

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA issues urgent advisory to 2025 matriculants and tertiary students regarding illegal educational institutions
DATE	7 January 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) in Mpumalanga hereby issues a critical alert to the 2025 cohort of matriculants, current students, and their families to exercise extreme caution when enrolling in higher education institutions for the upcoming academic cycle.

As the province prepares for the release of matric results, there is a historical surge in the activity of "bogus" colleges, unregistered entities that exploit the anxieties and aspirations of young South Africans.

These illegal institutions operate without the requisite accreditation from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) or the Council on Higher Education (CHE), ultimately issuing qualifications that hold no value in the professional labour market.

The rise of these predatory entities represents a significant threat to public confidence in the national education system and places an undue financial burden on hardworking families. For a student, the discovery that years of study and significant financial investment have resulted in an unrecognised certificate is a devastating blow that can derail a career before it begins.

From a strategic labour perspective, these institutions compromise the quality of the workforce and create a cycle of unemployment. The PSA emphasises that resilience in the face of academic pursuit must be matched by diligence in verifying the legitimacy of one's chosen institution. To safeguard their futures, the PSA urges all prospective students to perform a rigorous verification of any private college before signing contracts or paying registration fees.

A legitimate institution must be able to provide proof of registration with the DHET and clear evidence that its specific programs are accredited by the relevant Quality Council, such as Umalusi or the CHE. Common red flags often include institutions that lack permanent physical infrastructure, those that pressure families for full upfront tuition payments, or those that make extravagant promises of guaranteed employment upon graduation.

The PSA remains steadfast in its 105-year legacy of protecting the interests of public servants and the broader community. While the PSA calls upon the government to intensify enforcement and shut down these illegal operations with greater urgency, the primary line of defence remains an informed public.

The PSA encourages all learners to consult the official registers maintained by the DHET to confirm the status of their prospective colleges. Ensuring that the youth enter the workforce with credible, recognised qualifications is essential for the continued excellence of our public service and the economic health of the Mpumalanga province.

END

