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**27 September 2021**

## **Professor Phakeng's appointment “an honour for UCT” and an “exciting” move for Bristol**

### **Leaders at both institutions react to UCT Vice-Chancellor’s new dual role**

University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng will have the honour of becoming the University of Bristol’s (Bristol) first [Bristol Illustrious Visiting Professor \(BIVP\)](#) on 20 October 2021.

Over the year-long inaugural appointment, Professor Phakeng will engage with Bristol’s academic community and participate in a public lecture series.

The professorship will comprise a mix of virtual and in-person activities, and Phakeng will pay Bristol an extended visit to engage with their researchers, senior management team, and wider community.

Bristol is among the United Kingdom’s top 10 universities and among their top five for research.

This new initiative continues Bristol’s international collaboration programme with academics abroad and sits within their [International Research Partnerships portfolio](#).

The invitation from Bristol’s Vice-Chancellor Professor Hugh Brady recognises Phakeng’s “exceptional and inspirational” work in mathematics education and university leadership in post-apartheid South Africa.

Professor Brady said that by hosting Phakeng, Bristol hoped to “learn from and be inspired by her knowledge, approaches, and ethos”.

### **North-south collaboration**

The BIVP will also continue Phakeng's existing relationship with the institution from which she was [awarded an honorary doctorate in 2019](#).

In an announcement on the Bristol website Brady said, "[Phakeng] has established herself as an inspirational figure in maths education and university leadership in South Africa. I have already had the great pleasure of working closely with Professor Phakeng on our important Bristol-UCT Strategic Partnership, and as members of the Worldwide Universities Network. It will be exciting to have our entire community benefit from Mamokgethi's expertise, energy and vision over the year ahead."

The Bristol announcement also read: "We will work together to build on and enhance our research endeavours in mathematics education in particular, as well as developing our institutional partnership with the University of Cape Town more broadly. Due to the ongoing global pandemic, we anticipate that the majority of this Visiting Professorship will take place virtually; however, we are looking forward to welcoming Professor Phakeng to Bristol as soon as it is safe and practical to do so."

The appointment is a great honour, Phakeng said in response.

"[This is] not only for me on a personal level, but also for African scholarship. It's an opportunity to share from the work that I have done in multilingual mathematics classrooms in South Africa. On a much wider scale, I believe this appointment will also strengthen the relationship between two great institutions of higher learning: UCT, which is the highest ranked university in Africa, and the University of Bristol, which ranks among the world's top 60 institutions of research and higher education."

Phakeng added: "The landscape of education around the world, and more specifically the landscape of leadership in higher education, has changed a great deal in recent years and will change even more in the near future. I hope this new relationship will offer opportunities for me to share with my colleagues in Bristol from my own leadership journey. And I am excited to learn from them in turn."

### **Academic excellence**

UCT Chair of Council Babalwa Ngonyama said it was a great honour for UCT and for Phakeng. This opportunity had further cemented an important relationship for the university, and further entrenched UCT's relevance on a global scale.

Ngonyama said: "It is particularly meaningful to see our vice-chancellor leading the way, in a visiting professorship that will deepen her own ongoing scholarship in mathematics education as well as UCT's own research endeavour. Professor Phakeng mirrors [the] academic excellence we encourage in our academic community, as well as the value of research in areas that have important societal impact."

"I refer to Professor Phakeng's work in mathematics education in multilingual contexts – an examination of which languages are privileged, and which are marginalised and impact on teaching and learning. This is close to our hearts at UCT as we work towards transforming

our institution and making it a home to all, with the ultimate goal of unleashing human potential," said Ngonyama.

"We look forward to seeing the fruits of this collaboration. On behalf of the UCT Council, I wish Professor Phakeng a generative and fruitful year with Bristol university."

Associate Professor Shose Kessi, Dean of Humanities, which is Phakeng's research base, said: "Professor Phakeng's appointment is a singular honour for the university and for the Faculty of Humanities. As an institution, we pride ourselves on the quality of our scholarship and policy contributions in the field of education, as we understand its critical importance in shaping an equitable society.

"Our School of Education is a trusted producer of empirical research and nuanced understandings of the challenges and opportunities related to levelling the education playing field in South Africa and on the continent. Professor Phakeng's nous as a leader and as a top-tier scholar has added quality and great insights to the work we produce, and it is a privilege to have a VC with a deep appreciation for this work. The visiting professorship will provide an opportunity to further strengthen the channels in which we exchange knowledge, which will benefit many. I congratulate Professor Phakeng, and laud Bristol University for this appointment."

### **Enhanced relations**

The professorship will be launched with an online event on 20 October 2021, and [registration to attend is now open](#).

Brady said that he hoped the professorship would enhance relationships between the two institutions, which already benefitted from a range of collaborations. These include the bilateral [dual-PhD cotutelle programme](#); the UCT-led [Transforming Social Inequalities through Inclusive Climate Action](#) research programme; and a high-level meeting between the respective vice-chancellors and other senior management team representatives in June 2020 to discuss strategic priorities and alignment for the two institutions. This explored developing partnerships through other initiatives such as the [SDGs \(Sustainable Development Goals\) Africa Summit](#), and plans for a co-hosted global histories and collaborative research conference.

**ENDS**

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

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