

**THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DR
BLADE NZIMANDE, STATEMENT ON POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING SECTOR STATE OF READINESS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020**

16 January 2020

Programme Director

**Director Generals of the Department of Higher Education, Science and
Technology, Mr Gwebinkundla Qonde and Dr Phil Mjwara;**

DDG Present;

Chairpersons and CEOs of our Entities;

Administrator of NSFAS

Vice Chancellors and TVET Principals

Student formations;

Labour Unions

Members of the media

Fellow South Africans

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2019 following the Minister of Basic Education announcement of the 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam results.

I would like to particularly congratulate all those who will be joining us in our various post-school institutions, the public universities and TVET colleges.

The 2019 NSC overall pass. Rate, with the progressed learner included, stands at a new record of 81.3% - a 3.1 percentage points improvement from the 78.2% achieved in 2018. Further analysis of the 2019 NSC examinations results show that:

The number of candidates with bachelor passes is 186 058.

The number of candidates, who passed with a diploma pass is 144 672.

The number of candidates who passed with Higher Certificate entry is 78 984.

Of the 2019 passes:

121 179 achieved 30% or above in mathematics and 77 751 achieved 40% or above. In most Bachelors programmes a student will not be accepted with lower than 40% in mathematics, unless they have exceptional results in other subjects. In the sciences students won't be accepted with lower than 50% in mathematics.

The worrying thing is that in 2019 the actual number who passed with 40% or above in mathematics was lower than the number in 2018 (where 86 874 passed with this mark).

The overall number of spaces in the university system for 2020 is 201 041 – however universities would be expected to enrol within a 2% range of this figure so the actual numbers after registration could be up to 4 020 enrolments more – i.e. 205 061, or less - i.e. 196 020.

It is also important to note that the audited data for 2018 shows that of the first time entering intake 21% of students enrolled for Certificates, 24% for Diplomas, and 55% for Degrees.

The Certificates would mostly be foundation type Higher Certificates – that students who received Bachelors or Diploma passes, but did not get the entry requirements for their programme of choice, could enter into.

I also would like to take this moment to equally urge all learners who have not passed their matric not to despair, but instead to explore and consider other options, including the Second Chance Matrics Support Programme and other post-school education and training opportunities that do not require a NSC pass for entry.

University Education

Many of those who have met the entrance requirements for university study will be pursuing degrees, diplomas and higher certificates at one of our 26 public universities.

It is important to realise that entrance requirements into university studies is linked to academic achievements in the National Senior Certificate (NSC).

While the minimum requirements to achieve a bachelor's, diploma, or higher certificate pass in the NSC is set in policy, individual institutions and programmes set specific entrance requirements. This means that a person with a bachelor pass may not necessarily meet the requirements for entry into particular degree programmes. This is usually influenced by the academic demands and specialities required in various programmes and/or number of spaces available.

In 2020, our 26 public universities will provide access to approximately 201 042 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.

The new enrolment plan for universities for 2020 – 2025 has just been completed.

All universities were required to consider their enrolments in terms of the fiscal realities and constraints, and to plan realistically, making sure that the enrolment numbers targeted resulted in the optimum number of new students entering the system for the first time in 2020, being fully supported through available infrastructure and sufficient qualified lecturers and academics, and within the constraints of the funding available for bursaries for poor and working-class students.

The enrolment plan provides details of the enrolment targets for all fields of study, and specifically for those scarce skills fields that support our country's growth, such as Engineering Sciences, Life and Physical Sciences, Animal and Human Health Sciences, and Teacher Education.

In 2020, of the 201 042 new entrants, approximately 66 764 students will be enrolling in these areas:

16 152 in Engineering programmes
16 948 in Life and Physical Sciences programmes
10 912 in Human and Animal Health programmes of which
906 in Animal Sciences programmes
9 796 in Human Health programmes
210 in Veterinary Sciences programmes
22 752 in initial Teacher Education programmes

Universities have been requested not to over-enrol in 2020 to ensure the appropriate infrastructure and human resources for the numbers of students in the system, the quality of teaching and learning and the sustainability of the university system.

Since the tragic loss of life at the University of Johannesburg in 2012, most institutions have discouraged walk-in applications, and we have supported them as a department. We have rather focused on encouraging prospective students to apply early and on time through the Apply Now! Campaign, which runs every year from March through to September in conjunction with the Khetha Career Development Services.

We are therefore confident that most students who are intending to enter university or college in 2020 have applied to the institution of their choice before the closing date.

The DHET bursary scheme for students from poor and working-class backgrounds

Our commitment has been to support as many academically deserving undergraduate students as possible that require financial assistance.

In 2018, government announced substantial new funding to support poor and working-class students from families earning up to R350 000 per annum into universities and colleges.

The new funding was introduced as a bursary for first-time entering university students into the system in 2018 and in 2020 will enter its third year of implementation.

The bursary is being phased in over five years. Students who qualify for funding based on the financial criteria must register for a funded qualification at a public university or TVET college to receive funding. Any student that qualifies and accepts the funding to study must accept the conditions of the funding provided to receive their funding.

2020 Applications

For the 2020 financial year, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has received a record-breaking number of applications by the closing date of November 30, 2019. NSFAS a total of 543,268 first-time ever applications (prior year 428 929, a 26% growth) from across the country, with the vast majority of applicants submitting applications online via myNSFAS portal.

Applicants includes those who were in Matric in 2019, learners in Grade 10 – 11, intending to further studies at the TVET Colleges. What is very encouraging is that more than 200,000 applicants were from out of school youth or youth that were not in the Department Basic Education system in 2019.

All applications have been processed over the festive season, and to date 428,377 applications have been approved for NSFAS funding. This information is transferred on a daily basis to institutions to identify NSFAS eligible students at the point of registration.

A total of 281,639 (52%) of all applications received thus far are SASSA beneficiaries. This is very encouraging as NSFAS is improving its delivery on mandate to reach the most vulnerable.

From the total number of applications received, 31,160 applications remain incomplete or may have outstanding or incorrect supporting documents. This figure had been reduced from over 130,000 initially. This category of students have been contacted by the call center to submit the required documentation.

NSFAS cleared close to 100,000 by validating poor quality documents received with Departments of Home Affairs and Social Development. This assisted poor students as facilities for many of our target group are not readily available for even a routine task of scanning.

The 26% improvement of application volumes over the prior year and the success rate of processing and approving such large numbers prior to the registration season of the tertiary sector, is contributed to an extensive outreach campaign, partnerships with both local and provincial governments; and private sector. Premiers from various provinces, together with their provincial departments of education supported NSFAS in reaching out to the most rural areas. This administrative effort by NSFAS will assist students, as eligible students are loaded onto institution databases, which clear students then for registration without having to pay any upfront or registration fee.

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) made their facilities available for NSFAS applicants to submit both online and manual application, as well as submission of the supporting documents.

NSFAS has launched a project in partnership with Department of Basic Education that aims to provide supplementary NSFAS content to Grade 9 – Grade 12 learners while they are still in class. Our outreach program shows that scholars know very little about NSFAS. This means that this relationship must be strengthened.

During the 2020 application, NSFAS introduced a prepopulated Application Forms - Pertinent details about all learners were prepopulated in the application using information from the Department of Basic Education database.

For additional security, applicants are vetted directly with Home Affairs and Social Development when they register online.

This is a major improvement in NSFAS administration, as communication of funding decision prior to the commencement of the academic year will allow students to enroll at tertiary institution without having to pay upfront registration fees.

Funding decisions for the 2020 applications have been updated on the myNSFAS portal profiles. Applicants have received SMSes redirecting them to the online portal to see the latest status update. Students declared eligible for funding not required to pay a registration fee.

Review Process

The Administrator introduced an additional layer of quality assurance to review all applications. A review process is done for all those students who are disqualified in the first round. At total of 27,129 are currently under a second round of assessment and where additional documentation has been requested.

Students that wish to appeal the NSFAS ruling to disqualify are invited to appeal in the event that their household circumstances had changed. The opening date appeals will be 20 January 2020 and NSFAS will communicate to all students the requirements.

Stats on NSFAS eligible students for University vs TVET enrolment

Students become NSFAS funded once they pass the NSFAS eligibility criteria as well as NSFAS being in receipt of proof of registration for an approved course at a Public Institution.

There is great difference in the amount of applications received from universities and TVETs with 453,157 indicated university as their first choice of public institution, while only 90 111 chose TVET Colleges.

To support the ongoing registration at TVET Colleges, where it is expected to have a large influx of Walk-Ins, NSFAS has deployed a team of support staff, from January 13, 2020.

The TVET returning students still to be processed late in the month, as NSFAS is working with the TVET Principal to determine academic progression.

Returning Students

As NSFAS received progression data from institutions they are then able to load payment data of continuing students for 2020. At least more than 212 000 university returning students have already been declared eligible for NSFAS in 2020 academic year.

This take us well over 600 000 funded students declared eligible for funding thus far.

This is for the first time ever that NSFAS students are declared eligible before registration.

Student Housing Infrastructure Programme

Through the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (SHIP) of the Department of Higher Education and Training, we aim to develop large-scale student housing projects at universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in the coming years. The goal of SHIP is to provide 300 000 new beds at the 26 public universities and 50 public TVET colleges over the next 10 years.

The programme has succeeded in raising funds to supplement the Department's infrastructure funding and has forged partnerships with a range of entities in both the public and private sectors. We currently have partnerships with the National Treasury, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and Infrastructure Investment Programme for South Africa (IIPSA), amongst others.

Large projects comprising of 7 273 new beds are currently being developed at are:

Nelson Mandela University – 2 000 beds
University of Fort Hare – 1 437 beds
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University – 2 000 beds
Vaal University of Technology - 1 836 beds

The next set of projects will provide 12 448 new beds at:

North West University – 1 728 beds
University of Limpopo – 3 500 beds
University of the Western Cape – 2 720 beds
University of Zululand – 3 500 beds
King Hintsa TVET College – 1 000 beds

The projects in the pipeline where feasibility studies will be undertaken in 2020:

Cape Peninsula University of Technology – 2 150 beds
Central University of Technology – 1 000 beds
University of Johannesburg – 2 000 beds
Walter Sisulu University – 3 000 beds
Lephalale TVET College – 1 200 beds
Northlink TVET College – 1 500 beds

From 2020/21 onwards, the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme Management Office will prepare a pipeline of projects each year, funded by both the public and private sectors to unlock the investment required for the programme.

I however would like to call upon those private providers of student accommodation not to exploit students through exorbitant rent. I intend convening a meeting in the coming weeks with some of the major private providers of student accommodation to discuss these and other related matters on quality and safety of such accommodation.

Central Applications Clearing House

Prospective first-time entry students who have applied for spaces in a university but have not been able to secure a space in their institution of choice will be referred to the Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) for assistance in finding another space available in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system. Students who did not apply to an institution can also utilise CACH for referral to potential spaces.

The CACH service was developed to assist learners who are eligible for higher education studies and have applied for space at a university but have not been offered a place at the institution of their choice after the Grade 12 results are released. The CACH went live on the 14th January and will continue to operate until the 28 February 2020.

Learners who are unable to secure spaces at the institutions they applied to send an SMS with their name, ID and contact number to 31629 and they will be called back.

They can also access the system via the website <http://cach.dhet.gov.za> or send an email to 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 admission requirements, institutions will contact learners to offer them available places.

The 2020 CACH service is linked to the Khetha Helpline, which can provide career advice, guidance and information and assist anyone interested in pursuing higher education and training opportunities or other skills development opportunities in the PSET system.

Learners will be guided through possible alternative options at TVET colleges, artisan training and other skills development opportunities.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The mandate of the Department is to develop a skilled and capable workforce that can contribute to inclusive growth path.

Central to achieving this mandate is also ensuring that students get access to and succeed in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges leading to intermediate and high-level skills.

TVET colleges play a pivotal role in addressing South Africa's skills needs and cater for a wide spectrum and growing numbers of students.

TVET colleges have flexible and diverse course offerings ranging from full qualifications to short courses, occupational and skills programmes which include learnerships and trade offerings. A few colleges offer higher certificate qualifications in collaboration with universities. These higher certificates are of a vocational nature and serve as preparation for work.

While education is an apex priority of government, technical and vocational education and training needs to be the apex of post-school education and training.

Government wants to ensure that we support TVET colleges in ensuring transformation with regards to relevant and responsive curricula, lecturer development, improved administration, management and governance of TVET colleges with the aim of producing employable young people with high quality occupational and vocational education and training skills.

Government will continue to grow the system so that TVET colleges become institutions of choice providing skills to growing numbers of students and exceeding the number of university students significantly. This will be achieved through joint planning in using the different funding sources to scale up enrolments in the occupational qualifications.

In this academic year (2020), 226 685 new entrant opportunities will be provided by TVET colleges of which 156 800 opportunities will be available for students interested in studying towards a National Diploma in Engineering, General or Business Studies.

Meanwhile 63 658 new entrant opportunities will also be available across 19 programmes for the National Certificate (Vocational), which provides both theory and practical experience in various vocational fields.

There are 5 387 entry opportunities into the Pre-vocational Learning Programme (PLP), which will enable a student not meeting the requirements for the TVET college programme of his/her choice to obtain the required knowledge and competences to do so in the following academic year.

Application for these opportunities have already commenced and prospective students are encouraged to continue to approach the TVET colleges nearest to them to apply.

TVET colleges also offer occupationally directed qualifications and programmes that are accredited by SETAs and professional bodies under the auspices of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations. These range from learnerships, trade offerings to shorter skills programmes.

These opportunities are accessed through a contractual agreement with an employer and the TVET college delivers the theoretical and practical components.

Centres of Specialisation

The Centres of Specialisation (CoS) is a national programme aimed at building the capacity of the public TVET college system to deliver trade qualifications while building the much-needed skills for Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) of government's infrastructure programme.

The programme started in 2019 at 26 college sites spread across the country. These college sites are providing training in 13 critical trades and occupations that are in short supply for various infrastructure development projects and the economic needs of the country in general.

In this academic year, these Colleges will take 840 new apprentices into the Centres of Specialisation (COS) programme.

Employers will take in apprentices and send them to colleges between February and March. Four Employer Associations, which include the Retail Motor Industry (RMI), Steel and Engineering Industry Federation (SEIFSA), Institute of Plumbing (IOPSA) and South African Institute of Welding (SAIW), are part of this ground-breaking initiative.

Private Higher Education Institutions

In 2020 there are a total of 135 Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) registered with the Department offering higher education and vocational programmes, across diverse fields of study, ranging from Higher Certificate to Doctoral studies through both distance and contact modes of delivery.

The number of registered PHEIs changes from time-to-time, depending on the economy, the accreditation status of programmes and compliance with regulations.

The Department monitors the system to ensure compliance on an ongoing basis and publishes an updated register of Registered PHEIs on a monthly basis on the Department's website, which includes details of the accredited programmes they may legally offer, as well as accredited sites of delivery.

All prospective students wishing to study at a PHEI need to check the register to ensure that the institution they are considering is operating legally, and is accredited to offer programmes they wish to study.

While PHEIs operating legally play an important role within the higher education sector and offer credible and quality programmes, there are a number of 'bogus' institutions that continue to advertise unregistered and unaccredited programmes to unsuspecting students.

It is also important to check that the programme you wish to register for at a legally registered PHEI is accredited by our department and other relevant bodies like the Council on Higher Education and the SETAs.

Lastly, I would like to alert you that I am currently in consultation with stakeholders in the education sector about the new academic year preparations in general.

Our consultations include Students' Political formations, Student Organisations, Political Parties, Labour Federations, SALGA, Faith-based organisations, and CONTRALESA, amongst others. These consultations will culminate in a substantive media briefing. More details on this media briefing will be shared later.

I wish the 2019 class all the best

I thank you all.