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### **UCT Zoology and Botany departments in line with global trends**

The University of Cape Town's Zoology and Botany departments have merged to form a new Department of Biological Sciences.

The move is in line with global trends in which the teaching and research of life sciences has moved out of the domain of specialist departments and is increasingly organised under umbrella departments or schools.

UCT's undergraduate biological science courses have also been restructured to consolidate course content that will empower graduates to deal with critical environmental challenges facing Africa and the rest of the world, says Professor Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, who heads up the new department.

A world-renowned palaeobiologist, Professor Chinsamy-Turan was recently awarded the National Research Foundation's Transformation of the Science Cohort Award for her achievements. She explains that the historical organisation of biology into zoology and botany, as distinct and separate disciplines, is now deemed artificial.

"The modern biologist needs to have a multifaceted platform on which to build specialist skills. The merger of the two departments will therefore assist in efforts to equip graduates to develop specialist skills," maintains Chinsamy-Turan.

She explained that for some years UCT had moved away from teaching speciality courses at undergraduate level and only introduced specialisation at the honours level. "As a result, relevant new courses and majors were already being shared by both the Botany and Zoology departments."

"Biologists around the world are increasingly being expected to confront the challenges that society faces including climate change, pollution, conservation of biodiversity, overexploitation of natural resources and human-wildlife conflicts. Tackling these issues

requires a global and systems approach, rather than a taxon-centred approach,” she explains.

Chinsamy-Turan added that the merger will encourage collaboration between academics and researchers with specialist interests and will enable relevant training for the next generation of biologists.

**ENDS**

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