



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: SUNDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2023**

**NSFAS STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE SOUTH AFRICA UNION OF STUDENTS (SAUS)**

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Contrary to the belief by the South African Student Union, the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS) is not in a crisis. It is however an organisation which is in a process of realignment and modernization to meet the demands of the more than one million (1million) students that it is currently serving.

Since its established by my Government in 1999, NSFAS provided financial assistance to deserving beneficiaries who qualify for post school education and training.

As a scheme, NSFAS represents one of the most progressive efforts by the government to systematically break the legacies of inter-generational social inequality in access to and outcomes of, post school education and training.

Since 1991, NSFAS funding has grown from disbursing R21.4 million to almost R50 billion to fund children of the working class and the poor seeking to further their studies in public universities and TVET colleges.

One of the most progressive milestones for the scheme has been the integration of all public universities and TVET colleges to a new student-centred model in which students apply directly to NSFAS for funding. It is undeniable that this progressive transition requires an increase in NSFAS resources and a new cadre of employees to implement the student centred model, in which the direct payment systems is a key component.

To ensure that NSFAS delivers on its mandate, the Board is implementing the following reforms:

1.The redesigned Information Communication Information (ICT) system, which leverage modern technologies and capabilities in order to deliver the NSFAS mandate seamlessly.

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Board Members: Mr. Ernest Khosa - Chairperson | Mr. Masile Ramorwesi – Acting Chief Executive Officer | Mr. Bamanye Matiwane | Ms. Jullie Beya | Prof. Laurance van Staden | Mr. Nceba Maxwell Fuzani | Prof. Ntombizozuko Dyani-Mhango | Prof. Pumela Msweli | Dr. Reshma Mathura | Ms Lisa Seftel | Mr. Lucky Masuku | Mr Melosi Baloyi | Mr. Sanele Zondi | Mr. Sibonelo Cyril Madiba | Mr. Yonke Twani



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- 2.The reviewing of all the processes, operations, and their allowances disbursement model.
- 3.The reviewing of the overall governance and management design to ensure the full execution of its mandate.
- 4.The implementation of a new performance management and accountability framework in a bid to establish a high-performance culture within the organization.
- 5.The improvement of the stakeholder, media and communication relations; Implement a 24-hour call centre.
- 6.Taking necessary action against all students and institutions who have been defrauding or owing NSFAS.

To strengthen the NSFAS Board, Prof Laurens van Staden and Prof. Ntombizozuko Dyani-Mhango have been appointed in the Board. Both these two additional Board members have a wealth of experience in the higher education sector and in the legal fraternity.

To strengthen the management team, the Board has appointed Mr Errol Mandla Makhubela as the new Executive: Core Business effective and the new Senior Manager Corporate Communication and Spokesperson, Mr Ishmael Mnisi. They are both appointed with effect from 01 December 2023.

The Board will announce further reforms and appointments that will be taking place at the executive and senior management level of the organisation.

## TURN-AROUND ON STUDENT FUNDING

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is currently funding 1.3 million students for the 2023 academic year following an unprecedented surge in the number of applications received. The entity has been working tirelessly to ensure that it improves on its processes for applications and ensuring quick turnaround times on funding decisions.

## OPENING OF THE 2024 APPLICATION SEASON

NSFAS will officially open its application for 2024 funding on the 21 November 2023 and will close on the 31 January 2024. The reason for opening in November, is so that we can afford the beneficiary shorter



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turnaround times for decision making which is aligned to our financial eligibility assessment which requires updated SARS information. NSFAS was awaiting SARS completion of its tax period and to enable NSFAS to have the necessary and updated information available during our application season.

We encourage all students who wish to study in the post school education and training sector higher education and training space to ensure that they apply on time. It is also important that students note that they don't need results when they are entering post school education and training for the first time.

Furthermore, NSFAS is engaged in conversation with the department of basic education to improve the application validation processes including verifying parental relationships. All these improvements will ensure that funding decisions are confirmed timeously.

NSFAS urge students to provide accurate information particularly parental information when applying, so that when validations occur with Home Affairs, students can be easily funded and not be subjected to appeal processes to prove parental relationship. The parental relationship verification has been a huge challenge, where students change their parents' information for the sake of the bursary. Our partnership with DBE will further strengthen our ability to verify parental relationships.

The NSFAS Board is pleased to once again announce that NSFAS will continue to make immediate funding decisions for new applicant SASSA beneficiaries. Immediate funding decisions, mean as soon as you submit your application you will receive an outcome. The moment you are verified as a SASSA beneficiary, we will not require any supporting document. In fact, all new applicants will not require supporting documents, except for learners with disabilities.

All rejected applicants will be able appeal and it is important that students submit the appropriate supporting documents.

Some of the new features for the 2024 application period is the NSFAS mobile application which will be rolled out initially for iPhone operating system (IOs), Android and in due course of HUAWAI devices. The student app will include the biometric capability which will be rolled out later in the year. Students will also be able to track their application statuses and funding via WhatsApp on 078 519 8006, and USSD at \*120\*67327#.

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## PAYMENT OF OCTOBER ALLOWANCES

The NSFAS is improving its data exchange processes with institutions to ensure seamless data integration and the registration of students onto new NSFAS direct payment systems. Furthermore, NSFAS continues to review all its processes, operations, and its disbursement model.

In relation to the allowances, disbursements for the month of October, NSFAS successfully disbursed allowances to 143,423 beneficiaries at TVET colleges, with a total amount of R681,051,078.

The NSFAS Board would like to reiterate its statement as issued on the 5th of November 2023 regarding the matter affecting allowances disbursements to university students.

Tuition and allowances disbursement for University students were initiated on 25 October. However, there was a delay in payments of allowances at some universities which did not finalise their university reconciliation, which is very critical information to ensure that NSFAS disburses allowances correctly to the institutions for tuition and living allowances to students. This is an important measure to ensure that NSFAS accounts for each and every disbursement it makes to properly account for using public money. It is also important to note that NSFAS is working with all institutions to improve its data management systems to ensure that allowances are paid on time to all beneficiaries.

To date, the total tuition disbursements to all universities amounts to R1,602,289,873,00.

NSFAS is currently engaged in the process of doing mop up payments for universities where there were exceptions.

Furthermore, the claim by SAUS that there are 70 000 students who have not been paid is unfounded and untrue.

## PROGRESS ON APPEALS PROCESS

The NSFAS appeals process is almost at the final stage for university students who submitted their

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appeals. It must however be noted that the appeals process is a continuous process for TVET beneficiaries because of the alignment of their academic year which completely differs from the university's academic year.

SAUS is welcomed to engage further with NSFAS to explain the detailed processes of appeals.



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## FEUDS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND BOARD

The Board of NSFAS dismiss with contempt the assertion by SAUS that there is feud between the NSFAS Board and Management. It is their incumbent on SAUS to provide details of the alleged feud in reference. However, should SAUS regard the Boards, decision to implement the findings and recommendations by the Werkmans Attorneys report as feud, their assertion will be misguided.

The NSFAS Board will continue to implement the recommendations of the Werkmans Attorneys report including taking remedial actions against all individuals and institutions who are implicated in wrongdoing. It must be noted that the Board is unwavering in implementing all the recommendations of the report without any prejudice.

The Board also notes the attitude by SAUS that suggest the organization has some role in Labour relations matter at the NSFAS. This attitude is misplaced and the NSFAS Board urge the leadership of SAUS to separate their social relationships from the mandate of NSFAS. In is not in the place of NSFAS to call for the reinstatement of any NSFAS official including the CEO.

## FUNDING GUIDELINESS

The NSFAS Board in consultation with the Department of Higher Education and Training is finalizing the funding guidelines for the academic year 2024. These guidelines will be announced on the 21st of November together with the opening of the application season for the academic year 2024.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite its current challenges, NSFAS remains the largest student funding agency in Africa and a unique scheme in the world that completely funds students for their study, travel, accommodation, and personal care. This has turned the tide in student funding for the children of the poor and the working class.

The NSFAS Board would like to assure all the beneficiaries that the Board is working hard to ensure that

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NSFAS implements all its decision to fulfill its mission of transforming NSFAS into an efficient and effective provider of financial aid to students from poor and working-class families in a sustainable manner that promotes access to, and success in, higher and further education and training, in pursuit of South Africa's national and human resource development goals.

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