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Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng,
Chair: UCT Fellowships Committee

Dear Professor Phakeng,

**Nomination of Professor Nicola Illing
as a Fellow of the University of Cape Town**

It gives me great pleasure to be able to nominate **Professor Nicola Illing** of the Department of Molecular & Cell Biology in the Faculty of Science as a Fellow of the University, in recognition of her distinguished record as a researcher and academic.

Professor Illing is a BSc (Eng) and Master's graduate of this University who went on to do a DPhil at Oxford. She came back to UCT first as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Dept of Chemical Pathology from 1990-1993, and was then appointed as a Lecturer in the then Biochemistry Department in the Faculty of Science. She was appointed *ad hominem* to Associate Professor in 1996, became Head of Department of Biochemistry in 1998, and then Head of the new Molecular & Cell Biology Department from 2001-2003. She was promoted *ad hominem* to full Professor in 2011. She has been awarded a number of prestigious scholarships and bursaries, but most notably the NRF/FRD's President's Award, for excellence in a young researcher, in 1995. She also received the SA Biochemistry Society's Silver Medal in 1995. She is presently rated B3 by the NRF.

She has established herself as a leading international expert in the field of "evo-devo" – evolution and development – research, with a holistic rather than narrowly-defined single-disciplinary approach. She has focussed in on the fundamental theme of evolution of development, with studies on how morphological adaptation and variation has arisen in vertebrates and plants, from a common genetic toolkit. Thus, in recent years she has worked on bat wing development as well as on desiccation tolerance in plants, with a wide range of South African and international collaborators.

She and her team have published 62 peer-reviewed articles or book chapters since 1989, which have garnered 2321 citations (Scopus, 2021) for a Scopus H-index of 29 and Google Scholar H-index of 33. Her publication record shows ample evidence of high-impact and novel research, in high-ranked international journals – and an uncompromising approach to publishing quality rather than quantity. She has also

graduated 17 MSc students by dissertation and 13 PhD students, which is an excellent record. She presently has 5 PhD students registered.

Her contributions go beyond just academic research, as she has been a reviewer for a wide variety of top international journals in her field, and was an Associate Editor for the SA Journal of Science for 2010-2012. Most recently, she has been a Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Science for 5 years, and has spearheaded initiatives to give funding to young researchers, as well as being involved in a University initiative for funding postgraduates.

I attach evidence of her distinction as a locally and internationally recognised researcher, together with a list of very eminent potential international referees, her curriculum vitae, publication lists, and a collection of her key publications. I am sure that you and the College of Fellows will agree that she is richly deserving of election as a Fellow.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Rybicki', written in a cursive style.

Ed Rybicki
Director, BRU
Fellow of UCT
FRSSAf, MASSAf