

Ministry rejects appointment of NTU president-elect

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National Taiwan University (NTU) president-elect Kuan Chung-ming, sitting, signs a T-shirt sold by students supporting him as university president at the university's campus in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Wu Po-hsuan, Taipei Times

The Ministry of Education last night announced that due to concerns over failures to avoid conflicts of interest, it has decided not to approve the appointment of National Taiwan University (NTU) president-elect Kuan Chung-ming (關陳明).

The decision came more than three months after Kuan was elected by the NTU election committee as the university's president. Kuan was originally scheduled to take office on Feb. 1.

While campaigning, Kuan did not reveal he was a Taiwan Mobile (台電) independent director, among other posts, Deputy Minister of Education Lin Teng-chiao (林騰鏢) said.

Taiwan Mobile vice chairman Richard Tsai (蔡啟芳), who was on the committee, also failed to avoid a conflict of interest, he said.

NTU did not fulfill its responsibilities in the election, resulting in a competition that was unfair and biased against other candidates, he added.

At the same time, a situation in which academic integrity was obviously breached also emerged, Lin said, referring to accusations of plagiarism by Kuan.

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The university's presidential election is to return to its initial stage of reviewing the qualifications of recommended candidates, he said.

The ministry said it has asked NTU and the committee to report after they have carried out a complete recommendation and election process that meets the requirements set by the university.

Kuan did not respond to requests for comment as of press time last night.

Since his election on Jan. 5, Kuan has been accused of plagiarism and having a conflict of interest, which initially cast doubt on the legitimacy of his selection and prevented the ministry from confirming his appointment with effect from Feb. 1 as scheduled.

The university eventually cleared Kuan of the accusations, but last month allegations surfaced of him teaching illegally in China since 2005.

Earlier this month, the ministry assembled a task force to investigate whether Kuan had been working in China — a breach of Taiwan's laws, which prohibit government officials, public servants and public-school teachers from working in China.

Kuan served as a minister without portfolio from 2012 to 2015, Council for Economic Planning and Development minister from 2013 to 2014 and National Development Council minister from 2014 to 2015.

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