



The South African Dental Technicians Council

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COMMUNIQUÉ

RE. TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY 2021 PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS

The South African Dental Technicians Council has received queries from students who took the final practical exit-level examinations in May 2022 and who have been graduated by TUT but cannot register with the Council. Council therefore wishes to place on record the following:

1. The Council has been engaging with TUT for a number of years now regarding the declining standards of TUT's Dental Technology programmes, which according to the Council, have not been adequately preparing graduates thereof to register and practice as dental technicians and dental technologists.
2. This led to the Council appointing its own examiners, in line with Act and Regulations. In 2019 and 2020 the examiners concluded that the work was of a poor standard, and not sufficient for professional registration. Their report concluded by requiring a re-examination of the students.
3. However, in the meantime, the University, knowing that only two of the students had been passed by the Council examiners, chose to ignore this, and graduated the students. These have become known as the 'pipeline students'.
4. At the request of the Minister of Health, the Council proposed a compromise solution to enable the registration of these students, as they refused to take a re-examination. This solution was accepted by the Minister but has yet to be implemented. The solution is annexed to this communiqué.

5. The 2021 cohort of students, for a variety of reasons, including all the problems of COVID-19, had their academic year extended to May 2022 prior to their taking their final practical exit-level examination.
6. During ongoing discussions with TUT and especially around the assessments used by TUT to assess the practical work, it became evident to Council that TUT's assessments methods were fatally flawed as students passed despite producing work that is considered to be clinically unacceptable. This method of assessment was previously rejected by the Council and detailed explanations were conveyed to TUT. Regardless of this, TUT continued to ignore Council, until very recently (mid-July 2022).
7. The negotiations around the pipeline students became increasingly acrimonious and Council and its examiners have feared for their safety. This was based on threats received from the students to "burn down Council House"; the insulting manner in which members of Council and the Registrar were treated in a meeting on TUT campus by both students and staff; and the deliberate disruption of a Council workshop by TUT students and staff. Consequently, the Council examiners felt they could not enter TUT campus this year to assess the practical work of the 2021 cohort.
8. In light of the fact that the sample work produced by the exit-level lecturers is always transported to Council House prior to the examination, Council requested that the students' practical examination work also be transported to Council House where the Council examiners could assess the work in safety.
9. Unfortunately, *en route* to the Council the transportation was hijacked, and all the work was lost. Therefore, Council cannot register these students as their work has not been assessed by the Council examiners, and Council cannot accept the assessment of the University examiners. This cohort of students has now been referred to as the '2021 stolen exam' students. In the meantime, TUT has once again graduated these students, whose final practical work was not assessed by the Council's examiners.
10. As a result of further negotiations with TUT, Council has approved that the following options be given to these students, and has requested approval of these from the Minister of Health:
 - a. The students must take a re-examination, and the work will be assessed jointly by the University and the Council examiners;

b. The students join the existing cohorts of pipeline students and undertake the compromise solution as approved.

11. Once approval for these options has been granted by the Minister of Health, this communiqué will be updated.



MRS PT NKUNA
REGISTRAR/COUNCIL SECRETARIAT