



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Mr C Plaatjies

E-mail: clintonplaatjies@outlook.com

Dear Mr Plaatjies

ILLEGAL AWARDING OF QUALIFICATIONS BY THE FREEDOM INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Thank you for the e-mail of 12 April 016, regarding the above.

The Department has a statutory responsibility of regulating the activities of private higher education institutions operating in South Africa. The *Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997)* (hereafter referred to as "the Act") and the *Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions, 2016* (hereafter referred to as "the Regulations"), make it mandatory for private institutions, local or foreign, offering higher education programmes to be registered with the Department before they operate.

In terms of section 51 of the Act, no person other than a public higher education institution or an organ of the state may provide higher education unless that person is registered or conditionally registered with the Department as a private higher education institution. Section 66 of the Act makes it a criminal offense for an institution to provide higher education without registration.

Section 65(D) of the Act stipulates that: "*No person may offer, award or confer a degree, or a higher education diploma or a higher education certificate, provided for on the HEQSF unless such a degree, diploma or certificate is registered on the sub-framework for higher education on the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in section 7(b) read with section 13(1)(h) of the National Qualifications Act.*"

The HEQSF, a copy of which is available on the Department's website at www.dhet.gov.za, was published on 2 August 2013 by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in Government Gazette Number 36721, Volume 578 which makes the HEQSF effective from 2 August 2013. The HEQSF stipulates the following qualifications as higher education qualifications:

- a) *Higher Certificate;*
- b) *Advanced Certificate;*
- c) *Advanced Diploma;*
- d) *Diploma;*
- e) *Bachelor's Degree;*
- f) *Honours;*
- g) *Masters: and*
- h) *Postgraduate Diploma.*

The purpose of registration is to ensure that private higher education institutions operate within the law, have the necessary resources, capacity and expertise to offer acceptable standards of higher education, the programmes they offer are registered, the qualifications the students attain are aligned to the NQF and students are protected from fraudulent operators in higher education. Further, the Department is required to ensure the highest standards of integrity at all levels, that the Department discharges its responsibilities in an accountable manner and that it protects the public against any form of malicious and unscrupulous conduct threatening the higher education system.

Regarding the awarding of the *Doctor of Philosophy (Missiology)* by the *Freedom Institute for Theological Studies and Research* which is supposedly domiciled in Trivandrum, Kerala, India, to Paul Charles, the Department is able to confirm as follows:

- a. According to the information at the disposal of the Department, the *Freedom Institute for Theological Studies and Research* is not recognized by any state authority in India and it cannot therefore award a *Doctor of Philosophy (Missiology)*.
- b. Any person purporting to have a degree awarded by the *Freedom Institute for Theological Studies and Research* is doing so in contravention of section 66(2) of the Act which stipulates that:

“Any person who pretends that a qualifications has been awarded to him or her by a higher education institution, whereas un fact no such qualification has been awarded, is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to a sentence which may be imposed for fraud.”

- c. In light of points a) and b) above, the Department cannot recognize the *Doctor of Philosophy (Missiology)* awarded to Paul Charles by the *Freedom Institute for Theological Studies and Research*.
- d. Further, any person purporting to have obtained a *Doctor of Philosophy (Missiology)* from the *Freedom Institute for Theological Studies and Research* would be committing an offence in terms of section 66(2) of the Act.

Should you wish to pursue legal charges against an organization or the individual, you may file a case of fraud with the *South African Police Services (SAPS)*. You may attach a copy of this letter to the affidavit. The Department will assist in signing a 212 statement if an when SAPS approaches the Department for a statement.

The Department will conduct further investigations and pursue the legal process in due course. In this regard, it would be appreciated if you could provide all of the contact details of Paul Charles so as to assist the Department in its own investigation.

Should you have a query, do not hesitate to contact the Department.

Yours sincerely



Dr Shaheeda Essack
Director: Private Higher Education Institutions