Research

We are committed both to protecting and encouraging curiosity-driven research that has a real impact on our communities and environment.

12% of SA’s NRF-rated scholars
The National Research Foundation (NRF) allocates ratings based on a researcher’s recent research outputs and impact, as perceived by international peer reviewers. UCT maintains a very high participation rate in the rating system with 500 of UCT’s academic staff rated by the NRF.

25% of SA’s A-rated scholars
Thirty of the country’s NRF A-rated researchers, who are international leaders in their fields of research, are at or affiliated to UCT.

17% of SA’s SARChI chairs
A total of 42 of the country’s SARChI chairs (South African Research Chairs Initiative) are held by researchers at UCT.

>124 active inventions, with 40 patent applications filed and 23 patents granted in 2021

Research and innovation in numbers

R15 billion
value in external research contracts approved in 2021

R30 million
in accumulated income since 2002 from intellectual property commercialisation

164 active inventions, with 40 patent applications filed and 23 patents granted in 2021

>100 student societies are active on campus, divided into five categories: academic, national/cultural, faith, special interest and political. Students can choose to participate in almost 40 sporting codes, including such diverse sports as jiu jitsu, fencing, rowing and rugby.

25 km²
The total size of the UCT campuses, including its satellite campuses in Observatory, home to the Faculty of Health Sciences; Gardens, where the Hiddingh campus for fine art, film, media, and drama studies is located; and the Atlantic Seaboard, where the Graduate School of Business’ Breakwater campus is located.

30 392 students and 4 984 staff
In 2021 UCT was home to 30 392 students (18 154 undergraduates, 11 880 postgraduates, 358 occasional) and 4 984 staff (1 264 academic, 3 698 professional, administrative support and service, and 22 external). Over the course of the year, anywhere between 100 and 1 000 students are employed by the university.

7 400 students
lived in UCT’s 39 catered or self-ca-tering student residences in 2021. The university’s Avenue Road Residence in Mowbray provided 500 additional student beds since it opened in 2021.

>9 000 undergraduates – nearly half of UCT’s undergraduates – received financial support in 2021.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs)
23 MOOCS are currently running at UCT and have, since 2015, attracted more than 680 000 participants from over 180 different countries across the globe.

>1.2 million
print volumes and an estimated 54 km of shelf space are available at UCT Libraries (before the 2021 fire).

General operating budget 2021

R3 904 million

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<th>Income</th>
<th>Income 2021</th>
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<td>UCT</td>
<td>R3 904 million</td>
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<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Staff and related costs</td>
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<td>Grants to student housing and the Baxter Theatre</td>
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01 About UCT
Welcome to UCT

UCT aspires to become a premier academic meeting point between South Africa, the rest of Africa and the rest of the world. The advantage of expanding global networks and our distinct point in Africa, we are committed to innovative research and scholarship, to engage with the key issues of our natural and social worlds.

We aim to produce graduates whose qualifications are highly recognised and locally applicable, underpinned by values of engaged citizenship and social justice.

Students come to UCT from all over Africa and the world...

In 2021, 30 392 students were registered for studies at UCT, including 31 614 African students, 4 479 SADC students, 767 students from the rest of Africa and 552 students from elsewhere in the world.

... and when they graduate they are welcome anywhere.

Did you know?

1. All four executive leaders of the academic enterprise at UCT are women, including the vice-chancellor and three deputy vice-chancellors, which is rare in higher education institutions around the world.

2. The university is alma mater to five Nobel laureates: Hendrik van Boeijen (1914), Kanemasa Sato (1949), Elton Basebe (1964), Sir Aaron Klug (Chemistry), Allan McLeod Cormack (Medicine) and Jimmy Carter (Economics).


4. Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe took up the position in January 2020, having taken over from Dr Max Price, who served the institution from 1996 to 2019.

5. UCT is a member of a number of global university networks, including the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), and the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN).

A brief history

The boys’ high school that became Africa’s top-rated university.

1829
The South African College (SAC), UCT’s predecessor, started as a private secondary school for boys.

1873
The University of Cape Town (UCT) opened, and the SAC began preparing its pupils for entry to its junior classes to the newly created South African College School (SACS).

1887
Along with the country, the SAC grew steadily and admitted women for the first time.

1900
The SAC transferred all of its school pupils to SACS, in effect becoming a university college under the University of Cape Town.

1910
The new University of Cape Town (UCT) made teaching its first priority with the establishment of five new faculties.

1928
The bulk of UCT’s campus moved to Groote Schuur Estate, and its student body swelled by 65% to over 4 200 students.

1950
While UCT grew increasing support to teaching and research, the apartheid regime barred black students from enroling without government permission.

1968
The number of black students at UCT fell to 411, from 552 just 10 years earlier. When UCT emerged as the University of Cape Town in 1969, only 86 black students were enrolled.

1969–1985
UCT students increasingly opposed the apartheid policies, clashing more directly with police both on and off campus. Despite this turbulent environment, UCT strengthened teaching and research by providing more facilities and new buildings to house them.

1985–2020
The warming of apartheid opened the way for increasingly rapid transformation of the campus community, even before the first democratic elections in 1994. Making a sustainable, positive impact in higher education and society now drives the university’s vision. This is supported by three pillars that underpin our transformation and sustainability.

Transformation

Social Responsiveness

Social Responsiveness Award

The 2021 Social Responsiveness Award was presented to Associate Professor Gita Zierpael, who was part of a multi-disciplinary team who raced to find solutions for the Western Cape’s water crisis.

100UP
Each year, the UCT 100UP programme provides 100 grade 10, 9 and 8 learners from township schools in the Western Cape higher for education.

Teaching and Learning

State-of-the-art classrooms

Close to 100 of UCT’s teaching venues include document cameras, data projectors, customised lecture theatres and built-in PCs – enabling flexible delivery of course content. Lecture recording and a comprehensive learning management system provide further tools to optimise teaching and learning at UCT.

MOOCS
23 massive open online courses are currently running at UCT and have attracted more than 10 000 participants from over 180 different countries across the globe.

Awards

Did you know that 5 of UCT’s top 10 rated courses are given by women? This is rare in higher education institutions around the world.


drprecious
Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe took up the position in January 2020. She is the second black woman to hold the position, having taken over from Dr Max Price, who served the institution from 1996 to 2019.

Contact Us

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UCT’s place in the world is to be at the cutting edge, to forge into the unknown and the unfamiliar.

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng
Vice-Chancellor

“...a key indicator of the university’s health is that many more women are being appointed to academic positions in line with national policy to ensure gender equality.”

Professor Precious Moloi-Motsepe
Vice-Chancellor

Did you know?

1. UCT students come from 164 countries, some 120 000 of whom live in South Africa.

2. The Office for Inclusivity & Change (OIC) provides institutional responses to transformation, sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), disability and cultural change.

3. Transformation

3. UCT staff were from designated groups (70% in black people, women and people with disabilities) of which 71% were black South Africans.

Did you know?

1. The number of black students at UCT fell to 411, from 552 just 10 years earlier. When UCT emerged as the University of Cape Town in 1969, only 86 black students were enrolled.

2. UCT’s place in the world is to be at the cutting edge, to forge into the unknown and the unfamiliar.

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng
Vice-Chancellor

"I believe that this is a great time to be at UCT. Across South Africa and even the world, the higher education sector is seeking ways to be more inclusive, to fund students so that their opportunities are available to everyone with high academic potential, irrespective of their background. This is a time that brings the prospect of making real change happen, of contributing to solutions that might guide other institutions and organisations across our nation to do the same. UCT’s place in the world is to be at the cutting edge, to forge into the unknown and the unfamiliar.”

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng
Vice-Chancellor