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Beware of bogus online schools and websites that sell fake certificates

Umalusi is seriously concerned about the mushrooming of bogus online schools as well as the increase in the reported cases of fake certificates being sold to unsuspecting members of the public.

Currently, Umalusi is working with the SAPS on various cases that concern unaccredited institutions that have admitted students into non-existing programmes. Such institutions circulate fake Umalusi accreditation certificates or fake emails purporting to be accredited by Umalusi. Some institutions issue students with fake letters bearing the Umalusi logo which letters are purported to be legitimate registration letters. In addition, the institutions make students write exams using old questions papers accessed from the websites of provincial education departments.

The CEO of Umalusi, Dr MS Rakometsi, said “to date, Umalusi has not accredited any online school to offer any of its qualifications. In the same vein, Umalusi is not aware of any such institution having been registered by any provincial education department.” Umalusi urges the public to visit its website (www.umalusi-online.org.za/enquiries) to verify the accreditation status of an independent school or a private college.

Similarly, members of the public are warned against buying fake certificates that are advertised through various social media platforms. Umalusi is the only institution in South Africa that is legislatively mandated to issue certificates of learner achievement in respect of the NSC, SC(a), NC(V) levels 2-4, N2-N3, and GETC: ABET. No other body or person is allowed to issue any of these certificates.

The public is warned that the practice of selling and buying fake certificates is a criminal offence which is punishable by law. Umalusi condemns this fraudulent activity in the strongest possible terms. All employers in the public and private sectors are advised to verify their current or future employees’

qualifications through the agencies that Umalusi has contracts with. Their names are available on the Umalusi website (www.umalusi.org.za). Simply click on the Certification & Verification icon. The verification service is reserved for the qualifications / certificates that are issued by Umalusi.

The public is urged to report any case that involves operating an illegal institution to the relevant provincial education department. The selling and buying of fraudulent certificates should be reported through the tollfree number (0800 408 409) or email address (umalusi@whistleblowing.co.za).

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