

ARTICLE: University staff member leaves over phantom PhD

A University of Otago staff member has left after it emerged she did not have a PhD from Cambridge University she claimed.

Karen Hartshorn was a science communicator in the Dunedin multidisciplinary health and development unit.

Her role was to use Otago science research discoveries to write academic papers in newspaper and magazine articles.

She left the university recently, about two weeks after a tip to the Otago Daily Times that she had inflated to qualifications.

The University will not reveal whether she resigned or was dismissed.

English-born Ms Hartshorn does hold a BA from Harvard University in the US.

She was also a PhD student in geology in the science department at Cambridge University in Britain for four years.

But she never completed her Cambridge qualification, and her name does not appear on the PhD graduate's role on the university's library catalogue or in annual reports from the earth sciences department.

Responding to enquiries, Nicholas Saffell from Cambridge's office of external affairs and communications said in an e-mail that in September 2004, Ms Hartshorn submitted a revised PhD thesis which was sent to the examiners, but she has not yet had a "viva" the oral examination required to complete the degree process.

Ms Hartshorn's situation has some similarities to that of Mary Anne Thompson, the former head of the New Zealand immigration service, who resigned this year after was discovered she did not have the doctorate from the London school of economics she claimed.

Ms Hartshorn did not claim to hold a doctorate when she obtained her first job in Dunedin, in 2006, as director of New Zealand International Science Festival, the woman who employed her, Dame Elizabeth Hanan, said on Monday.

In a March 2007 interview, Ms Hartshorn said she had a PhD in geology from Cambridge in recent was referred to as Dr. Hartshorn.

She was also listed as holding that qualification and title in the university's staff list for last year and this year, and has been referred to as Dr in official documents since 2007.

Ms Hartshorn was not available for comment.

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