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## **The facts about Mr Joseph Khohlokoane's debt at UCT**

**Please cite Ms Gerda Kruger, Executive Director: Communications & Marketing Department, UCT**

The University of Cape Town has noted multiple inaccuracies in the reports on a graduand's study debt. Below are the facts of the matter as UCT:

UCT confirms that Mr Joseph Khohlokoane graduated today. It is UCT policy that students who have outstanding debts cannot graduate. This is not unique to UCT. However, it must be noted that UCT, when requested, and despite the unpaid debt, will confirm to potential employers that the students indeed completed the academic courses successfully. We do this in order to ensure that the student is not prejudiced in securing employment because of the outstanding fee debt.

Mr Khohlokoane studied for his BSocSci from 1992 to 1996. He completed his studies in December 1996. He was academically eligible to graduate but was blocked from the ceremony due to outstanding fee debt. At that time the debt amounted to R5,196.

Mr Khohlokoane's study was fully funded by UCT (including tuition, housing, meals, book allowance and sundries). This financial assistance totalled just over R69,000: R40,884 from UCT bursaries, R26,800 in loans from the government and a UCT bail-out loan of R1,400.

However, the annual Family Contribution required by UCT was unpaid. UCT did pursue the debt, first directly with the student and later the case was handed over to attorneys. Mr Khohlokoane did make sporadic payments of R50 and then R100 per month, which stopped in 2000. UCT tried to contact him numerous times in 2000 and 2001, without success. UCT stopped pursuing the debt from November 2002.

The debt was cleared by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in March 2013. Mr Clarence Johnson of Worcester contacted the DHET about Mr Khohlokoane's situation. By this time the debt, interest accrued and debt collection charges amounted to R8,342.

UCT has a very generous financial aid system to help students in financial need. In fact we distribute some R141 million a year to students from various sources. It is, however,

expected that students pay UCT the fee that they have agreed with the institution. Student fees are a large proportion of UCT's income and we are reliant on that income to sustain our operations.

We are grateful that only about 0.6% of our annual student fees are unpaid at each year-end. We encourage students to seek guidance if they are struggling to pay the fee debt after qualifying. As an example, the Department of Higher Education and Training makes available some funding that, in certain cases, can assist students who have completed degrees but are unable to repay the financial commitments they agreed to.

***ENDS***

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