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UCT to host Africa's first International Mathematical Olympiad

The University of Cape Town will host the 2014 International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) in July 2014. The IMO is the world championship of mathematics, launched in Romania in 1959. The oldest and biggest of the major international science olympiads for high schools today draws participants from more than 100 countries, representing 85% of the world's population.

Cape Town was selected as the host city by the South African Mathematics Foundation (SAMF). Johann Engelbrecht, the Executive Director of SAMF, said: "2014 could be just what mathematics in South Africa needs. It is an opportunity to show the world that we are able to host world-class events and that we have world-class mathematicians."

Professor John Webb, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at UCT, will chair the local organising committee. He was responsible for taking the first South African teams to the IMO in 1992, and is currently Secretary of the IMO Advisory Board. Professor Webb said: "South Africa has taken part in the IMO every year since 1992, and over the years South African teams have won a total of 42 medals: one Gold, nine Silver and 32 Bronze."

Professor Webb said: "The IMO has never been held on the African continent before. At present rather few African countries take part in the IMO. We hope to increase the number of African participants significantly in 2014. Hosting the IMO is a major task, and we will be calling upon other Western Cape universities to join us in this project. Local maths teachers will also be recruited to give a hand."

Countries enter teams of up to six students, who must be 19 years old or younger and not registered at university. The teams write two very challenging problem papers over two days. Each paper consists of just three problems.

Professor Webb said: "The problems are very tough, and even experienced university mathematicians find them a challenge to crack."

Local boffins sign up in record numbers for 2012 UCT Mathematics Competition

A record entry of 8312 participants from a record number of 153 Western Cape schools will converge on UCT's Upper Campus on Monday evening, 16 April 2012, to test their skills in the annual UCT Mathematics Competition, sponsored by Aurecon and Capitec Bank, with prizes donated by Casio and Oxford University Press.

More than 200 high school maths teachers will help run the competition, which will take place in 63 venues on campus. Separate papers for each grade, from Grade 8 to Grade 12, have been set by a committee of maths teachers and UCT lecturers.

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