



Research for Agroecology Network Southern Africa (RAENS)

2 Masters Bursaries 2026-2027

Understanding the Social, Ecological and Environmental Impacts of Agroecology in South Africa

DSTI/NRF Research Chair: Environmental and Social Dimensions of the Bio-economy

Department of Environmental and Geographical Science
University of Cape Town, South Africa

Closing date: 31 August 2025

Start Date: January 2026

Applications are invited for 2 full-time Masters bursaries focused on understanding the impacts of agroecology on farmers, communities and the ecosystem in South Africa. The position falls under the SARChI Bio-economy Research Chair, in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. It will be funded and completed under the Research for Agroecology Network Southern Africa (RAENS) project.

The overall goal of RAENS is to establish a transdisciplinary agroecology research and knowledge network in Southern Africa to strengthen existing initiatives, showcase the potential and scalability of agroecology, facilitate shifts in agricultural training and research towards agroecological and regenerative ways of producing food, fibre, and fodder, and to inform policy, thereby leading to an enabling landscape for agroecology uptake, research and training.

We seek 2 suitably qualified scholars to join a dynamic team of researchers in the [Bioeconomy Research Chair](#) and the RAENS project, to explore the social, ecological and economic impacts of agroecology at various sites in South Africa.

The full-time positions involve fieldwork that will entail traveling to multiple pilot sites in different provinces of South Africa for several weeks at a time to support participatory, farmer-led research on the impacts of agroecology.

- One Masters student will focus on the **ecological and biophysical** aspects of agroecology, such as: soil health, biodiversity, water conservation, recycling and integrated pest management.
- The others Masters student will focus on the **social and economic** aspects of agroecology, such as: social cohesion, livelihoods and territorial markets, governance, indigenous food and farming systems, diets and community resilience.
- Research on cross-cutting themes such as the role of youth, gender, climate change and indigenous knowledge may be incorporated into both Masters projects.

In addition to the Masters research, the selected candidate will be expected to participate in RAENS meetings and events.

The bursary is for two years of full-time study, with the second year subject to satisfactory progress. The total value of the tax-free bursary is R200,000 per annum, with additional funding available for fieldwork costs. UCT Fees will be covered by the project. The bursary does not include benefits or travel/relocation costs.

Eligibility: Applicants must have an Honours degree with a minimum of 65% in a relevant field (such as environmental science, conservation, anthropology, sociology, development studies, geography, botany, agriculture), awarded within the last five years.

Desired competencies:

- Strong research, analytical and conceptual skills
- Experience in rural communities in South Africa
- Knowledge of agroecology
- Commitment to engaged scholarship
- A background that combines both natural and social sciences (or humanities) would be an advantage, as would a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis skills
- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Strong presentation and facilitation skills
- Fluency in English (spoken and written), with a strong preference for an additional South African language
- Computer literacy, including ability to use Microsoft office and common analytical packages
- Driver's licence

Applications

Applications should be sent to Fahdelah.Hartley@uct.ac.za and should include:

1. A detailed letter of motivation describing why you are a suitable candidate, which of the 2 Masters bursaries you are applying for, and your research interests
2. A comprehensive CV
3. Academic transcripts
4. The names and contact details of two referees

The successful applicant will need to apply separately for Masters study to the University of Cape Town and to the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science. The scholarship is subject to acceptance of the candidate for Masters study at the University of Cape Town. <https://science.uct.ac.za/departments/egs/applications-faqs/dissertation-masters-and-phd>.

Closing date for Masters scholarship applications: 31 August 2025

Closing date for UCT applications: 30 September 2025

Interviews for short-listed candidates will take place in early September with the outcome of the RAENS scholarship known by mid-September. We advise that you do not apply to UCT until the outcome is known. If you do not hear from us by 15 September please assume your application to be unsuccessful.

Further information can be obtained from Brittany.Kesselman@uct.ac.za