



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: SUNDAY, 05 NOVEMBER 2023**

**SUBJECT: NSFAS RESPONSE TO SUNDAY TIMES ARTICLE TITLED “NSFAS LEAVES STUDENTS STARVING DURING EXAMS” WRITTEN BY PREGA GOVENDER**

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Cape Town, 05 November - The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is concerned by the misleading heading of an article by the Sunday Times newspaper written by Prega Govender today, the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The heading “NSFAS leaves students starving during exams” casts aspersion that the NSFAS, “deliberately neglected” to pay allowances to students at the University of North West, University of Venda, Durban University of Technology, University of Limpopo and the University of Cape Town.

The response provided to the Sunday Times, which in part, was quoted in the article provided the reasons for the delays in the payments of allowances which in the main was not an NSFAS generated problem, but which was brought by universities Data Adjustment Process submitted to NSFAS. This process affords institutions the opportunity to rectify their data, to address scenarios such as student module additions or cancellations and changes in allowance types, such as transitioning from transportation to accommodation.

The article by the Sunday Times fails to appreciate the fact that accountability and financial prudence is also an important part of the NSFAS allowances disbursement policy.

The article also fails to appreciate measures introduced by NSFAS to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of student information provided to it by institutions. All these efforts are aimed at

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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



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

ensuring that NSFAS pays the right student allowances and to minimize delays in the disbursements of allowances.

The NSFAS Board remains concerned when allowances are not paid to students and the institutions on time. NSFAS understands the critical importance of these funds to students and institutions. In this regard, the NSFAS apologizes to all students who could not receive their allowances on time.

The NSFAS Board is grateful to all institutions that provided students with food, whilst the processes of the payment of allowances is finalised.

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.

The NSFAS continues to implement its redesign to the Information Communication and Technology system, which leverages modern technologies and capabilities in order to deliver the NSFAS mandate seamlessly. 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.

For university students, tuition and allowances disbursement were initiated on 25 October. Unfortunately for some universities, these payments were withheld pending the finalisation of the Universities 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 disbursements it makes to properly account for using public money.



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

To date, a total of **R3,186,669,612** has been processed for tuition to institutions, allowances through institutions and NSFAS Card allowance.

**The disbursements were made as follows:**

Total tuition disbursements to all universities amounts to **R1,602,289,873,00**. Out of this amount, the universities mentioned in the Sunday Times article were disbursed as follows:

- Durban University of Technology ( 20, 684 students) R79,909,781,00
- North West University (23,463 students) R121,099,033,00
- University of Cape Town (4,635 students) R41,103, 909,00
- University of Limpopo (12, 896 students) R56,618,475,00
- Stellenbosch University (4,219 students) R30,140, 360,00
- University of Venda (177 students) R2,213,173,00

Total allowance summary disbursed through Institutions amounts to **R1,073,197,301,00**. Out of this amount, the universities mentioned in the Sunday Times article were disbursed as follows:

- Durban University of Technology (18,135 students) R71,576,229,00
- North West University (4,692 students) R22,310,161,00
- University of Cape Town (3, 753 students) R22,296,974,00
- University of Limpopo (2,022 students) R26,713,475,00
- Stellenbosch University (1,235 students) R10,677,047,00
- University of Venda (97 students) R1,902,760,00

Total direct allowances summary disbursed through direct payment partners amounts to **R511,182,438,00**.



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

Out of this amount, the universities mentioned in the Sunday Times article were disbursed as follows:

- Durban University of Technology (20,660 students) R 37,557,519,00 (Ezaga Holdings)
- North-West University (19,765 students) R32,658,312.00 (Norraco)
- University of Cape Town (4,573 students) R7,157,063,00 (Co-invest)
- University of Limpopo (12,8961 students) R 23,958,810,00 (Ezaga)
- Stellenbosch University (2,581students) R3,196,656.00 (Co-invest)
- University of Venda (177 students) R1,589,669,00 (Tenetech)

This disbursement covers students for whom NSFAS has received valid registration data, and have been confirmed as funded. However, due to some institutions having not finalised their Data Adjustment Process university reconciliation data, their tuition and allowance payments are on hold.

In the case of the University of Limpopo's submission, the University submitted its adjustment file. However, upon data verification process, it came to NSFAS attention that the details for over 2,000 students, submitted at the beginning of the year (on 30/03/2023) had changed.

Initially, NSFAS suspected an error and consequently initiated correspondence with the institution, urging them to rectify the data.

The final revised data file was received on 26th October 2023. Subsequently, NSFAS undertook a review of the data; however, it became apparent that the delay in processing this data was impacting the timely disbursement of payments to other students and the file was not processed in time for November 2023 allowance payment. NSFAS is currently engaging with the university to ensure to speedy resolution to this matter.



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

The Board of NSFAS will continue to work with all institutions to continuously improve its data management systems in order to improve on the payment of allowances and related services.

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