



## higher education & training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media Release

### **MINISTER NZIMANDE HOLDS PRODUCTIVE MEETING WITH COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERS**

**PRETORIA, 29 January 2017** – The Minister of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Dr Blade Nzimande, met with the leadership of the South African Further Education and Training Students Association (SAFETSA) on Friday, resulting in a number of important milestones.

The meeting came after SAFETSA submitted a list of concerns to the Department late last year, that included challenges relating to student funding, learning conditions and delayed results and certificates.

Among other things, it was agreed at the end of the productive meeting that college administrators would be engaged as a matter of urgency to ensure that students with pending results are accommodated during the 2017 academic year, that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) would extend its closing deadline by two weeks, that the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) would ensure a speedy resolution to the backlog of outstanding certificates, that priority be given to the release of pending results and that SAFETSA would meanwhile consider suspending the current shutdown of some colleges.

“We had a very good meeting with SAFETSA as part of my continuing regular meetings with a range of higher education stakeholders to discuss preparations for the 2017 academic year.

“I’m very confident that after this meeting with SAFETSA that we have now moved significantly in addressing many of the legitimate issues that the students are raising, that are affecting them and colleges,” Minister Nzimande said.

“During our deliberations my Department was very clear on our commitment to ensure that any delays that may affect the system cannot and should not be to the detriment of those hard working students seeking to study further or enter the job market. I further impressed on SAFETSA leadership our mandate as DHET which is to ensure that learning at our institutions should continue under conducive conditions free of violence or intimidation. In this regard, I also want to reiterate the importance of continuing open dialogue among all college stakeholders, and the need for them to keep working together to ensure stability in the system,” he added.

Noting that 2016 was yet another challenging year for the higher education sector, the Minister paid tribute to all stakeholders at TVET colleges, particularly students, for the minimal disruptions to study programmes that had occurred there during the year – adding that it was his hope that this would continue this year.

“I must commend SAFETSA for this. We are working tirelessly to ensure that the legitimate issues that they have raised that are under our control are speedily attended to”.

“The lack of disruptions in the TVET system last year was not only most welcome, it was an indication of the maturity with which all the key stakeholders in our colleges, including students, approach their core business of empowering the next generation of young people with practical skills. This bodes well for our colleges and the South African economy, as well as the future of our young democracy,” Minister Nzimande said.

He reiterated that while the mandate of the Department of Higher Education and Training was to develop a skilled and capable workforce that could contribute to a sustainable and inclusive growth path for South Africa, TVETs were particularly crucial to this task.

“Indeed, our 50 public TVET colleges are vital national assets, which empower the next generations with very practical skills and knowledge. They make a vital contribution to the ability of our economy to be competitive, despite the fact that they currently face a number of real challenges.

“I must also stress, once again, that there is absolutely nothing in the memorandum that we received from SAFETSA that cannot be resolved with goodwill, determination and focus among all stakeholders, of course supported by DHET,” Minister Nzimande said.

He said the government's commitment to the higher education sector was demonstrated in part by the substantial increases in funding to NSFAS since 2010, and the state remained committed to finding the resources to support the children of all poor, working class and middle class families in their quest to better their lives and those of their families through skills acquisition.

It was in this light that he had announced last year that all students who come from households with a combined income of less than R600 000 per annum would be given subsidy funding by the government to cover this year’s fee increases, up to 8%. This moratorium on fee rises also applied to TVET students.

**Ends**