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## **UCT rated within top five in Centre for World University Rankings subject rankings**

The Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR) on Monday, 03 April 2017, released their inaugural subject rankings which placed the University of Cape Town (UCT) in the top five – out of over 26 000 higher education institutions – in two subjects: Ornithology (third) and Area Studies (fourth). Overall, UCT was ranked 166th among the participating global institutions.

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalisation, says: “UCT is very proud indeed that our scholarship in these fields has been internationally recognised. Having universities that rank globally (including other South African universities) benefits the country as a whole. It sends a message that the country’s higher-education system is globally competitive.

“The high ranking in these two fields demonstrates that African researchers can take the lead in helping to solve African problems, and also that they are bringing a strong African voice to global debates.”

These rankings highlight the world’s elite universities in the sciences and social sciences, based on the number of research articles in top-tier international journals.

For more information visit the [CWUR website](#).

### **Ornithology ranked third globally**

For Ornithology (the study of birds), UCT was ranked third globally, along with Lund University in Sweden, which received the same ranking score as UCT (90.22). University of Groningen in the Netherlands and Cornell University in the USA were ranked first and second respectively.

Professor Peter Ryan, director of the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology (Fitztute), says: “This is great recognition of the contribution that researchers at UCT make towards

ornithological studies. The fact that UCT is so prominent in ornithological research provides further validation of the success of the National Research Foundation (NRF) Centre of Excellence funding model." (See more about the Fitztute below.)

Professor Phakeng adds: "As a university, we are grateful to the NRF for the funding that we've received to enable much of the work that has happened in this area, putting South Africa and the continent on the map. It is investments such as these that will help to make the issue of African biodiversity visible globally. "

In addition to the [Fitztute](#), the [Animal Demography Unit \(ADU\)](#) and the [Centre for Statistics in Ecology, the Environment and Conservation \(SEEC\)](#) have strong interests in bird-related research, giving UCT a critical mass of ornithological researchers and research expertise unmatched in the southern hemisphere.

Professor Ryan says: "Southern Africa has a wealth of bird life, making it an excellent place to study bird biology. Our birds also face numerous threats, so much of our research is aimed at conserving birds and their habitats for future generations. We work closely with BirdLife South Africa, a leading environmental non-governmental organisation. Citizen science projects, such as the ADU's [Southern African Bird Atlas Project](#), generate huge databases that provide further impetus to ornithological research at UCT."

### **Area studies ranked fourth globally**

UCT was ranked fourth globally in Area Studies. According to Thomson Reuters, Area Studies covers resources concerned with the social, economic, political and military character of a geographical area or region such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, etc. The University of Oxford was rated first in Area Studies, followed by the University of the Witwatersrand and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London in the United Kingdom.

Professor Jeremy Seekings, Interim Director of the new Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, says: "Being ranked fourth in Area Studies is a tribute to several generations of scholars at UCT who have sought to locate the study of South Africa – its languages and literatures, its history and politics, its economy and society – in a more broadly African context.

"African studies at UCT has benefitted from an illustrious series of champions, including Jack Simons (professor of African studies through the 1950s and early 1960s, until forced into exile), Mike Savage (the founding editor of *Social Dynamics*), Mahmood Mamdani (the inaugural AC Jordan Chair of African Studies) and Martin West (for many years the force behind UCT's 'Board of African Studies', which helped to finance research by both academics and postgraduate students).

"What these and many other UCT scholars realised was that scholarship could contribute both to recognised disciplines (such as History or Sociology) and the highly interdisciplinary field of African studies. This paved the way for mainstreaming the study of Africa in diverse departments rather than isolating it in an institutional ghetto."

Says Professor Francis Nyamnjoh, in the Department of Anthropology (Fellow of the Cameroon Academy of Science and the African Academy of Science: "It is noteworthy that UCT is in the limelight for Area Studies. This is a promising beginning for the sort of leadership expected of UCT on the Africa-wide journey into the exciting new possibilities that a concerted, systematic and truly epistemologically inclusive effort at reconfiguration of higher education in South Africa should deliver."

### **More about FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology**

The institute was recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the Department of Science and Technology through the NRF in 2004. Since then the institute's research output has grown steadily in terms of the number of papers and students, and their impact. The recognition of the institute as a Centre of Excellence also strengthened ties to bird researchers at the Universities of Pretoria and Limpopo, and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

### **More about Area Studies at UCT**

UCT is home to a wide range of research groupings focused on better understanding the politics and economics of Africa. For more information about our research groupings please [visit](#).

Such research groups include: [Institute for Democracy Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa](#), which conducts comparative empirical studies of contemporary African democracy; The [Democracy in Africa Research Unit](#) within the Centre for Social Science Research; the [Poverty and Inequality Initiative](#); the [South African Labour and Development Research Unit](#) and the [Centre for African Studies](#), among others.

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