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## Two additions to UCT's growing A-rated cohort of outstanding researchers



Professor Michael Claeys (left) and Professor Giona Tuccini (right)

Photos: UCT

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The University of Cape Town (UCT) recently welcomed two additions to its growing list of National Research Foundation (NRF) A-rated researchers, bringing the total number of A-rated researchers for the period in review to seven. The newly-rated researchers are Professor Michael Claeys, Department of Chemical Engineering and Professor Giona Tuccini, Department of Italian Studies.

A-ratings are awarded to researchers acknowledged as leading international scholars in their fields. The rating of individuals is based primarily on the quality and impact of their research

outputs over the past eight years, taking into consideration the evaluation made by local and international peers.

In addition to Claeys' and Tuccini's new A-ratings, UCT also celebrates the previous A-rated researchers whose rating has been confirmed for another five years. They are the late Emeritus Professor Jean Cleymans from the Department of Physics; Professor Rajend Mesthrie from the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics; Honorary Professor Robert J Wilkinson from the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM); Professor Jill Farrant from the Department of Molecular & Cell Biology; and Professor Mark Solms from the Department of Psychology.

The NRF rating system is a key driver in their aim to build a globally competitive science system in South Africa.

### **Professor Michael Claeys, Department of Chemical Engineering**

Claeys' research focuses primarily on catalysis for energy applications including the Fischer-Tropsch process, a technology which lies at the heart of South Africa's synthetic fuels and chemicals industry and one that is playing an increasingly important role worldwide in the production of green future fuels and chemicals from sustainable resources such as CO<sub>2</sub> and hydrogen.

As a soft-funded researcher, a large portion of this research is conducted as part of industrial collaborations including a longstanding partnership with energy and chemical company Sasol's Research and Development division. Claeys leads a team of high-level researchers from both UCT and Sasol in harnessing Fischer-Tropsch catalysis to address industrial problems in this field.

"Traditionally my strengths have been to test catalysts in a variety of reactor systems at fully relevant industrial reaction conditions," he says. "In recent years, however, my research in catalyst preparation and design has strongly improved as well, often facilitated by international collaborators."

### **Professor Giona Tuccini, Department of Italian Studies**

Tuccini specialises in the field of mysticism and religion in Italian literature (poetry and prose), medieval/early-modern Italian authors with a special focus on Petrarch and Spiritual Petrarchism, as well as in Italian prose, cinema and drama of the 20th century, in particular on Pier Paolo Pasolini and Enrico Pea, whom Tuccini is an undisputed authority.

"The aim of my research has been to analyse the intersections between ancient and modern/contemporary Italian culture in a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective," he says. "This has affirmed the centrality of the literary text as a wealth of echoes."

He joined UCT in 2010 as an associate professor of Italian Literature and Head of the School of Languages & Literatures' Italian Section. In the wake of receiving his NRF A-rating, Tuccini has been promoted to full professor. Tuccini believes that the NRF A-rating will greatly support his future projects in Italian Studies and enable him to build new bridges between specialists in South Africa and abroad.

***Ends***

**Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department**

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