



**Communication and Marketing Department  
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**13 June 2017**

## **UCT statement on an outdated media report on a student's unpaid debt from 1996**

An inaccurate report from 2013 is circulating about a student who waited 17 years to settle unpaid fee debt and graduate. Here are the facts about this incident.

- The outstanding debt in this student's account was R5 196 at the time of leaving UCT in 1996. The student made initial payments of up to R100 a month and then stopped in 2000. UCT tried to renew contact with him until 2002.
- He was later assisted and the debt was cleared by the Department of Higher Education and Training in March 2013. The total settlement was for R8 342, including interest and debt collection charges.
- At the time the story was written, it was UCT policy that students who had outstanding debts could not graduate. This was true for other universities as well. However, it must be noted that UCT, when requested, and despite the unpaid debt, would 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.
- UCT has a financial aid system to help students in financial need. In 2016, the university distributed R626 million (undergraduate) and R351 million (postgraduate) 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, DHET 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***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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