

Systems in place to ensure smooth 2017 varsity registration

Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande says a lot of ground work has been done to ensure a seamless registration period for the 2017 academic year.



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He said this when Ministers in the Social Cluster fielded questions from Members of Parliament (MPs) in the National Assembly on Wednesday, 30 November 2016.

“With respect to universities, I convened meetings with all stakeholders, including university management and SRCs, to discuss and agree on proposed solutions and a roadmap to ensure that universities return to normality, conclude the 2016 academic programme and prepare for the 2017 academic year,” he said.

The Minister said challenges facing the 2017 registration of students at universities will mostly be related to funding and student accommodation.

He said no challenges are anticipated at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

Minister Nzimande said between December this year and January next year, he will further engage with management, SRCs and other student formations to appraise them of the new developments and ensure agreements are reached with a view to minimise disruptions at the start of the 2017 academic year.

“On the 8th of December, the department will meet all the university registrars, finance executives, the South African Union of Students and NSFAS and the meetings will be on, amongst other things, plans for the registration period as well as issues linked to fees and mechanisms for the missing middle, how we implement them, as well as addressing issues of financial exclusion and student accommodation.”

Missing middle to pay no fee increase

During the question and answer session, the Minister was asked if any provision was made for the “missing middle” students with debt to ensure that they are not academically excluded.

“We have said that all those who come from families earning up to R600,000 won’t be paying any increase. That is the biggest intervention we made... Universities must be able to work out a system such that students who owe, including those from the ‘missing middle’, are not excluded...”

“However, mechanisms must be put in place [to deal with] how their debt is paid and how their debt is managed so that we minimise exclusion even for missing middle students,” he said.

University exams continuing without disruptions

The Minister said the department has been monitoring the exams at all institutions and is in constant communication with them to ensure that exams run smoothly.

He said the department recognises the enormous repercussions that the failure to complete examinations will have on institutions and students, particularly final year and prospective students.

“There are some institutions that have concluded their main examinations – that’s the University of Venda, University of Limpopo, North West University and Mangosuthu University of Technology.

“At other institutions, examinations are continuing without disruptions... Some institutions have allowed students to choose to write their exams in January and we will monitor this as well,” he said.

The Minister said departmental officials have been visiting some institutions where there were disruptions in an attempt to address issues raised by the students.

“Continuous meetings are held with the Security Cluster as part of an interdepartmental plan to ensure safety and security at all institutions of higher learning. The department has also met with managers responsible for security risk management at universities.

“Representatives from the National Joint Operations Centre and representatives from the private security industry regulatory authority ... [met] to deliberate on safety and security on campuses and to find better ways to deal with violent protests and disruptions...”