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UCT moves up in research rankings

Ranked 9th in the world for infectious diseases in subject rankings

The University of Cape Town (UCT) moved up 18 places, from 121st to 103rd position in the [2021 US News & World Report Best Global Universities rankings](#), and was ranked in the top 100 for six subjects, including an outstanding top 10 ranking for infectious diseases.

The Best Global Universities rankings differ from most other world university rankings in that the emphasis is on academic research. The methodology assesses 1 748 universities, ranking the top 1 500 in terms of a university's global and regional research reputation and academic research performance, using bibliometric indicators such as publications, citations (the number of times a publication is referred to) and international collaboration.

Said Professor Sue Harrison, UCT's deputy vice-chancellor for research and internationalisation: "We're delighted with UCT's performance, which really does reflect our research community's commitment to excellence. This has been a challenging year, yet we have remained steadfast in our focus and it is wonderful to be acknowledged for the work that we are doing.

"Our leading work in the health sciences has shown up particularly strongly in these rankings. We know that our researchers in the Faculty of Health Sciences do extraordinary work, and this pandemic has reminded us - if we ever needed reminding - of the critical work they do. I am also pleased to see our strengths reflecting well across disciplines in the subject rankings, as we know we cannot tackle our disease burdens – never mind the many other grand challenges – without reaching into social sciences and beyond."

Six subjects in the top 100

In the simultaneously released subject rankings this year, UCT ranked in 18 subjects, including six in the top 100:

- one subject in the top 10: infectious diseases tied at 9th in the world
- two further subjects in the top 50: public, environmental and occupational health (36th) and immunology (47th)
- three further subjects in the top 100: social sciences and public health (53rd), microbiology (79th), and psychiatry/psychology (92nd).

Professor Lionel Green-Thompson, UCT's dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, points out that the new rankings for infectious diseases and public, environmental and occupational health is "no accident". While these rankings would have relied on historic data, the COVID-19 pandemic has represented a powerful convergence of these disciplines providing an illustrative exercise of the intersection of biomedicine and public health through the determinants of health and wellness in the lives of communities.

"Occupational health in the faculty has had an impact on the safety of healthcare workers across the province and has found expression in the national discourse. The intersectoral nature of the disciplines which have been ranked augur well for future research in collaborative spaces."

Top 10 subject ranking for infectious diseases

Much of UCT's work in infectious diseases, the subject ranked in the top 10, takes place under the umbrella of the world-leading Institute of Infectious Disease & Molecular Medicine (IDM) which draws most of its members from the Departments of Medicine, Pathology and Integrative Biomedical Sciences in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Says IDM director Professor Valerie Mizrahi: "It's both exciting and gratifying to see how well UCT has performed. Placement in the top 10 in infectious diseases is a remarkable achievement which speaks to our position as a global leader in the fields of HIV, tuberculosis and HIV-associated TB.

"Global leadership in infectious diseases research is underpinned by disciplinary strengths in microbiology, immunology, clinical medicine and public health – all subject areas in which UCT has excelled. I am particularly proud of, and humbled by, this achievement, which reflects the work of many researchers and research groupings who have made major contributions to tackling the viral, bacterial, parasitic and fungal diseases that plague our country, continent and world through world-class research."

UCT a consistent presence through Top 50, Top 100 and Top 200

Public health, which has shown up well in two of the top 100 subjects, has long been a strength at UCT, and consistently shows in the top 100 across various university ranking systems.

Director and head of the School of Public Health and Medicine, Professor Landon Myer, said the ranking is "testament to the incredible value of the school's unique integration of world-class training programmes, cutting-edge research initiatives and close collaborations with both local health services and international public health agencies.

"While the methods for and value of ranking academic institutions in general is debatable, these rankings provide important recognition of the outstanding work that takes place throughout our school."

Rankings of the year

UCT continues to perform well in global rankings and this year leads Africa in four major world university rankings. Apart from the US News & World Report Best Global Universities, these include Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings and the Center for World University Rankings (CWUR).

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