



Republic of the Philippines
Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education

Ground Floor, Bldg. E, UP Ayala Land Technohub Complex, Commonwealth Ave. Diliman Quezon City
Email: unifastsecretariat@ched.gov.ph



MEMORANDUM FROM THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TES-18-2019

For : **Presidents/Heads**
Higher Education Institutions with TES Grantees

Regional Directors
Commission on Higher Education

UniFAST Regional Coordinators

From : 
ATTY. CARMELITA YADAO-SISON MNSA, Ph.D.
OIC, Executive Director IV
Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education

Subject : **INCIDENT REPORT ON UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS OF UNIFAST TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY (TES) SERVER BY EXTERNAL INTRUDER/HACKER**

Date : 10 April 2019

In accordance with the Data Privacy Act, the UniFAST Secretariat hereby informs the general public and stakeholders about the incident report by its ICT Team of unauthorized access of the UniFAST Tertiary Subsidy (TES) Server by an external intruder/hacker on March 16, 2019. Please see the attached copy of the incident report containing the full details of the incident, and the data and other information being deleted by the hacker, for your reference.

In this regard, the incident has already been reported immediately to the National Privacy Commission which is conducting its own investigation and proper action on the said incident.

Upon the instruction and approval of the UniFAST Board, the UniFAST ICT Unit has been directed to restore the TES Portal system in a secured server to prevent the recurrence of the incident and to ensure that the necessary security protocols are in place to restrain unauthorized persons from unlawfully accessing the UniFAST TES Server.

The ICT Team noted that the breach did not affect or cause damage to the validated list of TES grantees because the incident happened much later or after the completion of the validation and verification process on the TES applicants on January 25, 2019. During the January 28, 2019 Board meeting, the body unanimously approved the final list of 232,115 TES grantees. Hence, any such breach could not affect the operation of UniFAST Secretariat since the back-up copies had already been saved by the System Developer prior to the incident.

The UniFAST Secretariat guarantees and commits to all concerned that it shall restore the TES Online Portal as soon as possible after all the backup data are migrated and transported into the new system. Rest assured the UniFAST ICT will take appropriate security measures to protect the integrity of all the UniFAST data.

Cc: **Chairman J. Prospero E. De Vera, DPA**
CHED and the UniFAST Governing Board





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Data Breach Incident Report

Agency	:	Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST), a government instrumentality created pursuant to Republic Act No. 10687 and attached to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
Address	:	Ground Floor, Building E, Ayala Land Technohub Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Contact No.	:	0928 551-1317
Incident	:	UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS OF UNIFAST TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY (TES) SERVER BY EXTERNAL INTRUDER/HACKER
Date of Incident	:	Sunday, March 17, 2019
Time of Incident	:	9:00 A.M.
Systems Involved	:	CHEDRO Registry Portal, Higher Education Institutions' Portal, Regional Coordinators' Portal, and TES Management System Portal
Data Involved	:	Personal Data of 1,130,899 Applicants for Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES): <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learner's Reference Number;2. Student Identification Number;3. Full Name - last name, first name and middle name;4. Birth date;5. Father's name;6. Mother's name;7. Address – Town, City/Municipality, Province and Zip Code;8. Course enrolled;9. Year level;10. School;11. Tuition fee (total assessment);12. Household number; and13. Family Income.

Breach Details

On March 17, 2019 (Sunday) at around 9:00 A.M., the Developer of the System was informed by a certain TES focal person of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) about the inaccessibility of the HEI-Portal. Thereafter, the Developer checked the UniFAST TES Database named *tetris_db*. He found out that the said database was deleted by an intruder/hacker from its server with an IP address <http://202.57.63.88>.

After remotely checking the server and confirming the database deletion, the developer noticed a created database named *please_read_me_xmg* with a table named *warning* that has a record which contains a ransom note on how to recover the lost data, a Bitcoin address and an email address of the intruder. The following is the record entry from the database table named *warning* ---

Warning Message:

"To recover your lost data : Send 0.045 BTC to our BitCoin Address and Contact us by eMail with your server IP Address or Domain Name and a Proof of Payment. Any eMail without your server IP Address or Domain Name and a Proof of Payment together will be ignored. Your File and DataBase is downloaded and backed up on our servers. If we don't receive your payment, we will delete your databases."

BitCoin Address: 1666666vT5Y5bPXPak4jWqJ9Gr26SLFq8P

Email Address: muhstik@protonmail.com

Moreover, the MySQL database configurations used by TES systems were modified by the intruder.

On March 18, 2019, the Developer notified the Data Protection Officer that he had reasonable belief that a personal data breach occurred.

Actions Taken

The Systems Developer further assessed the breach. He tried to trace the intruder from the logs and found no trace and immediately saved the warning database created by the intruder. The developer also restored the TES database from its backup copy and performed checks and updates on MySQL server on the same day when the breach was found since HEIs were already calling about the inaccessibility of their HEI Portal because they were retrieving information of their TES grantees.

On March 18, 2019, the UniFAST Secretariat informed the CHED Office of Planning, Research and Knowledge Management (OPRKM) about the incident. On the same date, the Secretariat ascertained when the unauthorized access transpired and the magnitude and possible impact of the breach. It was determined that the breach occurred on March 16, 2019 which happened much later than the completion of validation and verification procedure on the TES applicants on January 25, 2019. During the 18th Regular meeting of the UniFAST Board on January 28, 2019, the Body unanimously approved the final list of TES grantees numbering 232,115. Hence, any such breach could not affect the operations of the UniFAST

Secretariat since back-up copies had already been saved by the Systems Developer prior to the incident and the process of evaluation of applicants was already terminated.

On March 19, 2019, actions were taken by the UniFAST Secretariat to further secure the remaining data. A plan was made on how to inform the data subjects and assure them that the Secretariat will employ stiffer measures to secure their data.

On March 20, 2019, the UniFAST Secretariat had a meeting with the CHED OPRKM Director IV and MIS staff and the following were discussed:

1. How to restore the integrity of the information and communications system;
2. The proper treatment on how to remedy possible damages; and
3. Proposals on how to prevent the recurrence of the incident.

Subsequently, the narrative report was submitted to the Chairman of the CHED and the UniFAST Governing Board. It was also agreed that the incident be reported immediately to the National Privacy Commission in accordance with the Data Privacy Act for advice on next steps to address the breach.

Prepared by:



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Reported by:



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