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NSFAS joins PCHET and DHET oversight visits to institutions

ACEO thanks NSFAS staff for their dedication during festive season

Tshepo Boshiane

The Acting CEO of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Mr. Waseem Carrim, has commended staff for their dedication and hard work during the festive season to ensure that key deadlines and targets were met.

Speaking at a recent staff dialogue session, the ACEO expressed his sincere appreciation to employees for their commitment during one of the busiest periods of the year. "We are on track. And this is not a reflection of the Board or me. It reflects the hard work that you put in," Mr. Carrim said.

He noted that this progress was achieved without introducing new systems, but rather through teamwork and collective effort. While acknowledging that challenges remain, he emphasised that NSFAS carries the hopes and dreams of many young people across South Africa, making the

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Inside this edition:

- NSFAS donates thousands of laptops to schools and colleges
- NSFAS partners with the National Gambling Board (NGB) to promote responsible gambling awareness among students



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NSFAS accelerates digital access across institutions

Tshepo Boshiane

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has donated over ten thousand laptops to various TVET Colleges, schools and Community Education and Training (CET) centres across the country to assist top performing learners and NSFAS funded students bridge the digital access gap in their academics.

NSFAS embarked on a Digital Access Campaign last year, when it donated over 600 laptops to the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE), which hosted the Studentpreneurs Indaba at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

These laptops were procured by NSFAS during the 2019/20 financial year, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, to support TVET students in



Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube handing over laptops to top performing NSFAS funded students at Northlink TVET College.

continuing their academic activities through online learning.

This intervention was necessitated by the nationwide lockdown, which required students to transition from traditional face-to-face learning to remote and online modes of instruction due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The donation by NSFAS is in accordance with, and in support of, the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA), Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003 (BBBEE Act), the Preferential Procurement

Policy Framework Act, No. 5 of 2000 (PPPFA), and NSFAS' Supply Chain Management Policy/Asset Disposal Policy, as applicable, with the aim of promoting equitable access to education and economic participation.

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work of every employee meaningful and impactful.

Reflecting on the recent application cycle, Mr. Carrim highlighted the system’s performance: “NSFAS systems are not bad. We managed to process close to a million applications without any serious glitches.”

He added that systems alone are not enough - “You can have the best systems in the world, but if you do not have the right people and processes in place, even the best systems will not work for you.”

During the session, the ACEO provided updates on:

- Applications and appeals
- Approved numbers for First Time Entering Students (FTENs) and continuing students at universities and TVET colleges
- Registration data
- Loan applications
- The disbursement schedule

He also addressed several organisational matters, including:

- Board-approved policies
- Skills development initiatives and the ongoing skills audit
- Individual performance contract assessments
- Introduction of new employees, including executives
- The decentralisation project and the Head Office relocation
- Subsistence and Travel (S&T) rates, noting that clear guidelines will be finalised

Regarding office relocation, Mr. Carrim confirmed that the current lease expires in January 2027. “Our lease here ends in January 2027. We have started a process to establish two offices — one in Gauteng as the Head Office and one in the Western Cape. As we have committed to you, no one will be forced to move. You may choose to work in the Western Cape, in Gauteng, or from a decentralised office as part of our broader model. We are a flexible and adaptable employer,” he said.

The Staff Dialogue also allowed employees to ask questions and engage directly with the ACEO. The session concluded with the presentation of Long-Service Awards to employees in recognition of their years of service and contribution to the organisation.





Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube and Deputy Director General Samuel Zungu, during an oversight visit at the Chief Albert Luthuli Skills Centre in KwaZulu Natal.

Oversight visits assess readiness for the 2026 academic year

Tshepo Boshiane

The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training (PCHET), together with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), conducted oversight visits to various institutions of higher learning and training to assess their readiness for the 2026 academic year. The visits formed part of ongoing efforts to ensure stability and a smooth start to the academic programme.

The oversight delegation was led by

the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Mr Tebogo Letsie, and supported by Deputy Ministers Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube and Dr Mimmy Gondwe. The visits were further supported by NSFAS Executive Management, Acting Director-General Ms Thembisa Futshane, Deputy Director-General Mr Samuel Zungu, and other DHET officials.

The purpose of the visits was to assess the operational state of readiness at institutions, identify

challenges early, and provide real-time support and intervention during the critical registration period.

Mr. Letsie emphasised that it was essential for the Committee to conduct on-site visits to gain firsthand insight into institutional challenges.

He stated that visiting institutions directly enabled the Committee to better understand the issues on the ground and address them promptly.

During engagements with student leadership structures, several



concerns were raised. These included matters relating to private accommodation providers, engagement with university management, and the need for a stronger NSFAS presence at institutions to expedite funding processes and prevent disruptions to teaching and learning.

Speaking during one of the visits, Dr Dube-Ncube reaffirmed the Department's commitment to student welfare. She indicated that student safety and well-being remained a priority and assured stakeholders that the Department would continue focusing on these matters.

Deputy Minister Gondwe encouraged students to prioritise their academic responsibilities and to make decisions that reflected accountability and discipline.

In a media interview conducted during the oversight period, the Minister of Higher Education, Mr. Buti Manamela, acknowledged that NSFAS had faced challenges but noted that the Scheme had demonstrated improved responsiveness in 2026. He indicated that payments had been made on time and that issues raised at institutions were being addressed promptly.

The Minister further observed that there was growing stability within the post-school education and training system as the academic year commenced.

The oversight visits concluded with a commitment from all stakeholders to continue working collaboratively to ensure a stable and effective 2026 academic year.



MEDIA CORNER

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT



NGB AND NSFAS PARTNER TO SUPPORT STUDENTS' SUCCESS AT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING AWARENESS

The National Gambling Board (NGB) and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) have initiated a strategic partnership aimed at raising awareness at tertiary institutions, protecting students from gambling-related harm, and safeguarding the public funds allocated for education.

This collaboration arises from growing concerns about the increasing exposure of young people to gambling, particularly illegal online

platforms, and the unintended use of student allowances for gambling activities. Research indicates that financial pressure, aggressive digital advertising, ease of online access, and targeted promotional offers have contributed to increased gambling participation among youth, potentially affecting academic performance, financial stability, and overall well-being.

NSFAS remains firmly committed to its mandate of enabling access to education

and supporting student success by providing funding for tuition, accommodation, meals, and essential learning needs. The partnership seeks to empower students with knowledge, awareness, and responsible decision-making skills so that these resources fulfil their intended purpose, supporting education and improving life opportunities.

The NGB remains committed to its mandate of ensuring that gambling operates fairly, transparently, and in

accordance with national laws and that the public, including minors and vulnerable persons, are protected from the risks and socioeconomic impact of gambling.

Both organisations share a strong commitment to consumer protection, harm minimisation, and safeguarding vulnerable groups, particularly young people and students. The two entities will, in the coming weeks, formalise this collaboration through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), establishing a governance framework for joint interventions.

Purpose of the Partnership.

The partnership provides a collaborative framework to:

- Promote responsible gambling awareness among students.
- Discourage the misuse of NSFAS-funded allowances for gambling, including illegal online gambling, and
- Strengthen preventative education and early intervention initiatives across universities and TVET colleges.

In his remarks, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of NSFAS, Mr. Waseem Carrim, stated, “NSFAS funding is intended to support students’ educational journey and essential living needs. When these funds are diverted to gambling, it can undermine academic success and long-term financial well-being. This partnership focuses on prevention, awareness, and empowering students to make informed choices that support their future”.

Key areas of Collaboration

Through this partnership, the NGB and NSFAS will jointly:

- Implement nationwide outreach and on-campus education programmes,
- Deliver targeted education and awareness campaigns on financial literacy, and the risks of online and illegal gambling, and
- Engage students through workshops, dialogues, and on-campus activations focused on prevention, harm reduction, and informed decision making, and
- Share information, within the framework of applicable legislation, to strengthen education, monitoring, and preventative interventions.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the NGB, Mr Lungile Dukwana, emphasised, “This partnership prioritises the protection of young people through harm reduction approaches that prevent the development of harmful gambling behaviours. Particular attention will be given to the growing normalisation of gambling through digital advertising platforms, social media, and mobile applications, which increasingly affects students.”

This partnership underscores a shared commitment by the NGB and NSFAS to support student success and well-being, protect students from gambling-related harm, safeguard public education funds, and promote responsible behaviour and informed financial decision-making.

“Expanding access to education while protecting students from gambling-related harm
and promoting responsible decision-making.

-Your skill is the bag; don’t gamble with it. #YSBDGI

Issued by: National Gambling Board (NGB)

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Institutional Capacity Workshops set the agenda for NSFAS 2026 service excellence

Tshepo Boshiane

During the month of January, NSFAS hosted a series of Capacity Support Building Programme workshops in preparation for institutional deployments ahead of the 2026 academic year.

The programme, organised by the Core Business Operations Unit, aimed to equip graduate interns with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively support frontline operations during the registration period at institutions across the country. The workshops formed part of NSFAS' broader readiness strategy to strengthen service delivery during one of the busiest periods of the academic calendar.

The training focused on building practical skills, systems knowledge, and a strong understanding of NSFAS processes. Interns were prepared to assist students with funding-related queries and to serve as a bridge between NSFAS and institutions. Beyond operational readiness, the programme also supported youth development by providing graduates with meaningful workplace experience while improving the overall student funding journey.

In her opening remarks, Acting Chief Operations Officer, Ms Lungisa Sishi, emphasised the importance of understanding the full NSFAS value chain during the registration period. "Students apply for NSFAS and often assume that the next step is payment, without realising that several processes must first be completed before payment can be made," she explained.

The training programme focused on two critical pillars of the student experience: Student Accommodation and NSFAS Funding Processes. These sessions deepened interns' understanding of:

- The NSFAS student accommodation framework and compliance requirements
- Funding cycles, allowances, and disbursement workflows
- Supporting students with accommodation- and funding-related queries
- Strengthening collaboration between NSFAS and institutions

These technical sessions were facilitated by Mr Thilivhali Mukondeleli and Mr Gibson Seota.

In addition, the programme covered essential organisational support systems that contribute to a safe, ethical, and well-functioning institution. Presentations on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Human Resources (HR), and engagement with External Funders were delivered by Ms Zodwa Rode, Ms Mpho Matlala, and Ms Nokulunga Mtse.

Graduates received practical guidance on workplace health and safety, compliance standards, HR policies, professional conduct, organisational culture, and the role of external funders in strengthening student financial support.

The NSFAS Acting Chief Executive Officer (ACEO), Mr. Waseem Carrim, also engaged directly with the interns. He encouraged them to uphold integrity, demonstrate service excellence, and approach their roles with a clear sense of purpose in serving students across South Africa.

The workshops concluded with a renewed focus on preparedness, professionalism, and delivering a responsive and student-centred service during the 2026 academic year.

NSFAS launches unannounced door-to-door inspections

NSFAS Student Accommodation Unit

For some time, the South African Union of Students (SAUS) and the South African Technical Vocational Education and Training Student Association (SATVETSA) have raised serious concerns about unsafe and uninhabitable accommodation in both campus residences and private housing. These concerns relate to living conditions, safety, hygiene, and overall compliance with required standards.

In response, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has, from 28 January 2026, intensified its oversight by conducting unannounced, door-to-door inspections at NSFAS-accredited student accommodation and properties nationwide.



Key actions being implemented:

- NSFAS officials are carrying out full on-site inspections of accredited residences and private accommodation.
- Where properties do not meet the minimum norms and standards, affected students are reallocated to compliant and safe accommodation.
- Accommodation Providers (APs) found to be non-compliant are formally instructed to urgently upgrade and meet the required standards.

This intervention is part of NSFAS' ongoing commitment to protect student dignity, safety, and well-being, and to ensure that public funds support only quality, habitable living environments.

NSFAS commends and appreciates all Accommodation Providers whose properties and services fully comply with NSFAS norms and standards and who continue to prioritise student welfare.

Students are encouraged to report poor living conditions through the appropriate institutional and NSFAS channels so that swift action can be taken.

Safe accommodation is not a privilege — it is a right.

Out and About - NSFAS attends the Annual Next-Gen Career Expo

Hundreds of young people attended the **Annual Next Gen Career Expo** in Kwa-Mhlaga, Mpumalanga. The purpose of the expo was to provide career guidance and funding opportunities to high school learners. The Expo is graced by the attendance of the Minister of Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Sindisiwe Chikunga who gave a keynote address.

The Minister, supported by the tribal authority, urged young people to take advantage of opportunities brought by exhibitors to the community in order to secure a brighter future.

