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Media release by Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, and Tshwane University of Technology, regarding the impasse with the South African Dental Technicians Council.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Durban University of Technology (DUT) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) - the only South African institutions training Dental Technicians and Technologists – have launched an application in the High Court, Pretoria, to address the ongoing impasse between the Universities and the South African Dental Technicians Council (SADTC).

Discussions with the SADTC on accreditation, assessment and registration processes have continued since 2019 without resolution. This has led to no new student intakes by the Universities, over a number of years, thus placing these critical programmes at risk of permanent closure. The five students who graduated from TUT since 2023 constitute the country's graduate output.

Dental Technicians and Technologists are essential members of the oral healthcare team. A prolonged shortage will harm public access to dental services. The Universities have always prioritised quality and public safety, noting that technician work undergoes multiple layers of professional review before reaching the dentist, who retains final responsibility for patient care.

The three Universities seek various orders from the High Court, including:

- setting aside the SADTC's unfair and unilaterally imposed current final practical examination framework (where a Diploma student currently fails if any one of 112 binary pass/fail criteria is failed), not aligned with national or international norms and standards; and
- requiring the SADTC to register the 159 "pipeline students" who lawfully completed their qualifications prior to 2022.

The Universities launched the application to enable the sustainable continuation of dental technology training and to ensure continued student intake in these critical programmes.

We call on the Department of Higher Education and Training and the National Department of Health to support a swift, constructive outcome that safeguards high-quality dental technology education and meets South Africa's oral health needs.

For inquiries, contact: DUT- mbowenit@dut.ac.za

CPUT- Kansleyl@cput.ac.za

TUT- TshisikhaweRPT@tut.ac.za