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UCT delighted with Times Higher Education ranking

Full results of **Times Higher Education World University Rankings** available on
<http://bit.ly/thewur> after embargo is lifted

Please cite Ms Gerda Kruger, Executive Director: Communications & Marketing Department at UCT

The University of Cape Town is delighted to be placed once again among the top 200 universities in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. The institution has remained on the brink of the list of top 100 universities worldwide over the last three years.

The THE World University Rankings, released on 3 October 2012, place UCT at 113 (from 103 in 2011 and 107 in 2010). While any drop is a disappointment, it is a small shift, and our ranking remains a measure of consistently high international standing and reputation.

Professor Danie Visser, Acting Vice-Chancellor, said: "This kind of fluctuation does not worry us. There are thousands of universities in the world, and because the rankings are a relative positioning, it is possible for a university to score better on all the criteria, but still end up lower on the rank scale, just because some other institutions tried even harder."

Results from the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for 2012/13, released on 11 September 2012, place UCT at 154, from 156 in 2011 and 161 in 2010. The QS system ranks UCT as the only university in Africa in the top 200. The rankings also place four other South African universities in the top 700. UCT also performed well in the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), released in August 2012. The ARWU ranking for UCT remains unchanged in the 200-300 range, ranking UCT, once again, as the top university in Africa. The University of the Witwatersrand (Top 400) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Top 500) are the other South African universities that made the list.

"It is gratifying to be so well regarded by our peers, but we remain conscious that different institutions have their own strengths and bring their own particular value to their students. As a research-led university, UCT does well in global rankings because they all place a particular emphasis on research," said Professor Visser.

The THE system uses 13 individual performance indicators, which are intended to cover all three core missions of a university in its methodology: research, teaching and knowledge transfer. The highest weighted category remains "research influence", measured by the number of times a university's published work is cited in the papers of other academics. Knowledge transfer activities are also

included in an "industry income – innovation" category (worth 2.5% of the total ranking score) based on research income from industry.

The QS system uses: academic peer review: 40%; employer/recruiter review: 10%; student-faculty Ratio: 20%; citations per faculty member: 20%; proportion of international faculty members: 5%; proportion of international students: 5%.

The indicators used by the ARWU ranking include the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, the number of highly cited researchers selected by Thomson Scientific, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, and per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution.

The high international rankings held by UCT and other South African universities help to send out the message that students can receive a world-class education in South Africa. However, the rankings do not measure many crucial aspects of a particular university's mission, especially in the developing world.

For example, UCT devotes hundreds of millions of rands to promoting access to financially needy students who would not otherwise be able to come to a world-class university; to development programmes that recognise the inadequate academic preparation of many students admitted to UCT; to outreach projects that engage with communities that are in need of our support where we can be of use; and to research that addresses the key challenges of our society, such as infectious diseases, poverty and inequality, violence, climate change, and countless other issues. None of this is recognised in the rankings systems.

Thus while we are enormously proud of our achievements on the international playing fields, concern for rankings should never deflect us or any university from pursuing its duty to be socially responsive to the needs the community in which it lives.

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