



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

ADDRESS BY THE NSFAS ACTING BOARD CHAIRPERSON DR MUGWENA MALULEKE ON NSFAS MONTHLY UPDATES ON 2026 APPLICATION STATUS

GCIS Hatfield Offices, Pretoria | Thursday, 5 February 2026

Good morning,
Programme Director, Mr Ishmael Mnisi
Fellow Board Members,
NSFAS Executives and staff,
Members of the media, and all stakeholders present here today,
Fellow South Africans

Introduction

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) continues to play a pivotal role in expanding access to post school education and training for the South African youth.

Established as a government entity, NSFAS is mandated to provide financial support to eligible students at public universities and TVET colleges, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented and deserving individuals from pursuing their academic ambitions.

NSFAS is dedicated to advancing the nation's development by investing in human development. Through our bursary and loan programmes, we extend financial assistance to students from poor and working-class families, as well as those in the "missing middle" who may not qualify for full bursary support.

The Scheme's robust assessment and funding processes are designed to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and transparently, in accordance with government policy and the needs of the post-school education sector. In this context, we welcome and commend the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) for its successful recovery of over R1.7 billion from institutions and students. We wish to assure all South Africans that these recovered funds will be redirected to support the educational journeys of thousands of students at public universities and TVET colleges.

2026 Application Cycle: Updates and Progress

We are pleased to provide the following updates on the processing of applications for the 2026 academic year, encompassing first-time entering students, returning university students, and continuing TVET college students.

This week, NSFAS has approved funding for 660,039 First-Time Entering Students (FTEN), marking a notable increase from 632,333 approvals from the previous week. This upward trend underscores NSFAS's ongoing commitment to broadening access to post school education and training.

Currently, 85,662 applications from students who have submitted outstanding documentation are in progress, with verification underway. Additionally, 21,483 applications remain pending due to the need

The Halyard, 4 Christian Barnard
Cape Town City Center, Cape Town, 8000
Private Bag X1, Plumstead, Cape Town, 7801

T: 0800 067 327
E: info@nsfas.org.za
W: www.nsfas.org.za

NSFAS BOARD MEMBERS:

Dr. Mugwena Maluleke (Acting Chairperson) | Mr Waseem Carrim (Acting CEO) | Adv Lavan Gopaul | Dr Mampiane Johanna Maphutha | Dr Marcia Socikwa | Dr Siyanda B Mngadi | Adv Richardt Tlou Ramashia | Ms Karabo Mohale | Ms Ndileka Portia Loyilane | Mr. Siphwe Welcome Khumalo | Mr. Lukhanyo Daweti



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for further supporting documents. We urge all students who have not yet submitted their supporting documents to do so as soon as possible to avoid delays in the processing of their applications.

A total of 116,266 applications did not meet the eligibility criteria for bursary funding. However, of these, 13,052 applicants we have been offered NSFAS loans, ensuring continued opportunities for financial assistance.

Returning University Students

A total of 436,924 returning university students have met the academic progression criteria and are therefore eligible for continued NSFAS funding. Conversely, 109,761 students did not meet the required progression standards and are, as a result, ineligible for further financial support.

It is important to note that there are currently 4,945 applications pending due to outstanding academic results that have not yet been submitted by universities. NSFAS remains concerned about these delays and encourages institutions to expedite the submission of outstanding results to facilitate timely processing and funding decisions.

Continuing TVET College Students

A grand total of 210,989 continuing TVET college students are currently engaged in the NSFAS funding process. Of these, 127,503 students have met the academic progression criteria and are eligible for continued support, while 79,461 students did not meet the required criteria and are therefore ineligible for further NSFAS funding.

Additionally, there are 1,407 cases of course mismatch where course information does not align with NSFAS records and requires resolution. Furthermore, 2,126 applications are awaiting funding decisions, and 811 applications are in the process of being linked to the appropriate funding streams.

Enrolment and Registration Data

For the 2026 academic year, projected registrations indicate an intake of 106,615 first-time entering students at TVET colleges and 161,122 first-time entering students at universities.

To date, NSFAS has received registration data for 44,616 students from TVET colleges and 2461 students from universities. Efforts are ongoing to ensure that all registration information is submitted promptly to facilitate efficient funding allocations and support for eligible students.

NSFAS Loan Update for the 2026 Application Cycle

As part of this mandate, NSFAS introduced a loan scheme designed to assist students who do not fully meet the criteria for bursaries but still require financial support to pursue their studies at public universities and TVET colleges.

The NSFAS loan programme is targeted at students who fall within the “missing middle” income group—those whose family income exceeds the threshold for bursary support but is insufficient to cover the full

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cost of tertiary education. The loan provides eligible students with financial assistance on favourable terms, including low interest rates and flexible repayment options after graduation.

For the 2026 application cycle, NSFAS has received a total of 26,538 loan applications from both prospective and continuing students. Of these, 4,609 applications met the established loan criteria.

To date, 1,561 loans have been approved, with these students now receiving support through the NSFAS loan programme. Approximately 20,368 applications did not meet the required academic or financial eligibility standards and, consequently, were not approved for funding.

NSFAS thanks all applicants for their interest and encourages those who were unsuccessful to continue striving towards academic excellence and to reapply in future cycles if eligible. The Scheme remains committed to refining its processes and ensuring that funding reaches those who need it most.

NSFAS Appeals Update: 2026 Application Cycle

The NSFAS Appeals process provides applicants and current beneficiaries with the opportunity to request a review of their application outcome should they feel that their circumstances have not been fully considered, or if additional information has become available that may affect their eligibility.

2026 Appeals Cycle Update

For the 2026 application cycle, NSFAS received a total of 91,937 appeals. The breakdown is as follows:

- Continuing students: 78,347 appeals (85.22%)
- First-time entry students: 8,533 appeals (9.28%)
- Senior students: 5,057 appeals (5.5%)

As of today, NSFAS has made significant progress in processing student appeals:

- 10,445 appeals have been approved, enabling these students to commence or continue their studies with financial support.
- 5,407 appeals have been rejected as applicants did not meet the required criteria or provided insufficient information.
- A total of 44,983 appeals have been finalised, withdrawn, deleted, or closed in line with NSFAS policy and procedures.
- 3,209 applicants are awaiting review pending the submission of supporting documents. These students are strongly encouraged to submit outstanding information promptly to facilitate processing.
- Approximately 27,893 appeals remain in progress and are currently under review by the NSFAS Appeals Committee.

NSFAS remains committed to processing all appeals fairly, transparently, and efficiently. We encourage all applicants to ensure that their contact information and supporting documentation are up to date, and to monitor communication from NSFAS regarding the status of their appeal.

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Student Accommodation

NSFAS recognises that access to quality accommodation is not only vital for students' physical comfort but also fundamental to creating an environment that supports academic success, personal growth, and overall well-being.

To continually enhance the student accommodation process, NSFAS actively engages with students, institutions, and key stakeholders, including the South African Union of Students (SAUS) and the South African TVET Student Association (SAVETSA). These ongoing consultations ensure that accommodation criteria remain relevant and that challenges experienced by students are addressed collaboratively.

In response to requests from institutions for additional guidance on accommodation processes and requirements, NSFAS has developed a comprehensive guidance circular to clarify and support these processes.

One of the key areas addressed is the determination of private accommodation rates for 2026, which are currently under review. Adjustments to allowances and rates are informed by factors such as consumer price inflation, student academic progression, enrolment figures for first-time entering students, and budget allocations through the national budget process. NSFAS will announce the 2026 rates once the relevant budgetary information has been finalised.

For the upcoming academic year, higher education institutions participating in the student accommodation project will continue to have their accommodation payments managed directly by NSFAS, while institutions that have historically managed accommodation payments independently will maintain their current arrangements during this transitional period. Ultimately, NSFAS intends to assume responsibility for the entire payment process, and any changes to current arrangements will be communicated promptly and transparently to all stakeholders.

NSFAS has received a total of 194,069 student accommodation applications for the current cycle, with 78,409 applications from TVET colleges and 115,662 applications from universities.

For TVET colleges, 16,526 applications have been approved by NSFAS, while 50,810 applications are pending institutional review and 24,837 applications are awaiting landlord approval.

For universities, 39,127 applications have been approved by NSFAS, with 39,984 applications pending institutional review and 29,027 applications awaiting landlord approval.

NSFAS continues to work closely with both institutions and landlords to ensure the timely processing and approval of student accommodation applications, prioritising the needs and well-being of all applicants.

In light of recent concerns pertaining to student accommodation at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and other institutions where such challenges might arise, NSFAS wishes to clarify its ongoing efforts to improve the system. NSFAS is implementing a transitional framework designed to facilitate the shift towards a more centralised, transparent, and student-focused accommodation system. The primary objective of this transition is to address longstanding challenges and align all processes with

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the needs and well-being of students.

As part of this framework, all accommodation dates—including opening, closing, move-in, and move-out periods—will be closely aligned with the academic calendar. This alignment ensures that students are not left stranded at any point during the academic year and supports a seamless transition into residence for all eligible students. NSFAS acknowledges the proactive steps taken by CPUT and other universities to provide temporary accommodation for students during this period.

Further, NSFAS is upgrading its accommodation portal to provide students with a single, user-friendly platform where they can:

- Apply for accommodation
- Track application status
- Accept offers
- Log maintenance issues

The portal will also be integrated with institutional student management systems, enabling automatic verification of student registration and NSFAS eligibility. This integration will streamline the placement process and ensure that only qualifying students are allocated accommodation in accordance with NSFAS guidelines.

Conclusion

NSFAS remains steadfast in its commitment to expanding access to higher education and technical training for all eligible South African students. Through rigorous application processing, ongoing collaboration with institutions, and transparent communication, NSFAS is working to ensure that funding reaches those who need it most—efficiently and fairly.

Students and stakeholders are encouraged to stay informed via official NSFAS channels and to submit any outstanding information as soon as possible. NSFAS thanks all partners for their cooperation and support throughout the 2026 application cycle and looks forward to another successful year of empowering South Africa's future leaders.

-End-

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