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UCT to host Africa's first-ever Times Higher Education World Academic Summit

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has been announced as hosts for the Times Higher Education (THE) World Academic Summit (WAS) 2026.

UCT will host the summit from 29 September to 1 October 2026 in a landmark co-hosting agreement with the University of Bristol as part of a long-standing strategic partnership between the two universities.

As the first-ever THE World Academic Summit to be hosted in Africa, this historic gathering will showcase African universities' rising influence in innovation and research in the global higher education landscape.

The summit, themed "Knowledge, justice and futures: Universities in the age of intelligence", will gather global leaders in higher education, research, policy, business and civil society to explore how universities can shape a fairer, more sustainable and future-ready world in the face of accelerating technological, social and environmental shifts.

UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela expressed great anticipation at welcoming high-profile international stakeholders in higher education to UCT for this momentous gathering.

"Held for the first time on African soil, this summit invites us to ask how we – as a global community of scholars, policy makers, civil society and business leaders influencing the higher education space – can reconceive knowledge for the future, and in doing so, create pathways that are inclusive, sustainable and just," said Professor Moshabela.

Phil Baty, Chief Global Affairs Officer at Times Higher Education, added: "We are delighted to be taking the world's preeminent senior university leadership summit to Africa for the first time – and we are grateful to UCT and to the University of Bristol for joining forces to collaborate together to host us. A vital theme of the summits, and our world summit series, is the vital importance of international collaboration, to drive university impact and to meet some of our shared sustainability challenges, so it is particularly fitting that two world-class

research universities from across two continents are working together to host this vital gathering in Cape Town, one of the world's most dynamic cities.

"We'll be exploring how universities can create a sustainable and just future for all – and that is a conversation that the world cannot have without Africa being at the heart of it. So we look forward to welcoming a diverse international community, but with a very strong pan-African delegation, to the summit in 2026."

A global platform for future-ready higher education

The THE World Academic Summit 2026 will focus on four key themes shaping the future of universities worldwide:

- **Redefining the future university** – placing people, purpose and the planet at the heart of higher education.
- **Universities and society** – building trust, advancing justice and reaffirming the public good.
- **Reframing global collaboration** – creating equitable partnerships and resilient knowledge ecosystems.
- **Ethical AI and digital futures** – shaping inclusive, ethical and empowering digital transformation.
- [Read more about the summit.](#)

UCT climbs in THE World University Rankings

In addition to being announced as the 2026 host partner, UCT achieved a global ranking of 164 in the THE World University Rankings, having climbed up an impressive 16 places.

The announcement was made at the 2025 summit held in Thuwal, Saudi Arabia.

UCT now sits in the top 7.5% of universities worldwide, having been ranked out of 2 191 universities this year – a significant upwards shift from being ranked 180th out of 2 092 universities in 2025.

This success builds on the recent performance in the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings, where [UCT rose to 150th globally](#), the university's highest position in a decade.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About the THE World Academic Summit hosts

As Africa's leading university, **the University of Cape Town** (UCT) and its vibrant, diverse community are globally recognised for excellence in teaching, research, innovation and social responsiveness. Consistently ranked among the world's top universities, UCT is uniquely positioned as the premier academic meeting point between South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. Through innovative research and scholarship, UCT leads scientific

discovery across five strategic focal areas, broadly themed around, environmental sustainability, health, social justice and advancing African scholarship.

The **University of Bristol**, co-host of the summit, is one of the UK's most prestigious universities and a proud member of the Russell Group. Ranked among the world's top 60 universities, Bristol is renowned for its research excellence, innovation and global partnerships. The university's collaborative ethos and civic impact mirror its city's reputation as one of Europe's most creative and dynamic hubs.

About THE

Times Higher Education (THE) is the definitive source of data, insight and expertise on higher education worldwide. For more than 50 years, THE has built trusted relationships with universities, governments and students, supporting better decision-making across the global higher education ecosystem.

With over 10 million datapoints from more than 7 000 institutions in 171 countries, THE provides globally recognised rankings, data products, consultancy services and professional solutions. Its platforms attract over 65 million annual visitors, spanning the full higher education community – from prospective students to faculty, university leaders, policymakers and funders.

Through its events portfolio, THE convenes influential voices from academia, government and industry to debate, discuss and shape the future of higher education. Its expanding family of companies – including Inside Higher Ed, Poets&Quants, BMI, The Knowledge Partnership and others – ensures that THE continues to deliver unparalleled insight, global reach and impact across the sector.

- [Find out more about THE.](#)

ENDS

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