

Three varsities get their houses in order

Of the five universities placed under administration by Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande, three are on the road to recovery while problems continue at the other two.



Blade Nzimande (Image: GCIS)

Nzimande placed the University of Zululand, Tshwane University of Technology, Walter Sisulu University, Central University of Technology and the Vaal University of Technology under administration between 2011 and 2012.

The institutions had reportedly been riddled with tender corruption, infighting, poor administration and poor academic standards.

Higher Education director-general Gwebinkundla Qonde told Parliament on Thursday (15 August): "You can't intervene on the basis that there are systemic failures that you've seen which would jeopardise the [good] standing of an institution.

"The processes are such that you would try and negotiate your way even though the institution is bleeding to death; when it is in the ICU it is when you're able to get in and salvage what is left of it," he said.

He said legislation, related to the autonomy and governance of universities, had prevented the department from intervening earlier.

The department's Pear Whittle said the University of Zululand's code of ethics had been revised and that employees had to declare their interests to prevent fraud and corruption.

Whittle said the Tshwane University of Technology was stable and progressing after it was placed under administration in 2011.

At Walter Sisulu University (WSU), which struggled financially, stability had been achieved in the short-term with all creditors paid, staff salaries secured, payment backlogs cleared and a break-even budget tabled for the current year.

In April R3.1bn was requested from national government to fund a turnaround strategy for the university. Whittle said WSU's administrator, Lourence van Staden, faced major challenges and that a change in the institution's culture was required.

At the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein, attempts to appoint an administrator were challenged by the university council after allegations of fraud and corruption.

After losing the case, Nzimande decided not to appeal because of the enactment of the Higher Education and Training Laws Amendment Act in December last year.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>