

## **Support: Government's fee decision**

23 September 2016 – A number of stakeholders which include several universities and the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), Cosatu, the largest of South Africa's three trade union federations as well as the Department's NEHAWU branch, have "welcomed" government's decision on fees.

The ANC explained it believed that the "announcement is a significant step towards free education for the poor" while Nehawu applauded the "efforts of our government and the ministry of higher education and training ... in ensuring that poor people access post-school education and training".

Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Nzimande made the announcement on 2017 university fees earlier this week, saying that poor, working and middle-class families would be subsidised to cover the fee adjustments based on 2015 fees and that this would be done for increments up to 8%.

The net effect, he says, is that all NSFAS qualifying students as well as the missing middle – those students whose families earn about the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) threshold but who are unable to support their children to access higher education, will experience no fee increase in 2017.

He explains that after consideration of all inputs from a wide group of stakeholders and the Council of Higher Education's report on the matter, that the "best approach would be allow universities individually to determine the level of level that their institutions will require to ensure they continue to operate effectively and at least maintain existing quality".

Nzimande cautions the universities to take into account affordability to students, and therefore [fees have] to be transparent, reasonable and related to inflation-linked adjustments.

The Minister adds that the fee adjustments should not go above 8%.

Already this year, the Department's expanded funding has supported 405,000 students at universities and TVET colleges through NSFAS.

Furthermore, the Department has already subsidised the 2016 university fee increase to the tune of R1.9 billion.

Over R1.3 billion in bursaries for students studying scarce and critical skills has been made available this year. This has benefited 14,700 students.

The NSF also made R626.795 million available in 2016 to TVET college students, studying occupations in high demand and R1.237 billion for funding students in workplace-based learning.

Artisan programmes had received R4.6 billion in funding through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) which will help register 30,750 new artisans this year.