



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Degrees for sale scam at the University of Zululand

2 August 2016 - The Department of Higher Education and Training notes the Sunday Times article “Degrees for sale scam rocks Zululand varsity” published on 31 July 2016 with concern. The Department has been aware of the challenges experienced by the University of Zululand in this regard and has taken several steps to ensure the integrity of the University’s qualifications since this issue of fake qualifications was reported in the Independent Assessor’s Report of 2011.

Institutional leaders are reminded that public trust and confidence in the higher education sector and the integrity of academic qualifications are among its most important assets. The Council of an institution in terms of the Higher Education Act has a fiduciary and governance responsibility to ensure that a public higher education institution maintains quality in its primary activities of teaching and learning, and research.

The Minister in terms of his oversight responsibility will seek an urgent meeting with Council and will make a determination in this regard after all facts in this matter have been assessed. The falsification of qualifications and/or changing of marks are serious matters that compromise the integrity of the entire higher education system of our country.

It is important to provide a historical overview of the challenges experienced by this institution and interventions initiated by Minister Nzimande to remedy the situation.

The Minister appointed an Independent Assessor on 22 November 2010 to conduct an assessment into the affairs of the University of Zululand in terms of sections 44, 45, 46 and 47 of the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) as amended. The investigation by the Independent Assessor revealed serious challenges with regard to governance and management administration of the University that were destabilizing the effective functioning of the institution. The Independent Assessor found that it was clear that there may be people whose qualifications were are not authentic.

Following the Independent Assessor’s Report, the Minister appointed an Administrator for the University of Zululand with specific terms of reference including the initiation of a forensic audit and an investigation into the affairs of the office of the Registrar. Three forensic audits were concluded in January 2012, which raised serious irregularities relating

to university employees in possession of blank degrees and diplomas that could be used to fraudulently manufacture and sell false qualifications to students. Serious and repeated transgressions of University policy and procedures and acts of theft, fraud and corruption were uncovered. Disciplinary procedures were concluded against members of staff and students who were implicated.

The Minister notes with grave concern the Sunday Times report that the falsification of qualifications at the University of Zululand is resurfacing and continues unabated despite the implementation of systems, processes and procedures by the Administrator. These systems were to ensure and promote ethical conduct, fairness and transparency in the institution as well as internal control systems that will ensure prevention, early detection and timeous correction of acts related to fraud, corruption and maladministration.

The Department of Higher Education and Training views all such claims in a very serious light and will not hesitate to deal with Councils and Universities that make themselves guilty of this unacceptable and unethical conduct. The Department will act without fear or favour against anyone found guilty in this regard.

Issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training

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