



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Media High Alert**

**21 September 2017**

### **DHET WARNING ON CLONED AND FRAUDULENT ONLINE UNIVERSITIES**

Recent investigations by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) have uncovered a disturbing trend by fraudulent online universities that operate through parodying the names and profiles of already existing legitimate institutions.

Last week the Department intercepted marketing material seeking to promote the launch of a fake online American University in Johannesburg called the University of the People or UoP.

Further investigations revealed that the name and a somewhat altered acronym belong to an unrelated and legitimate institution. Furthermore, there is no supporting evidence on the legality of UoP with the United States' Department of Education.

Meanwhile the Department has been in contact with the authentic University of the People (UoPeople) and has determined that the institution is duly registered and accredited by the relevant US authorities.

#### **Please note the difference between UoP and UoPeople.**

However, due to the fact that UoPeople has no legal or physical presence in the form of operation sites in South Africa, the university is still considered unlicensed to operate in this country.

The Department wishes to reiterate that no online university or private higher institution resembling either of the two names are registered or accredited - as required by law - to enrol students or grant university qualifications in South Africa

The Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), governs the provision of higher education in South Africa including the establishment of universities.

Separate investigations have also uncovered another scam orchestrated by some of the legally registered institutions operating in the country. Their modus operandi is a deliberate misrepresentation of already accredited and registered programmes by changing the title of the qualifications, e.g., *Bachelor of Commerce* is marketed as a

*Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Management.* This practice is becoming widespread and it is causing untold damage for unsuspecting students.

The Department wishes to reiterate that students should first verify information on the Department's website to ascertain the legality of any institution before enrolling in order to avoid falling prey to bogus colleges and universities.

The website address is [www.dhet.gov.za/Resources/Registers](http://www.dhet.gov.za/Resources/Registers). Alternatively, they can forward their queries to [registrarpei@dhet.gov.za](mailto:registrarpei@dhet.gov.za), [registrarfet@dhet.gov.za](mailto:registrarfet@dhet.gov.za) and/or [callcentre@dhet.gov.za](mailto:callcentre@dhet.gov.za).

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**Issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training**

