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SA LONDON MET STUDENT: "I FEEL LIKE A REFUGEE"

South African claims she stands to lose £35,000 in student visa nightmare

by HEATHER WALKER

PHD student Michelle de Jongh stands to lose many hours of work and at least £35,000 invested in her education after London Metropolitan University's right to issue visas to foreign students was revoked by the UK Border Agency last week.

The university's licence was withdrawn after it failed to address "serious and systemic failings identified by the UK Border Agency six months ago." This means it has been removed from the register of licensed sponsors, and students from outside the European Union are no longer allowed to study at the university.

De Jongh, from Cape Town, commenced the process of applying for her doctorate in Business Studies at around the same time the Border Agency began its investigation into London Met.

Her course application entails working with her supervisor to prepare a 4,500 word proposal that takes months of research and must show considerable understanding of her subject. It is then submitted to the relevant UK body and goes through another vetting process before it is finally approved.

De Jongh started preparing her application in March, but had to continue working on it back in ...continued on page 2



London Metropolitan University's right to issue visas to foreign students was revoked by the UK Border Agency.



INSIDE:

Deon Meyer: The Heart of the Writer | p9

International bestselling crime writer Deon Meyer was in the UK as guest of Harrogate, the world's most prestigious crime writing festival. We caught up with him as he shared his views on writing, fame and his love for South Africa.

Angie Steele's recipe for rooibos & vanilla bean crème brûlée | p8

The good old crème brûlée with a hint of rooibos; so subtle that it takes a genuine South African to appreciate such a delicate flavour.

SA Chamber of Commerce hosts Helen Zille and Wesgro | p13

Zille's topic of discussion at a talk in London on 1 October will be: The Changing Landscape of Investment in South Africa.

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Jubilee: Sunday 16 September, no service between Finchley Road and Stratford. Saturday 15 September, no service between Green Park and Stratford.
Northern: Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 September, no service between Charing Cross and Camden Town. Sunday 16 September, no service between High Barnet and Camden Town until approximately 0845.

Minister commends Woolworths' effort to address transformation

■ After facing claims of racism, Woolworths has been commended for its EE implementation

by STAFF REPORTER

LABOUR Minister Mildred Oliphant has commended Woolworths for its "unwavering effort to genuinely address transformation in the workplace through the implementation of employment equity (EE)".

This comes after labour union Solidarity last week launched a campaign to boycott Woolworths after the retail group ignored its set deadline to remove advertisements, which the union claimed were racist towards white job seekers.

In a statement on Friday, Oliphant said it was important to highlight that Woolworths was among the number of large designated employers listed on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange that have been subjected to the Director-General Review process in terms of sections 43 to 45 of the

Employment Equity Act, 1998 in 2009.

"During this process, like any other employer that was reviewed, Woolworths committed itself to transforming their workplace by implementing their Employment Equity Plan as approved by the Director General.

"Subsequent to that, as part of the department's monitoring mechanisms, Woolworths was amongst those companies that were followed up in the 2011/2012 financial year to gauge progress made against the objectives they committed themselves to their approved Employment Equity Plan.

"Interestingly, Woolworths generally progressed well towards achieving race and gender equity at their workplace as per their own EE numerical goals and targets set

in their own EE Plan consulted and agreed to with their employees," Oliphant said.

She said there were companies that were genuinely addressing transformation in the workplace through the implementation of employment equity and Woolworths was one of them.

"However, there are those that hate to see integration in the workplace and society in general. They seek to find fault with those that genuinely implement employment equity as a means of addressing our painful past and imbalance in our society.

"As the government of South Africa and those that seek genuine transformation, we shall continue to encourage companies like Woolworths to continue with the transformation and integration of the society," Oliphant reiterated.

Last year, the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), which advises the minister on matters of EE, cautioned at the release of its annual report that it will take more than 129 years to transform the workplace to reflect South Africa's demographics judging by the snail pace of transformation.

The 2011 CEE report showed that top management and senior management positions were still dominated by white people in South Africa, while black people were stuck in the lower rungs in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, in comparison to their economically active population.

Figures from the 2012 CEE report indicate that there may be not much deviation from this preponderant situation, said the minister.

- *SAnews.gov.za*

South African student stands to lose £35,000 in London Met visa drama

continued from page 1...

South Africa because she had to leave the country so she didn't overstay her visa. When her new Tier 4 visa was granted in July, she returned to the UK.

The resident of Gospel Oak said she only found out about the visa debacle through the press.

De Jongh has contacted the dean of research, the vice-chancellor, her MP, and even the South African embassy for assistance.

She is now seeking legal advice.

"Taking into account that I continue to pay rent on my London flat, the money spent flying back and forth between SA and UK and having to sell my flat in Cape Town to pay for my studies, this is a £35,000 investment in my career I cannot afford to lose," said De Jongh, who on graduating hopes to secure a position in international policy at a multinational company.

"I entered the country legally and have met all the extensive criteria for a Tier 4 visa. I have been hung out to dry," she fumed.

De Jongh, who studied her Masters degree through London Met, said it was not simply a case of applying through another institution. "In the case of my particular course, I need to complete my PhD through the same institution as my Masters. If I do it through another university I have to resit my Masters, which will cost another £15,000.

"There are very few universities that offer my specialisation – this is why I am studying it here rather than in South Africa. Also as my topic is quite controversial

(corporate responsibility and sustainability in the oil, gas and mining industries in post-conflict countries), very few people understand it as well as my present supervisor does. I've been trying to apply to other universities but they are all full. I feel like a refugee, I have nowhere to go."

London Metropolitan University spokesman Nick Hansen said he sympathised with De Jongh's plight and that he would seek clarification from the university on her case.

He added that London Met had made every effort to communicate with its international students and had set up a helpline to provide them support. Contact the hotline on: 020 7133 4141.



■ Phd student Michelle de Jongh.



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