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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 3894**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 28/10/2022**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 42 OF 2022**

**Mr S S Zondo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

Noting that over the past year South African media houses have reported on an array of cases that paint a very grim picture of the internal operations at universities, ranging from cases related to human rights violations, gender-based violence, a culture of racism and claims of cover-ups, (a) how often does his department conduct oversight visits at South African universities and (b) do such visits include a focus on non-academic internal operations? **NW4852E**

**REPLY:**

The Department has a regular schedule of oversight visits to institutions relating to key programmes and reporting schedules, particularly those linked to earmarked funding from the Department.

On governance and management issues, the Department maintains oversight through the reporting regulations and regular engagement with institutions.

In 2014, the Minister of Higher Education and Training approved the Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions, aimed at improved institutional accountability. The Regulations provide the legal framework for reporting by all public HEIs required from a council and management team of a public higher education institution, so that they exercise their fiduciary and managerial responsibilities in a transparent manner; implement mechanisms that will ensure good corporate governance; and give regular account of the results of exercising their delegated power.

A university, in its submission, must ensure alignment between the following institutional plans and instruments: strategic plan, annual performance plan, annual report, budget documents and mid-year performance report. All reports must be signed and approved by the Council before submission to the Department.

The Department has an oversight function to monitor and oversee the implementation of the reporting regulations. The Chief Directorate: Institutional Management and Governance Support analyses the reports and checks to ensure that universities have complied with the reporting regulations. Should information be omitted in the reports, a request is made to the university to provide the requested information.

A financial health report is prepared by the Department to provide a consolidated review of all universities. This allows the Department to assess whether institutions are financially healthy as at the reporting date.

The Council Chairperson’s report is also analysed together with the Governance Scorecards to understand governance practices of each institution and across the system; and to identify areas of non-compliance with the requirements of the Act.

The Minister and Department are guided by the Higher Education Act in terms of the circumstances under which the Minister can intervene at institutions.

The Department also processes and responds to complaints and queries from the public, students, and stakeholders with regards to public higher education institutions, in relation to any matter of concern.