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Professor Phakeng joins University of Bristol UCT VC in new dual role to advance international learning and leadership

University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng has embarked on an exciting new role as the University of Bristol's first-ever Bristol Illustrious Visiting Professor to supercharge African scholarship, inspire learning, and strengthen relationships on a global stage.

Described by University of Bristol as "world-renowned African mathematician" and "a trailblazing academic leader", Phakeng holds an honorary doctorate at the university. Bristol is a top 10 UK university and is ranked 58th in the world (QS Rankings 2021).

Phakeng was invited to undertake the inaugural position in recognition of her exceptional work in mathematics education and university leadership in post-apartheid South Africa.

The year-long appointment will feature a series of public lectures open to all online and everyone can watch the virtual [launch event](#) on Wednesday, 20 October, when Phakeng will be officially welcomed by Professor Hugh Brady, Bristol's Vice-Chancellor and President, and Professor Judith Squires, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Phakeng said: "Being appointed as the first Illustrious Visiting Professor at the University of Bristol is a great honour, not only for me on a personal level, but also for African scholarship. It's an opportunity to share from the work 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. 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."

Throughout her illustrious career, Phakeng has broken new ground in a range of prestigious positions, including being elected as the first woman President of the Convocation of the University of the Witwatersrand, where she holds a PhD in Mathematics Education, leading the Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa (AMESA) as its first woman National President, and being the first Black South African researcher to be appointed to co-chair a study commissioned by the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction.

Her extensive research and community work has won many awards, including the Order of the Baobab (Silver), conferred by the President of South Africa and last year she featured in *Forbes'* list of the 50 Most Powerful Women in Africa.

Bristol Vice-Chancellor and President, Brady, said: "The University of Bristol is delighted and honoured to welcome Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng as our first Bristol Illustrious Visiting Professor. She 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 Illustrious Visiting Professorship](#) (BIVP) scheme is a new initiative building on the University of Bristol's proud legacy of uniting and collaborating with leading scholars from across the world.

Phakeng's role will also further enhance existing partnerships, including the University of Bristol's bilateral Dual-PhD Cotutelle Programme and the UCT-led Transforming Social Inequalities Through Inclusive Climate Action research programme, while also supporting and developing initiatives such as the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), the Sustainable Development Goals' Africa Summit, as well as plans for a co-hosted global histories and collaborative research conference.

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