

NSFAS processes over 800,000 applications

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has received and processed 839,130 online and manual applications for funding.



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According to the 2021 funding status report, of the 839,130 applications received, 722,252 were found to be funding eligible, while 55,945 applications were unsuccessful, as they did not meet the funding eligibility criteria.

A total of 5,335 applications could not be finalised due to the supporting documents needed to complete the evaluation process, and were closed.

“The balance of applications are mainly constituted of the trimester two applications for colleges. These applications were received during May and June 2021 to allow new students, who enrolled at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Tvet) colleges, to also apply for NSFAS funding,” the report said.

Programme to support approved students studying at public universities and Tvet colleges.

It covers areas including the 2021 application status update, allowances paid to institutions to date, appeals, and some of the challenges the entity has had to confront in ensuring that every confirmed funded student is paid the right amount and on time.

The report also provides a breakdown of the funding allocation to each institution.

The report said since its inception in 1999, funds allocated to NSFAS have increased substantially from R441 million in 1999 to almost R42 billion in 2021/21 financial year.

“These funds are allocated for students at public universities and Tvet colleges in accordance with the funding conditions for each sector published in the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Rules and Guidelines,” the report said.

Improvement in applications evaluation process

The report also showed that NSFAS has significantly improved its applications evaluation process and this is evident in the number of students whose funding decisions have been confirmed, compared to previous years, as well as students who were able to submit an immediate appeal when their applications were unsuccessful.

There were 19,820 appeals received and processed for the First Time Entering Students (FTENs) or new NSFAS students, with a total of 6,752 appeals reviewed and approved, as a result of changes in the household income, which occurred after the application was submitted to NSFAS.

“The balance of appeals remains unsuccessful, while others do not have enough supporting documents to substantiate the need for a review of the funding decision. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposed restriction levels, many students were faced with data connectivity problems, and were unable to submit documents as required.

“NSFAS then had to extend the appeals window from 30 May 2021 to 30 June 2021 to test the newly developed Appeals System Based Tools, and to accommodate students and institutions who may still want to submit an appeal,” the report said.

Over one million eligible for funding

The report further showed that the number of students assessed as eligible for the 2021 programme cycle is 1,286,867, with a total of 939,934 students allocated for the university sector and 346,933 students for the TVET Colleges.

These include new and continuing students.

Despite the progress being made, there are still challenges around the NSFAS wallet blockages.

Fraudulent activities have been noted and NSFAS will continue to make students aware of the importance of profile management to manage this risk and report any abnormal activities on their accounts.

“NSFAS intends to resolve any exceptions within the 2021 programme cycle, as it will soon start to prepare for the 2022 application cycle,” NSFAS Chief Corporate Services Officer, Sibongile Mncwabe, said.

The NSFAS contact centre operational hours are Monday to Friday, between 8.30am and 5pm.

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