

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION 195**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 27 OF 2010)**

**Dr W G James (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

Whether he has any plans to support universities to join the University of Cape Town for inclusion in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings Top 200 universities; if not, why not; if so, (a) how will the targets for excellence be met to enable the universities to qualify and (b) what are the further relevant details?

**NO3112E**

## REPLY:

1. Comparative practices related to league tables like the Times Higher Education World University Ranking is limited in its biased use of a range of indicators in an attempt to measure and compare universities. There are many differences between universities and the context in which universities are developed; continue to develop and function - including the financial, historical, social, political and cultural changes - makes information obtained in this way controversial. South Africa is on a specific development trajectory and imperatives considered as being key to South African universities might be excluded from the list of criteria against which institutions are judged.

A snapshot evaluation of these rankings shows a bias towards universities which are larger and well-resourced, where English is the language of the academy and modelled along Westernised notions of what a university is or ought to be. Strikingly, there is little to no recognition for the humanities and creative arts.

2. As the South African Government, our objective is to ensure that the quality of our universities is constantly and consistently measured against our own set of criteria (including international best practices). We have in place the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), which is the permanent committee of the Council for Higher Education mandated to ensure a robust quality system for the university sector. The HEQC executes this mandate through a vigorous process of academic programme accreditation as well as institutional audits. The process is aimed at continuously improving and strengthening our university sector.