

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR
BLADE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE NSFAS 2022 APPLICATIONS OFFICIAL
OPENING HELD AT THE GCIS TSHEDIMOSETSO HOUSE, PRETORIA

October 2021

Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Mr Buti Manamela;
Acting Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Phil
Mjwara;
Chairperson of the NSFAS Board, Ernest Khosa
My Advisors
NSFAS CEO, Andile Nongogo;
DDGs of the Department of Higher Education and Training;
NSFAS Executive and Staff;
Officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training;
Student leadership;
Members of the media;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to announce that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is opening its application season for learners and out of school youth from poor and working class backgrounds to apply for funding to study at public universities and TVET colleges in the country.

Considering the impact of coronavirus, now more than ever, the demand for student funding has increased.

As the government, we had to take an exhaustive exercise to categorise the students into the following five cohorts, which we believe will cover all students who have potential and in need of funding.

1. A First-Time Entering Student (FTEN) who are SASSA beneficiaries (Cohort 1)
2. A Returning Student, who are also SASSA beneficiaries. (Cohort 2)
3. A First-Time Entering Student who are not SASSA beneficiaries (Cohort 3)
4. A Returning Student, who are also not SASSA beneficiaries. (Cohort 4)
5. A students living with disability (Cohort 5)

The above cohorts apply to all natural citizens and permanent residents (As per South African Citizenship Act, 1995 (Act No.88 of 1995)

As the government, it is our duty to make sure that all those with potential are not prohibited by the lack of funds and we are proud of what this new Board has delivered.

The Board has assured me that the 2022 application process will handle student application efficiently and make the application process seamless.

But before I announce the 2022 application process, let me share with you progress government has made since the reorganization of the fund.

NSFAS achievements

Funding for university and TVET College bursaries for poor and working class students through the NSFAS increased by 107% from R20 billion in 2018 to R42 billion in 2021.

In the 2020 academic year, the third year of the implementation of fully-subsidised funding for students, students benefitting from the DHET Bursary Grant for university and TVET College students amounted to 751 858 students, made up of 489 912 university and 261 404 TVET college students respectively.

The total number of university students funded, including funding from other government departments, that is, the DBE Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme, the National Skills Fund and SETAs increased by 45.4% from 346 966 students funded in 2018 to 504 366 students funded in 2020.

The overall student demographic profile (university and TVET College students) in 2020 comprised of African students at (92.9%), Coloured students at (4.2%), Indian students at (0.7%), white students (0.9%) and others at (1.4%).

The NSFAS has been particularly effective at targeting females students, who constitute 61.5% of all students funded (in 2018 this was 61.4%).

This is actually similar to the overall representation of female undergraduate students in the public university sector.

The total number of female students who received NSFAS bursaries in 2020 increased by 30.6% from 360 344 in 2018 to 470 696 female students funded in 2020.

In the 2020 academic year, NSFAS funded 1421 university students with disabilities compared to 1921 students in the prior year, a decrease of 26%. This is concern to me and I will give this focused attention.

The NSFAS/DHET Disability Fund is aimed at providing financial support for students with disabilities who are financially needy but academically able.

Students with disability who qualify fall within the maximum threshold of up to R600 000 of combined gross family income per annum.

In addition to paying for students' full cost of study, the bursary also provides students with Assistive Devices (e.g. wheelchairs, hearing aids, adapted laptops etc.) and Human Support

(careers, scribes, tutors, sign language interpreters etc.) at a capped amount that is reviewed annually by NSFAS.

It should be noted that NSFAS funding increased from R5.9 billion in 2014/15 to approximately R35 billion in 2020/21.

As you know, additional funding was reprioritized to support a NSFAS shortfall in 2021/22, the current financial year, taking the total NSFAS budget to approximately R42 billion.

This is a significant contribution by government to supporting access to higher education and success of students from poor and working class backgrounds.

I am very proud of the achievements of the NSFAS.

I would also like to make the point that our Departmental cohort studies have shown that NSFAS students perform on average at a higher level than the whole cohort of undergraduate students.

This is contrary to what has sometimes been said publicly about the performance of NSFAS students, and shows that the financial support interventions of government do have a positive effect.

Under its new Board and management team, NSFAS is working hard to ensure that it operates as an effective and efficient entity, fulfilling its core mandate in the best possible way.

My Department and Ministry will continue to do everything possible to support NSFAS in continuing on this developmental trajectory.

As you may know, NSFAS received an unqualified audit for the 2020/21 financial year, which is a significant improvement on previous outcomes.

On the 2022 application process

The applications process is also open to individuals who are already enrolled at institutions, but are without funding and qualify financially for NSFAS funding.

The applications system will be open from 2 November 2021 until 07 January 2022 when the NSC results are released.

The application season has previously been opened from September to November annually.

This was to allow students to apply well in advance before the upcoming academic year, but most importantly to allow NSFAS to process these applications in time, before the approaching academic year starts and to give students time to submit missing supporting documents if necessary.

I am aware that there has been some concern about the perceived late opening of applications in 2021.

However, I would like to reassure you that this will, in no way, disadvantage those who seek NSFAS support for their post-school studies.

For a while now, NSFAS applicants have complained about the time they have had to wait for a funding decision from the Scheme.

This was due to the thorough verification process needed to identify eligible students.

This prompted the Scheme to go back to the drawing board and develop an applications process and systems that are not only user-friendly but will also provide real-time responses to students without compromising the application validation process.

NSFAS began working on this process earlier in 2021, and the time needed to perfect the process meant that applications could not open in September as usual. It was critical that we waited until the system was ready for implementation.

I am assured by NSFAS that the new faster application process will make up for any perceived lost time, and will see many students receive their funding results much faster than previously.

Some results will be received immediately and others may take up to 48 hours to be provided.

NSFAS initiated an enterprise-wide review of all critical systems aimed at delivering mandated services to students and other stakeholders (institutions, DHET, etc.), including new applications.

One of the areas that have been reviewed extensively are the processes and enabling technologies centred around the organisation's ability to assess, confirm, and communicate eligibility decisions to students.

These improvements entailed partial system re-design, a fresh look at some business processes and closer integration with some of our key partners such as South African Revenue Services (SARS), Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Department of Basic Education, Independent Examination Board, (IEB) and Credit Bureaus.

The magnitude and scope of these changes warranted a delay in the launch of the 2022 Applications cycle.

It is however important to indicate that such delays will not impact negatively on the student registration process as the new system will be capable of providing real-time funding eligibility decisions for students that are first time entrants to tertiary education and those that are linked to SASSA grant funding. These applicants will know immediately after lodging the application whether they qualify or not.

These students make up approximately 65% of the cohort of student applicants.

The balance of approximately 35% of the cohort of student applicants will go through further processing and be given a response much faster than previous application cycles.

The faster response time in these cases is made possible by a renewed commitment from our partners SARS, DHA, Credit Bureau, DBE and IEB to provide priority responses to our requests for supporting information to validate the funding eligibility process.

Earlier this week I visited NSFAS and was shown a demonstration of this new applications system.

I look forward to hearing reports of a successful NSFAS applications system and I urge students to apply as soon as possible and to provide the necessary information to support their applications, and ensure that the process goes smoothly and quickly, as it is meant to do.

Who qualifies for NSFAS funding?

Students qualify to get NSFAS funding if you are a South African citizen or permanent resident who plans on registering or already studying at a public university or TVET college in South Africa and they will fall within one or more of the below categories:

- SASSA grant recipients (the SASSA COVID-19 grant does not count);
- Persons whose combined household income is not more than R350 000 per year;
- Persons living with disabilities with a combined household income not more than R600 000 per annum.

The correct supporting documents are important in ensuring that NSFAS process your funding application in time for your registration at an institution of higher learning.

Students must go through the list of required supporting documents that I will mention to ensure that they have all of them before they start with the application process:

1. All applicants must provide a copy of ID. A temporary ID issued by the Department of Home Affairs will be accepted;
2. Non-SASSA applicants must provide ID copies of parent/s, legal guardian/guardian or spouse;
3. Smart ID cards: a copy with both sides of the smart ID must be provided;

4. Proof of income: applicant and/or parents/legal guardian/spouse (where applicable (non-SASSA) should provide latest payslip not older 3 months, UIF letter, appointment letter, retrenchment letter (applicant and/or parent(s), legal guardian/spouse).

It must be noted that no affidavits will be accepted as proof for any funding requirement.

How and where to apply

YOU CAN APPLY ONLINE VIA WWW.NSFAS.ORG.ZA
USING A CELLPHONE, TABLET AND COMPUTER.
FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS TO APPLY:

Step 1: Go to www.nsfas.org.za and click on the 'myNSFAS' tab

Step 2: Create a myNSFAS account

Step 3: Click on the 'APPLY' tab and complete the sections on the screen

Step 4: Upload required supporting documents where applicable

Step 5: Click on 'Submit'

If you do not have a digital device or access to the internet, do not stress, simply pop into your nearest National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) or Thusong Centre to apply following the same steps.

Prospective students are urged to apply to institutions via their application processes for a study place, as funding is only offered to students who are eligible for funding from NSFAS (financial eligibility) and who obtain a firm place to study in an approved programme at a public institution.

Prospective students can access the NSFAS application portal at (website address).

www.nsfas.org.za

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET APPLY FOR NSFAS FUNDING, VISIT OR CONTACT:

NSFAS VIA THE PLATFORMS BELOW:

- myNSFAS Portal : www.nsfas.org.za and log into your myNSFAS account;
- Facebook: National Student Financial Aid Scheme;
- Twitter page: @myNSFAS;
- Instagram: @myNSFAS Email: info@nsfas.org.za
- Website: www.nsfas.org.za

ON FRAUD AND HIJACKING OF STUDENTS PORTAL

Students are urged to keep their personal details such as your ID number, myNSFAS account login details and income information safe by not sharing them with anyone.

These are the tips to avoid being scammed:

- Don't leave your personal information exposed and unattended.
- Log out of your myNSFAS after using it.

Should a student suspect that his/ her account is hijacked he/ she can contact the following numbers to report the incident.

Tel No.: 0860 247 653

Email: nsfas@thehotline.co.za

Fax2Email: 086 726 1681

SMS Call Back Number: 30916

www.thehotlineapp.co.za

www.thehotline.co.za

On the Ministerial Task Team on student funding

Ladies and gentlemen

I have appointed a Ministerial Task Team to look at student funding policy issues for the future.

This MTT is working hard at developing policy proposals for a long term student financial aid policy that takes into account the comprehensive student financial aid needs of the post-school system.

The immediate challenge relates to identifying a sustainable mechanism for supporting students in higher education and training for the future and in particular looking at alternative funding sources to widen funding for missing middle and postgraduate students, while continuing to address support for students from poor and working class backgrounds.

Despite the fact that government has increased funding exponentially for students in TVET colleges and universities, we remain concerned about categories of students who struggle to afford higher education and the growing levels of student debt.

The MTT is reporting regularly to me.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the leadership of NSFAS and TVET colleges and universities and the many people working at universities and colleges to support students to succeed.

Your hard work is critical to the success of students.

I would also like to thank the student leadership of our institutions, the trade unions in our sector, and the national student organisations for their support to students and to NSFAS and institutions.

I thank you all