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6 October 2016

Dear IEASA Directors Forum

Re: Meeting with DHA regarding international students affected by student protests

Dear All

IEASA has met with Mr Phindiwe Mbhele, Director of the Corporate Accounts Unit at the Department of Home Affairs and have detailed the concerns of our institutions regarding international students being affected by the ongoing student protests.

The following was discussed and agreed upon:

1. With regards to returning students whose academic programme is still continuing into next year and beyond, the normal renewal/extension process will remain. Universities should provide letters confirming continuance of studies for those whose visas expire in Dec 2016.
2. Final year students whose academic programme ends in Dec 2016 and only need to return in 2017 for graduation will follow the existing process of applying for a visitor's visa in 2017 for the purpose of coming to graduate (if their current visa expires while they are abroad). Those who are visa exempt will travel directly to RSA for graduation.
3. Final year students who are unable to complete their academic programme because of the protest and are instructed by universities to return in 2017 will be issued with an extension letter of acceptance by the university to extend/renew within South Africa. The requirement to apply 60 days before expiry of current visa will be relaxed.
4. Final year students who are unable to complete their academic programme because of poor academic performance (related/not related to the protest) will have to renew/extend as per current protocol.
5. Where necessary, the current checklist for supporting documents (Study visa) will be relaxed and only critical documents required to allow for an extension not exceeding 6 months to allow completion of the academic programme. IEASA is currently confirming with DHA the actual requirements for these visa extensions. A list will be sent to the IEASA DF by Friday 14 October.
6. All the above proposals are dependent on whether universities decide to move the academic programme over to 2017 or as per normal allow the academic programme of 2016 to end in Dec 2016.

Should any universities decide to extend the 2016 Academic year into January of 2017, solution number 3 would apply and students must be told immediately to start applying for their renewals.

Please also note that now when applying for renewals from within South Africa, through VFS police clearance documents are no longer required due to the fact that biometrics are now taken from within VFS offices.

Excerpt from notice:

"With effect from the 01st of October 2016 The Department of Home Affairs will automate the process of obtaining a South African Police Clearance Certificate. Instead of the applicant going to a police station to apply for a police clearance, VFS will use the applicant's biometrics (fingerprints) which we are already collecting in the current process and use them to run background checks against the South African Police

Services database. On receipt of the electronic police clearance VFS will merge the records with the main application and transmit the contents electronically to DHA as a full and complete application. The SAPS database background check will take an average of 24 – 36 hours, a great improvement from the 3 to 4 months that it takes currently to get a police clearance from SAPS, as reported by applicants.”

For more information on this, please visit: <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/rsa-police-clearance-certificate>

For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely
Dr Nico Jooste



Dr Nico Jooste

Senior Director: Office for International Education, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and

IEASA President.