



**Statement by the Minister of Higher Education and Training,
Dr BE Nzimande, on Opportunities for the 2015 Matriculants in the
Post-School Education and Training System**

First and foremost, I wish to congratulate the 2015 matriculants who passed their examinations and especially those who fared particularly well. At the same time, I would like to encourage those who have not succeeded to rewrite their examinations or to pursue opportunities in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system.

As the Department of Higher Education and Training, we are aware that the matriculation examinations are a very important milestone in the lives of young people. We would like to make them aware of approximately 517 402 opportunities available to them within the post-school system — that is in our 26 Universities, 50 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and various workplace-related training opportunities supported through the 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which help to promote and fund occupational / skills programmes linked to educational institutions and workplaces.

These opportunities can further be broken down as follows:

- 212 472 new entrant opportunities at Universities;
- 133 551 Engineering and Business Studies opportunities at TVET colleges;
- 88 794 occupationally-directed (apprenticeship or learnership) opportunities in collaboration with TVET colleges, SETAs and employers;
- 30 750 new artisan learners to be registered; and
- 51 835 learning programme opportunities in the form of 5 087 apprenticeships, 9 073 bursaries, 20 138 learnerships, 17 537 skills and work readiness programmes supported through the SETAs.

This is the second cohort of 644 536 Grade 12 learners who wrote the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) aligned final examinations for the National Senior Certificate. They achieved a pass rate of 70.7%, with 455 825 learners satisfying the requirements of the National Senior Certificate with the following notable achievements:

- 166 263 learners qualifying for admission to bachelor studies at higher education institutions;
- 183 720 learners qualifying for admission to diploma studies at higher education Institutions; and
- 105 770 learners qualifying for admission to higher certificate studies.

Many of those who have met the entrance requirements for university study will be pursuing degrees, diplomas and higher certificates at one of 26 public universities. This includes the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) and the University of Mpumalanga (UMP), both of which are new universities entering their third year of operation.

These two new universities started with a modest enrolment of 130 students at SPU and 140 students at UMP in 2014. This year their enrolment will increase to 797 at SPU and 940 at UMP. The Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), will be entering its second year of operation with an intake of 1 300 students.

South Africa's recently established ninth medical school and the first in the democratic South Africa will open its doors for the first intake of 60 new students at the University of Limpopo during January 2016. This is the second historically disadvantaged university to be involved in the training of our medical doctors and is linked, over the longer term, to the Presidential Project of building an academic hospital in Limpopo.

The 26 public universities offer a diverse range of degrees, diplomas and higher certificates to prepare the matric class of 2015 to take their rightful place in the country's economy. The national average annual increase over the next five-year period in the number of first-time entering students at higher education institutions is targeted at 4.7%, with first-time entering students making up approximately 25% of the undergraduate student population.

In 2016, our public universities will provide access to approximately 212 472 new entrants wishing to pursue their studies across all general, technical and professional fields including Business and Management, Science, Engineering, Agriculture and Technology, Humanities, Social Sciences, the Arts and Education.

Those who have completed Grade 12 with a minimum of a higher certificate achievement can consider studying further at a TVET college for a National Diploma with 133 551 study opportunities available for both Engineering and Business Studies.

The National Development Plan requires that by 2030 at least 30 000 qualified artisans be produced per year. In South Africa there is a growing trend of matriculants utilising learnership or apprenticeship opportunities to become artisans in the Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Manufacturing or Support Services career fields.

Matriculants who have an inclination to become an artisan — such as a motor mechanic, plumber, electrician, chef, hairdresser, among others — can register at the National Artisan Development Support Centre (NADSC) in Kwa-Thema by going to their website: <http://nadsc.dhet.gov.za>, contacting the NADSC Call Centre on 011 736 4400 or by emailing

copies of their qualifications to info@eec.hipcc.co.za. They can also approach any of the student support services offices at any of the public TVET colleges for more information.

However, it is critical to note that in order to be accepted into an artisan programme, matriculants must have completed mathematics and science with a minimum mark of 50% in each of these subjects. Artisan work has become much more technologically advanced and requires a higher skill level. Those matriculants who do not have mathematics and science, but have passed and wish to consider a career as an artisan, can also register at NADSC for the Generic Trade Preparation Programme, which is a bridging course being implemented at public TVET colleges. This bridging course includes Mathematics, Engineering Science, a technical subject such as electronics, life orientation and computer skills, and a short course on artisan development legislation.

Out-of-school youth who wish to enter the world of work, or need to increase their skills capabilities, can consider the options of learnerships, apprenticeships and skills programmes.

TVET colleges also offer occupationally directed programmes that are accredited by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) under the auspices of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations. Among these, are programmes that are offered through apprenticeship or learnership agreements between the student, TVET colleges and employers. TVET colleges have set aside 88 794 study opportunities for this mode of delivery.

SETAs will further be providing 51 835 learning programme opportunities in the form of 5 087 apprenticeships, 9 073 bursaries, 20 138 learnerships, and 17 537 skills and work-readiness programmes.

In pursuit of the Department's mandate to increase access and success in TVET college learning programmes, and to transform TVET colleges into institutions of choice, construction at three of the 12 planned new TVET college campuses started in 2014, and these are at various stages of completion. This month, January, will see the first student enrolment intake at the Thabazimbi campus, while student enrolment intakes at the Bhambanana and Nkandla campuses will start in April 2016. The development and refurbishment of TVET college infrastructure will include student accommodation facilities and modern teaching and learning lecture rooms, workshops, simulation rooms, and resource and recreational centres.

As the Department, we are committed to realising the right to further education (meaning Higher Education, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training) as enshrined in our Constitution. This means ensuring that further education opportunities are available and accessible to all and that academically deserving students are not denied access due to financial need. We need to ensure, over the medium to long term, that sufficient financial aid

is made available to support all academically deserving but financially needy university students through income contingent loans and bursaries, and at the same time to strive to keep university fees affordable.

Government has listened to the concerns raised by university students. As an immediate measure, we have resolved the 0% fee increment for 2016 with universities, which amounted to R2.33 billion and agreed that university students who meet the NSFAS means test will not be required to pay upfront payments when registering for the 2016 academic year.

One of the most successful schemes established by government to assist students who display academic ability but come from poor disadvantaged families, is the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which provides loans and bursaries to students at all 26 public universities and 50 public TVET colleges throughout the country. NSFAS will be funding 205 000 first-time entering and continuing eligible students at universities and 200 000 students at TVET colleges in 2016 by providing student loans and bursaries totaling R10 billion.

Government has also reprioritised R2.543 billion of State funding in the 2016/17 financial year to be allocated to NSFAS to provide for loans to assist 71 753 identified students, who qualified for NSFAS funding but were either partially or not funded at all over the past three academic years. This means that these deserving students will not be barred from continuing with their studies because they owe universities outstanding fees.

A further R2.039 billion will be allocated to NSFAS in the 2016/17 financial year to ensure that these students, still in the university system, are supported financially to continue and complete their qualifications.

This total injection of R4.582 billion additional funds into the NSFAS loan scheme will go a long way towards supporting financially needy and academically deserving students.

In addition to the funds that NSFAS received from the funds voted by Parliament, the National Skills Fund (NSF) makes further annual allocations aimed at funding the full cost of study towards critical skills programmes, most needed for the growth and development of the economy. NSFAS has been allocated over R700 million for full bursaries for scarce and critical skills for the current year from the NSF. This funding is made available through the financial aid offices at universities, and students wishing to make use of these bursaries are advised to enroll for critical skills study programmes, which include science, commerce, health science, engineering and many others.

The Department is committed to expanding access and success in our institutions for students who have special needs. At our TVET colleges, for example, government pays 80% of the programme cost of the student's choice with an additional allocation being made dependent on the type and severity of the disability. In addition, NSFAS has earmarked R72.9 million in the 2016 academic year to provide financial aid to disabled students in universities.

The Department, in collaboration with Department of Basic Education, launched the “*Apply Now*” campaign with the aim of creating awareness of career options, study opportunities and application procedures for PSET. In 2015, we reached out to Grade 9 to 12 learners in 6 812 public secondary and combined schools in the country, distributing one million “*Apply Now*” booklets.

This campaign complements the Career Development Services Helpline (Call 0860 999 0123 for advice or send an SMS or “Please Call Me” to 072 204 5056); the Khetha radio programmes that are weekly flighted on 10 SABC African languages radio stations, including Afrikaans; social media platforms and career awareness events. The National Career Advice Portal (NCAP) (<http://ncap.careerhelp.org.za>) provides access to career information on career pathways, occupations and relevant education and training opportunities.

The Department is again operating the Central Application Clearing House (CACH) this month (January) and next month. The CACH service has been developed to assist learners who qualify for higher education studies and have applied for a space at an institution, but have not been offered a place at the institution of their choice after the matric results were released. It is also accessible to those learners who did not apply before the closing dates last year and now find that they are eligible for higher education studies.

Learners looking for spaces in the university education system can contact the toll free call centre on 0800 356 635, or send an SMS with their name, ID and contact number to 49200 and they will be telephoned back free of charge. They can also access the system via the website <http://cach.dhet.gov.za>. The CACH service will verify the learner's information and forward it to institutions that still have unfilled places. Where places exist and applicants meet the requirements, institutions will contact learners to offer them available places.

The 2016 CACH service is also linked to the Career Development Helpline, which provides general career information services, and to assist anyone interested in pursuing further education and training opportunities or other skills development opportunities in the PSET system. Learners will also be offered free career advice and be guided through possible alternative options at TVET colleges, artisan training and other skills development opportunities.

As Minister of Higher Education and Training, I have no doubt that these initiatives and campaigns create awareness of and provide useful information about career and funding options for post-school education and training. I want to take this opportunity to urge those who have not passed matric to rewrite their examinations or to access all the sources of relevant information that the Department has created specifically for them and to choose from a range of options available within the PSET system.

My Department, in line with government's programmes, remains committed to expanding diversity and creating more opportunities in the post-school education and training system, so that we can move away from a post-school system that is disproportionately dependent on access to university. We urge those who have not been accepted at universities to explore all the other post-school education and training options.

The Department of Higher Education and Training welcomes the Class of 2015 into the Post-School Education and Training system where learning and growth can take place in our 26 Universities and 50 TVET colleges, and through the 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).