

NSFAS 2022 funding reaches 691,432 students

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) will in the 2022 financial year spend R47.3bn in funding the tertiary education of 691,432 students.



Image source: Brian Jackson – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

This was on Friday revealed by Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister, Blade Nzimande, during a press briefing.

Of the approved applicants, 462,983 were female and 227,072 being male.

Addressing reporters, the Minister said: “There has been a new intake of 240,790 SASSA students... and we will continue to support 1,770 students with disabilities who receive quite a comprehensive set of allowances from the NSFAS Fund.”

Of this allocation, he said, 362,482 was for continuing students and 136,460 for new students.

He said that students registering in multiple institutions continue to be a challenge.

“We have found that 2,481 students have registered in more than one institution and NSFAS has received registration claims from more than a single institution,” he said.

To rectify this problem, students are required to deregister in institutions that they are not studying at and submit evidence to NSFAS so that funds can be released to the correct institution.

Another big challenge identified, he said, was with regards to funding conditions not met, students following incorrect academic pathways, registering on non-aligned qualifications. He said this was the case with even new students who were registered on qualifications that were being phased-out.

“The above requires all institutions and all students to strictly adhere to the approved NSFAS Eligibility Criteria and Conditions for Financial Aid funding without deviations. NSFAS will continue to work with institutions to ensure resolution to the anomalies in the system,” he said.

TVET college student funding

For 2022 TVET college bursaries, he said NSFAS projected a 10% growth in student numbers across all TVET academic cycles to an estimated 395,000 students. In this regard, NSFAS made provisional funding for 380,000 TVET college students.

To date, he said NSFAS received registration data for close to 200,000 students. This is at about 52% of expected and provisionally funded students in colleges, he said.

“In seeking to close the gap and understand the issues at college level, NSFAS deployed its staff in May to assist TVET colleges to submit registration data according to NSFAS requirements.

“This intervention assisted in the improvement of data quality submitted by the TVET colleges. However, this intervention is not sustainable as NSFAS does not have enough capacity to adequately support TVET colleges at various campuses in this particular way in the long-term,” he said.

The Minister said there was a need to capacitate TVET college staff on NSFAS processes. In the regard, he said NSFAS had committed to support colleges with a contribution of R500,000 per college in the short-term period to appoint financial aid officers.

The main issue affecting the processing of students in TVET colleges, like universities, is the problem of multiple registration status and students following incorrect academic pathways.

“There were 4,287 unprocessed students not processed for payment by NSFAS because of these exceptions. NSFAS has started a reconciliation and data sharing exercise with institutions for the resolution of these identified exceptions,” he said.

The minister said this issue would be sustainably resolved through “systems integration between NSFAS and institutions”.

“I am informed that already there is on-going work to resolve this issue,” he said.

Nzimande said the NSFAS board recently proposed new policy reforms to improve the efficiency of the scheme. He said had considered and agreed to these, saying the changes had proven to be positive in improving service delivery.

NSFAS administrative, student accommodation and other related challenges

After being inundated by student complaints on accommodation and being evicted by landlords, he said from next year,

NFSAS would take a proactive role in NSFAS-funded student accommodation in order to ensure value for money. This included standardising the cost and quality by grading student accommodation, thus paying a standard rate based on the grading of each type of accommodation.

He said: “Through numerous engagements with students, student leadership bodies, educational institutions, and accommodation providers, it is clear that student accommodation remains a major challenge to resolve. This is the case in both private accommodation and institution owned-accommodation.”

He said there were insufficient beds to accommodate students, while some institutions did not have sufficient quantities and quality of own accommodation.

“The building of more infrastructure for student accommodation remains a priority for government, and I intend to accelerate such construction, including through partnerships with the private sector,” he said.

Further announcements will be made in this regard later this year.

This included pilots to test various strategies and plans to significantly increase the number of student beds for both university and TVET college students.

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