

Degree fraudsters to face the music

Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande says serious action will be taken against those who have fake qualification certificates.



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The Minister said they will be prosecuted and publicly named and shamed.

Minister Nzimande said this after receiving an update from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

SAQA continues with its work to track forged national and foreign qualifications, as commissioned by Cabinet last year.

The Minister said fraudulent qualifications pose a serious threat to the credibility of the country's education system.

"This is a matter which we take very seriously, [hence] we have embarked on legislative measures to curb these phoney qualifications... We are proposing a 'roll of shame' for holders of such bogus qualifications.

"One of the most precious things any country can have is the credibility of its qualifications and higher education system, which is why we are acting robustly on the scourge. If one lies about one's qualifications or produces a false certificate, it is fraud, even in terms of existing law," Minister Nzimande said.

Minister Nzimande published new regulations last year to force employers to refer their employees' degrees for validation and verification.

SAQA will register the names of holders of bogus certificates on its website, a move that government hopes will end the growing prevalence of qualification forgeries.

Over the past few years, a number of cases of qualifications fraud, including those involving high profile figures, have been reported.

Between 1 October and 31 December 2016, 52 foreign qualifications had been found to have been forged, while 17 national qualifications were misrepresented.

As at the end of January 2017, a total of 1,276 qualifications (444 national and 832 foreign qualifications) were also recorded on SAQA's list of misrepresented qualifications.

Seventy-eight affidavits have been completed for handover to the Hawks for prosecution.

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