

TERTIARY

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - DENTAL COLLEGE

YEAR 2021

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - RANKING (16.11.2021)

(No. B/1094) **Dr F. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) current ranking thereof at international level;
- (b) reasons for the down ranking thereof to the 89th place at the level of African Universities, and
- (c) criteria used internationally to assess the standard thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ranking of universities worldwide is conducted by a number of international ranking providers. The University of Mauritius has been ranked by several such bodies and the hon. Member is referring to the uniRank, which is a ranking body featuring reviews and rankings over 13,723 officially recognised universities and colleges worldwide.

As per the uniRank list of 2021, the University of Mauritius ranks 89th in the top 200 best universities in Africa. I am informed by the University of Mauritius that the rank given by uniRank is based on website traffic flow and is not an academic ranking; it does not provide an indication of academic excellence related to teaching, learning and research at a university.

The University of Mauritius is also ranked by Webometrics Ranking of world universities whose primary objective is to promote open access of knowledge to society

at large and has ranked the University of Mauritius 59th in Africa and 33rd in Sub-Saharan Africa in July 2021.

Furthermore, in the prestigious Shanghai Ranking, the University of Mauritius is ranked in the top 150 in the field of Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the hon. Member would wish to know that one of the commonly used metrics for ranking purposes is the international reach of a University. This metric gauges the degree of mobility towards the University by both incoming international students and faculty. I am informed by the University of Mauritius that the change in ranking of the University on the uniRank from the 85th position in 2020 to the 89th position in 2021 is due to the following reasons –

- restrictions in mobility of international students given that Mauritius is found in a geographically remote from the mainland country and owing to the worldwide disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- also the low Internet traffic flow, that is, a general decrease in browsing on the University's website by prospective students.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as for part (c) of the question, it is to be noted that ranking is based on a set of criteria which includes *inter alia* –

- research, quality and output;
- graduate employability;
- knowledge transfer;
- international outlook;
- quality education, and
- teaching and learning standards.

I am informed that existence of an Apex High Education Regulatory Body in the country to charter, license or accredit a higher education institution is also taken into consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary, please!

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you, hon. Minister. Truly as you said the uniRanking is based on a web traffic accreditation. Will the Minister - I am sure she is aware, of the Scimago Institutions Ranking which like a composite indicator of research, innovation

outputs and social impact, the University of Mauritius has again there gone down from 58% in 2016 to 93 in 2020 in Africa - give us some explanation as reasons thereby?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have just mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the ranking is based on a number of attributes and in any particular ranking system, there are certain attributes that are given more weightage than others. So, if we look at the Scimago Institutions Rankings, its classification of academic and research-related institutions ranked by composite indicator that combines three sets of indicators based on research performance in relation to outputs and societal impact measured by the web visibility. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are a number of factors that influence the ranking given to a particular institution.

Dr. Aumeer: Thank you. Hon. Minister various concerns since the publication of such report and I know that ranking comes from a lot of different institutions, there has been raised bid by students, academicians and non-academicians, staff at the University of Mauritius. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether her Ministry had discussions with the vicechancellor in view of improving our ranking, be it academic, be it web-based traffic, be it exposure to the public, be it research work, in an attempt to improve the self-confidence of those working at the University and you surely know that any student, at any University, take it as a pride of the ranking of the University he or she is attending? Thank you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, indeed the University of Mauritius has engaged in a series of actions to ensure that the research output increases and this in view of pulling up its rank on the world ranking systems. However, we have also laid a lot of emphasis on quality and research work. You will note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Higher Education Commission has come up with more than 17 schemes for research to encourage institutions to go for research and on top of that the setting up of the Quality Assurance Authority based on criteria that are worldwide and accepted worldwide has been set up to ensure that the quality of delivery at the level of the public universities is enhanced.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is also the Kigali Initiative, which is one where institutions in the region in Africa are trying their utmost to get into at least the 200 best universities of the world. So, all this is being kept in mind and actions are being taken at the level of the universities to ensure that the ranking is upgraded.