3 July 2024

UCT in top 100 for the first time in THE impact rankings

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has broken into the top 100 for the first time, ranking 77th in the world – among 1 963 universities – in the 2024 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

UCT has also been ranked 7th for partnerships for the goals, while also performing well in five other United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

THE's Impact Ranking system uses the UN SDGs as a guide and has evaluated 1 963 universities across at least four indicators, including SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The rankings measure the contribution of higher education institutions to achieving the UN SDGs in research, teaching and practices.

Partnerships for the goals (Goal 17) was ranked in the top 10 in the world at 7th position.

"Our rise from 76th in 2023 to 7th worldwide for SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals is impressive. This achievement highlights UCT's strengths in collaborations with local, regional, and international entities, as well as our participation in several active and productive research networks," said Vice-Chancellor *interim* Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy.

"At UCT, we pride ourselves on our active participation in networks of international partners that value African expertise and our distinctive contributions to the global knowledge base. Through our membership of networks such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), we play a significant role in forging effective, equitable Global North–South as well as South–South partnerships, in this way contributing towards building expertise in Africa for Africa, by Africans," added Emeritus Professor Reddy.

Life Below Water (Goal 14), a first-time submission for UCT, was ranked in the top 20 in the world at 13th position.

A further four areas were placed within the top 100:

- Clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) at 23rd
- No poverty (Goal 1) at 64th
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Goal 16) at 81st
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9) at 98th.

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation, Professor Jeff Murugan, said: "We are excited by the innovations on our campus which have contributed to our achievement of 13th place in the world for SDG 14, which focuses on life below water.

"Our highest scores in this SDG were for supporting aquatic ecosystems through education and action. UCT's FitzPatrick Institute is leading impactful research in this field and has developed a method of using bottles to identify the main sources of litter in marine systems. This tool has now been adopted by research teams based in Australia, Spain, Norway, and the United Kingdom, with the findings from these studies contributing to the UN Plastic Treaty negotiations.

"Further, our students and staff support community initiatives like the Friends of the Liesbeek, which, among others, is dedicated to safeguarding our local water ecosystems."

Institutions are not compelled to provide data for all the goals to participate. They are only required to submit information on one SDG to join and on four SDGs (including SDG 17) to be ranked overall. This means universities are evaluated based on different sets of SDGs, depending on their focus. This approach highlights the diversity of universities, acknowledging that excellence can be defined in many ways.

This is the fourth year that UCT has participated in these rankings, introduced as a pilot in 2019. Of the thirteen SDGs the university submitted information for this year, six were ranked among the top 100 globally, and an additional five areas were ranked within the top 200:

- SDG 1 – no poverty: 64th (tied)
- SDG 3 – good health and well-being: 201–300 band
- SDG 5 – gender equality: 101–200 band
- SDG 6 – clean water and sanitation: 23rd
- SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth: 101–200 band
- SDG 9 – industry, innovation and infrastructure: 98th (tied)
- SDG 10 – reduced inequalities: 201–300 band
- SDG 11 – sustainable cities and communities: 101–200 band
- SDG 13 – climate action: 101–200 band
- SDG 14 – life below water: 13th
- SDG 15 – life on land: 101–200 band
- SDG 16 – peace, justice and strong institutions: 81st (tied)
- SDG 17 – partnerships for the goals: 7th (tied)

Methodology

To produce their Impact Rankings, THE uses indicators in four broad areas:

- Research: universities create knowledge to address the world's problems and help to deliver the SDGs.
- Stewardship: universities act as stewards of their resources, including physical resources, employees, faculty and students. This is a key factor in delivering the SDGs.
- Outreach: the work that universities do with their local, regional, national and international communities is another keyway that they can have an impact on sustainability.
- Teaching: plays a critical role in ensuring that there are enough skilled practitioners to deliver on the SDGs and in making sure that alumni take forward the key lessons of sustainability into their future careers.

Each university's total score, per year, is determined by its combined performance in its top three SDGs (each counting 26%) and SDG 17 (counting 22%). This means that different universities are scored based on a different set of SDGs, depending on their focus. The score for the overall ranking is an average of the last two years' total scores.

- View the complete 2024 THE Impact Rankings.
- Read about the methodology of the 2024 THE Impact Rankings.

ENDS

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