



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**MINISTER BUTI MANAMELA SIGNS OFF ON ENROLMENT PLANNING TARGETS
FOR UNIVERSITIES FOR 2026-2030**

TO ALL MEDIA

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The Minister of Higher Education, Mr Buti Manamela, has officially approved the Ministerial Statement on Student Enrolment Planning for Public Universities for the academic period 2026 to 2030, and the associated funding period through to 2032/33.

This marks the culmination of an extensive national planning process involving all 26 public universities, led by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The planning cycle included bilateral engagements with each institution, a national enrolment planning workshop in November 2024, and the submission of Council-approved institutional plans outlining enrolment, graduation and staffing targets for the next five years.

A Milestone for Systemic Stability and Growth

The approved targets project that total university enrolments will grow from just over 1.07 million in 2023 to 1.18 million by 2030, an annual increase of 1.5%. First-time entering undergraduate intake is expected to grow at 1.8% annually, with meaningful improvements also targeted in graduation rates, postgraduate output, and staffing qualifications.

While welcoming the institutional commitment reflected in these targets, Minister Manamela cautioned that these figures alone will not be sufficient to meet the broader National Development Plan (NDP) targets, especially in areas such as science and engineering, teacher education, and scarce skill development.

“This enrolment plan provides much-needed stability and predictability for our system. But we must also be honest: at the current rate, we are unlikely to meet the full scope of our NDP targets by 2030. This is not a moment to sit back — it is a call to act,” said Minister Manamela.

Re-Engineering the System for the Future

Minister Manamela stressed that this planning process should not be seen as final, but rather as a baseline from which to re-engineer the post-school education and training (PSET) system.

“We are committed to a more articulated, integrated and responsive PSET system. This means growing our TVET and Community College enrolments, improving quality and relevance, and expanding our digital, work-integrated and occupational training pathways. These shifts may and should inform future revisions of university enrolment targets,” he added.

The Department is currently working on several initiatives to drive this systemic reconfiguration, including:

- Developing a Skills for Growth Compact with industry and other government departments;
- Revising the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) of institutions to better align with national priorities;

- Strengthening the articulation pathways between TVETs, Community Colleges, and universities;
- Expanding distance and blended learning modalities to improve access and success.

- engagements with Department of Basic Education on a STEM programme, specifically Math, to increase the pipeline for STEM in higher education.

Next Steps

The approved Ministerial Statement will now be communicated to all public universities, along with institution-specific targets and expectations. Universities are expected to confirm these with their Councils and align their annual performance plans accordingly.

The Department will monitor implementation annually and will remain open to recalibration in response to policy shifts, budget considerations, and systemic performance reviews.

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