

ACCREDITBASE REPORT FOR 2011 REVEALS 48% INCREASE IN FAKE UNIVERSITIES

Submitted by: Verifile Limited

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Accredibase™ second annual report into diploma and accreditation mills (<http://www.accredibase.com>) activity has revealed an astounding 48% increase worldwide in the number of known diploma and accreditation mills in the last year. As the Internet is the primary home for these bogus education and accreditation providers, little action is taken to stop them from helping unscrupulous candidates deceive unsuspecting employers.

According to the 2011 report, the UK remains Europe's bogus university capital with 57% percent of European diploma mills claiming to operate from its shores. This year has seen a 25% increase in known diploma mills in the UK, with the number rising from 271 to 339, whilst in Europe as a whole the total number has risen from 454 to 593, an increase of 31%.

Top 10 European locations of the 'degree con' by country:

United Kingdom with 339 mills and 25% change over last year

Italy with 43mills and 207% change over last year

Belgium with 36 mills and 33% change over last year

Netherlands with 34 mills and 13% change over last year

Switzerland with 21 mills and 31% change over last year

Ireland with 20 mills and 25% change over last year

Germany with 13 mills and 0% change over last year

Spain with 12 mills and 33% change over last year

Austria with 11 mills and 0% change over last year

France with 11 mills and 57% change over last year

The world's biggest concentration of fake universities is still in the USA according to the 2011 Accredibase report which exposes 1,008 known bogus institutions, a rise of 20% in the last year.

Diploma mills are largely online entities whose degrees are worthless due to a lack of valid accreditation and recognition. The wide reach and anonymity of the Internet offers these operations the perfect market to exploit, which is alarming not just for prospective employers but for society as a whole.

Perhaps the largest and longest running network of diploma mills, University Degree Program, is still thriving despite action by the US Federal Trade Commission back in 2003. Accredibase found 18 active "university" and "accrediting agency" web sites linked to UDP, all hosted on the same IP address.

Whilst many of these UDP mills claim to be based in the UK or have UK sounding names (eg. Chelsea University), there has been no action against them by the UK Government.

Eyal Ben Cohen, Managing Director of Verifile Limited said: "The most effective way to combat credential fraud is to share information on diploma mills through international cooperation and raise awareness of the problem. This year's Accredibase report examines the current status of the diploma mill situation and considers what can be done to protect the public and businesses. Information

resources like Accredibase make it easier for regulators, law enforcement agencies and the private sector to access information on bogus institutions and aid in the detection of diploma mills.”

The Accredibase report identifies the following red flags that may help in the identification of diploma mills*:

- The institution does not have authority to operate or grant degrees from the education authorities where it claims to be based.
- Degrees are delivered in a very short space of time – sometimes just a few days.
- Degrees are granted based entirely on work or life experience.
- Contact details are limited to an email address and the institution is vague about its location.
- The institution will allow the student to choose his/her own course title and specify the graduation year to appear on the certificate.
- Sample certificates, transcripts or verification letters are available to view on the website.
- Institutions make over-complicated or misleading claims about accreditation or recognition.
- The institution’s name is similar to that of a recognised and respected education institution.
- Internet domain names are misleading – such as ‘.ac’ instead of the regulated ‘.ac.uk’ used by higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.
- The website is poorly designed, has poor spelling and grammar or it plagiarises copy from other institutions.

Verifile’s proprietary database of diploma and accreditation mills (<http://www.accredibase.com>), Accredibase™, keeps track of the credential fraud industry. Verifile’s Accredibase has identified approximately 5000 suspect educational institutions and accreditors, including 2,615 known bogus education and accreditation providers. In addition to the huge number of confirmed mills known to Accredibase, new suspect institutions are discovered on a daily basis – more than 2,000 are currently under investigation by Accredibase for inclusion in the database.

For further information or to read the Accredibase report for 2011, please visit <http://www.accredibase.com>

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* Adapted from Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2008 and Bear & Ezell, 2005

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Verifile Limited

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