to assess whether there is supervision expertise in the Section before we can recommend admission.

**Question #9: What would be the costs of my degree? Is there funding available to help me with these costs?**

The UCT Fees Handbook is available from the main UCT website and from the UCT Fees Office - <http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/fees/>. If next year's Fees Handbook is not available, then look at this year's one and add an inflationary increase to have an idea of what the following year will cost.

The Postgraduate Funding Office, located on the upper campus (Otto Beit Building), is an important source of information and advice about potential funding sources and the procedures necessary to access these. <http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/funding/postgraduate/applications/>

There are no Anthropology specific scholarships available within our department. Occasionally staff within Anthropology may have funding available. Post graduates are encouraged to tutor our undergraduates. We also advertise ad hoc research assistance or teaching posts among our post graduates.

**Question #10: When do courses start? Can I start mid-year or defer until the following year?**

Courses start in early February. We do occasionally have students start mid-year. This could be due to finishing their undergraduate degrees, securing finances or personal reasons. You can also choose to defer your start date until the following year. There may be implications for curriculum and thus for how quickly you can complete the degree.

**Question #11: How long is the degree?**

An Honours degree is expected to be one year if you register in February.

An Masters by coursework or dissertation-only is also a one year degree, though students often extend it by six months. There are financial implications to this.

A PhD is usually three years. You need to be registered for two consecutive years.

**Question #12: What else do I need to be concerned about?**

For our international applicants, you will need to begin the Study Visa application process should you be accepted into the University. It's time consuming and frustrating, so please start it as soon as possible. Please contact IAPO - The International Academic Programmes Office <http://www.uct.ac.za/about/iapo>. It aims to be the first port of call for all international students and provides a wide range of services including general enquiries from prospective students, advice on the safety of the area you wish to stay in, the appropriateness of working while in South Africa, application for study permits and general advice about your stay at UCT.