

Nine SA universities make the grade in QS World University Rankings 2018

The 2018 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings, released yesterday, 8 June 2017, include nine South African universities in its African list of 18 institutions. University of Cape Town (UCT) remains at the top of that ranking, at position 191 and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) has improved its place to enter the top 650.



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UCT rises in employer rankings

UCT performs among the top 20% of the almost 1,000 institutions evaluated in the QS rankings and remains the top university in Africa.

“It is encouraging that UCT is holding firm in the current uncertain climate of the higher education system in South Africa and in a highly competitive global arena,” says Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, deputy vice-chancellor for Research and Internationalisation at UCT. “While rankings are an imperfect measure of the quality of a university, it remains important for the country and the continent that we continue to produce excellent research and teaching, and are seen to do so.”

QS uses six indicators to build a university’s overall score; academic reputation, employer reputation, citations per faculty, faculty-to-student ratio, international staff ratio and international student ratio. UCT’s performance across these indicators

was varied, but its strongest performance was in the academic reputation indicator, which is based on a global survey. This is by far the most heavily weighted indicator, 40% of the overall score and suggests that UCT's international reputation among leading academics remains steady.

The university rose 43 places in the employer reputation indicator, which is based on the views of employers from around the world as to which institutions provide the best graduates. Some of this improvement can be attributed to a shift in weighting of international and domestic employers. Previously, QS applied a weighting of 70% for international responses and 30% for domestic ones, but a new refinement has shifted this ratio to 50:50 because a larger proportion of responses are now from domestic employers, who typically have a better knowledge of local institutions.

Youngest ranked university

The 12-year-old UJ is the youngest of all ranked universities in South Africa and has moved into the fifth ranking position nationally in the category 601-650). It is the only one of these top five universities in South Africa that has achieved this distinction without the benefit of a medical school.

Based on six performance indicators, related to global reputation, research output and quality, internationalisation, and teaching and learning; UJ's overall score was achieved, in part, by its improvement in employer reputation, as well as by its increased complement of international staff and students.

UJ outperformed the South African average for participating universities in four of the six indicators, namely, employer reputation, staff-to-student ratio, international staff and international students. The scores for international students and employer reputation indicators show the highest improvement from 2016 to 2017.

UJ is pleased with the recognition of its performance, which serves as an affirmation of UJ's strategic commitment to being locally responsive whilst maintaining global competitiveness.

Other university rankings

Three other African universities were included in the top 400 – Stellenbosch University at 361, the University of the Witwatersrand at 364 and The American University in Cairo at 395. The other South African universities are University of Pretoria (501-550); Rhodes University and University of KwaZulu-Natal (701-750); Northwest University and University of Western Cape (801-1000).

For more information, go to www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2018.

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