



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

DATE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSED NSFAS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS FOR FINANCIAL AID

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) takes note of the article in the Sowetan of November 17, 2021 which has resulted in other media queries to NSFAS. Note that the headline is factually misleading. While we appreciate the editorial guidelines and standards that governs newsrooms, we do so hoping that journalists will uphold the highest standard of accuracy, and trust.

NSFAS can confirm that it is currently holding stakeholder consultations regarding the proposed NSFAS 2022 Eligibility Criteria and Conditions for Financial Aid (funding guidelines). This Eligibility Criteria will be effective as of the 2022 academic year, with some transitional arrangements to be implemented in 2023.

The NSFAS Act 56 of 1999 mandates the Board to develop criteria and conditions for the granting of bursaries to eligible students in consultation with the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation amongst other provisions.

The Board believes that for NSFAS to be an effective and efficient provider of financial aid in a sustainable and responsive manner, all stakeholders must be engaged. It is for this reason that for the first time ever NSFAS is consulting all the relevant stakeholders on the proposed funding guidelines.

The stakeholders that are being consulted include the student leadership, university vice-chancellors, Technical and Vocational Education and Training College principals, some spheres of government and others. All the inputs of these stakeholders will be considered in the final document that will be presented to the Minister of Higher Education Science and Innovation for consideration.

Under normal circumstances, NSFAS would not have communicated to the public, until such time that the consultative process has been concluded and the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, has applied his mind on the proposed reforms.

For the record:

1. The current consultation process that is underway is for the proposed 2022 policy changes.
2. That process has not been concluded. More stakeholders in the higher education sector are being consulted
3. All stakeholders are given an opportunity to make inputs and the process is on-going
4. All inputs will be considered, and recommendations will be made to the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation.

On the proposed 75% progression rule:

1. The proposed policy is aimed at encouraging students to pass their courses and/or modules and not the pass mark as per the article.
2. The proposed policy, if implemented, would only apply as of the 2023 academic year, and would not be applied to students who entered higher education for the first time, also referred to as FTEN students. This is in recognition of the transition that many students make from high school to university.

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It should be noted that NSFAS funds students that would not otherwise be able to access higher education to ensure that they qualify and ultimately contribute to the economy. Therefore, this progression criteria is aimed at ensuring that students complete their qualifications within the allowable timeframe to ensure return on investment and to provide more opportunities to deserving students.

All the other matters including student accommodation that are contained in the proposed funding guidelines are subject to consultative processes. All these policy considerations are aimed at ensuring sustainability of the scheme and for the well being of students to ensure that they succeed. In this instance, the entity has the South African Union of Students on the proposed guidelines and as the entity we are awaiting on their submission.

Please note NSFAS will not be taking interviews on the matter. The final policy position is still under deliberation.

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Issued by

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