JOHANNESBURG - The Council for Quality in General and Further Education and Training, known as Umalusi, on Monday condemned the alleged sale of fake matric certificates through two websites it said it was able to identify.

“This is illegal and constitutes a criminal offense punishable by law. Umalusi condemns this fraudulent activity in the strongest possible terms. The misrepresentation of qualifications causes potential damage to the image of Umalusi, the country’s education system and by extension undermines government’s efforts to eradicate corruption,” the organisation said in a statement.

“Therefore, all members of the public are urged to vigilantly report these unscrupulous individuals and entities to the South African Police Service or alternatively report them anonymously on Umalusi’s national fraud hotline - 0800 000 889.”

The organisation identified the two website addresses as http://fakematricandcertificate.co.za and http://www.registermatriccertificates.co.za.

The internet page of the first website address shows not only matric certificates are available, but also diploma and degree certificates, driver’s licences, birth certificates, including death certificates. According to the website, a requested certificate is sent to a buyer as soon as payment and other additional information such as photographs are received.

The other website states that its services included registration of the purchased matric certificate on the South African “government database system”. It would take four to seven days to get the certificate into the government system after proof of payment is received, read information posted on the website.

Umalusi CEO Mafu Rakometsi said issuing of fraudulent certificates was on the increase and urged those who wanted to ascertain qualifications to contact Umalusi or other private agencies.

“It is appalling that people who manage these websites continue to do this with impunity... I want to assure South Africans that the law will be extremely harsh to those who are found guilty of producing fake matric certificates.”