



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

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## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Statement regarding the pronouncement on free education

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) welcomes the President of the Republic of South Africa's pronouncement on free Higher Education and Training for deserving poor and working-class students. We believe that the decision to increase the threshold to qualify for financial assistance to students from South African households with a combined annual income of up to R350 000 per annum reaffirms government's commitment to opening access for poor and working class youth and to ensure success in higher education and training.

NSFAS has been providing elements of free education through provision of bursaries to TVET college students over the years, as well as some university students whose final year loans were converted to bursaries based on their academic performance. NSFAS is of the view that the President's pronouncement which involves doing away with the Loan portion of the funding, will expand the reach and impact of free education that government has been providing through NSFAS over the years. We are proud to have provided financial assistance to more than 3 million beneficiaries since our establishment in 1991 and we are pleased to continue to build on this legacy.

The NSFAS Board and Management is encouraged by the decision to retain NSFAS as an administrator of financial aid for poor and working-class South African students at universities and TVET colleges through the student centred model. The organisation will work on reviewing its business model to implement these changes for the 2018 academic year and beyond. We have worked tirelessly to improve our systems, working closely with Universities, TVET colleges and Department of Higher Education (DHET) for 2018 and will adjust our systems to deal with the extended financial aid and the expected increase in the number of students who now qualify for financial assistance.

We also would like to reiterate that the NSFAS application window for 2018 funding closed on the 30th of November 2017. NSFAS has already received in excess of 300 000 applications for first year students who have signalled their intentions to study at Universities and TVET colleges in the 2018 academic year. We have already assessed 80% of the applications using the new criteria and will be communicating outcomes to all applicants from 12 th of January 2018. These outcomes will be made upon confirmation of institutional admission offers.

To ensure that we provide for those who missed out on the initial window because they were above the R122 000 household income bracket, NSFAS will be working with public institutions of higher learning to gain access to this information and use it to make funding decisions. To this end, all the new first time entry (FTEN) students who have been allocated space but haven't applied directly to NSFAS will be assisted. They will however have to supply the institution with mandatory documentation such as identity documentation of parent, legal guardian or spouse and proof of income or SASSA; all FTEN students are advised to bring these when presenting themselves at the Institutions of Higher Learning.

The students that haven't applied to the Institution of Higher learning and have also not applied to NSFAS during the registration period will be assisted through the Department of Higher Education and Training's Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) and are advised to register on this platform. We are liaising and exchanging information with DHET in order to assist prospective students who have been offered a place at the university or TVET College in order to provide financial assistance. Details on CACH can be accessed via DHET website - <https://cach.dhet.gov.za/Applicant/UsingCACH> For the 2018 continuing students, who were funded by NSFAS in 2017, their study loans will now be converted into a bursary to cover their full cost of study.

All continuing students are required to verify their funding status with the financial aid office or the student support services at their institutions before they continue with registration. NSFAS would require final academic results from the institution before continued funding can be confirmed. The academic results are exchanged with NSFAS via an integration platform with institutions and NSFAS progression rules will apply.

This will be our most crucial time of the year as we define the new ways of work and ensure an integrated approach to managing financial aid for our current beneficiaries and FTEN students. We thank the government for the opportunity to continue transforming the lives of young people in South Africa. NSFAS is consistently working and communicating with DHET, Institutions and key stakeholders on the rollout of the new funding scheme and is resourcing and aligning its operations accordingly. As a Scheme, we are committed to continue playing our part in creating a fair society in which education and training is valued and respected, and where young people are empowered to flourish and fulfil their potential.

**Issued by**

Steven Zwane  
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