

NEWS FROM:



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemakingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
La Grotto House, Glendarrach Rd, Rondebosch, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650-3733/2, Fax: +27 (0) 21 650-5682
Internet: www.uct.ac.za

20 April 2010

Record-breaking numbers to follow in Shuttleworth's footsteps

UCT Mathematics Competition: 20 April 2010. Command centre: Room 213, Maths Building, UCT Upper Campus
Registration: 17h30 for event at 20h00 (learners and UCT staff available for soundbites)

Long before entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth became the first African in space, he won gold in the University of Cape Town's annual Mathematics Competition. Today thousands of high school learners will be competing for the same prize – and who knows? One of them may someday venture further than Shuttleworth into a new frontier.

"UCT holds this annual competition to encourage learners and provide teachers with innovative maths materials they can take back into the classroom," said Dr Max Price, the Vice-Chancellor of UCT. "Whether or not they will register later as students at UCT, we want to seek out and develop talented learners in this subject, which is so vital to business, industry, research and innovation in South Africa."

The UCT Mathematics Competition will break several records this year:

A record 7648 entrants have registered, comprising 2438 individual learners in Grades 8-12, with another 5210 taking part as pairs. They represent 138 Cape Town schools (the same number as last year).

A record 200 Maths teachers have volunteered to help with registration and invigilation.

A record 60 venues will be used for the competition on UCT's Upper Campus.

The competition is organised by the UCT Maths Department, and supported by the Faculties of Science and Engineering & the Built Environment. Engineering company Aurecon is a corporate sponsor. Prizes are sponsored by Casio and Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Many participants from past competitions are now studying maths-related courses at UCT, and they are important role models and mentors. They will help run the 2010 competition.

Two lecturers in the UCT Maths Department participated in the competition as high school students and won gold awards: Dr Mark Berman and Mr Harry Wiggins both went on to win bronze medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad.

Background

The Mathematics Competition was started in 1977 by two local mathematics teachers, and it was first held in local schools. Even from the start, there were hundreds of entries. It soon outgrew the capacity of a single school to host it, so it moved to UCT in 1980. The papers are set by a team of teachers, and moderated by the staff of the UCT Maths Department. UCT Maths Professor John Webb took over as Director in 1987.

The Maths Competition has several spin-off activities:

- The UCT Invitational Mathematical Challenge, to which the top 30 students in each grade of the Competition are invited.
- Weekly meetings of the UCT Mathematics Circle, to which top performers in the Competition are invited. Later in the year the Mathematical Circle focuses on selecting and training Western Province teams to participate in the national Interprovincial Mathematics Olympiad in September. In 2009 Western Province teams were first in both Senior and Junior sections.
- The UCT Mathematics Series: a twice-yearly programme of Saturday afternoon mathematical fun and games, aimed at a general audience in grades 10, 11 and 12.
- Training is also offered to participants in the SA Mathematics Olympiad, a national event. Of the 20 finalists of the South African Mathematics Olympiad in 2009, 12 came from Western Province and were veterans of the UCT Mathematics Competition.

- Participation in the national Mathematical Talent Search, aimed at finding teams to represent South Africa in the Pan African Mathematics Olympiad (PAMO) and the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO).

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ray Hartle

Media Manager

Tel: (021) 650 5674 Fax (021) 650 5628

Cell: 083 4100312

E-mail: Ray.Hartle@uct.ac.za

Patricia Lucas

Media Liaison Officer

Tel: (021) 650 5428 Fax (021) 650 5628

Cell: 076 292 8047

E-mail: Pat.Lucas@uct.ac.za

University of Cape Town

La Grotto House, Glendarrach Road

Rondebosch

Website: www.uct.ac.za