



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

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MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTER MANAMELA CONGRATULATES THE CLASS OF 2025 AND OUTLINES POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS

TO ALL MEDIA

DATE: 13 JANUARY 2026

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela, congratulates the Class of 2025 on their performance in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. The Class of 2025 has surpassed the previous overall record pass rate, marking an important milestone for the basic education system and reflecting sustained improvements in learner retention, throughput and equity, including improved performance in many no-fee schools.

The Minister further extends a warm welcome to the Class of 2025 as they transition into the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector. This transition marks the beginning of a new phase of learning, skills development and personal growth. South Africa's universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, Community Education and Training (CET) colleges, private higher education institutions and skills development institutions stand ready to receive students across a wide range of post-school pathways.

“As we welcome you into the post-school education and training landscape, whether into universities, TVET colleges, CET colleges, private institutions or workplace learnerships, we celebrate not only your success at school, but the start of your next chapter in contributing to the growth and development of our country,” said Minister Manamela.

The Minister noted that the 2025 NSC results reflect both progress and emerging pressures for the post-school system. Approximately 927 000 learners wrote the NSC, with more than 760 000 passing and about 345 000 achieving bachelor's passes. At the same time, South Africa's public universities can accommodate approximately 230 000 first-time entering students in any given academic year. This gap between eligibility and available places underscores the importance of diversified post-school pathways and realistic planning across the entire PSET system.

The Minister further highlighted the continued concern regarding Mathematics, Accounting and Physical Science outcomes. While participation has improved marginally, only around 34% of learners wrote Mathematics, and pass rates in key gateway subjects remain under pressure. These trends have direct implications for access to competitive university programmes and for the country's long-term skills pipeline. Strengthening foundational learning and alignment between schooling outcomes and post-school demand remains a priority.

As students transition into post-school education, the Department urges learners, parents and guardians to follow official processes carefully. Students are reminded to ensure that they have received formal confirmation of academic placement and accommodation before travelling to any institution. Institutions will only engage students who have been formally accepted and accommodated.

"If you have not applied, or if your application was unsuccessful, please do not go to the institution. Institutions are not accepting in-person applications at this stage," added Minister Manamela.

CENTRAL APPLICATION SERVICE (CAS)

Students who require guidance in navigating entry into the PSET system are encouraged to make use of the Central Application Service (CAS). In previous years, the Department implemented the Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) as a short-term intervention to match unplaced applicants with available spaces.

From the 2026 academic year, CACH will not be implemented, as part of a broader reform of the PSET application process. CAS has been designed as a more comprehensive, integrated and long-term solution to improve access, visibility and coordination across the entire PSET system. CAS will progressively make visible a wider range of pathways beyond traditional university and college routes, while also helping to eliminate bogus institutions and protect prospective students from exploitation.

Students seeking information, guidance and support can WhatsApp the CAS Chat number 081 308 4196.

WARNING AGAINST BOGUS COLLEGES

The Department of Higher Education and Training warns prospective students against colleges operating illegally. Such institutions are not registered as required by law and do not offer credible qualifications. Qualifications offered by private skills development providers must be quality assured by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Bogus colleges often exploit this period of transition, charging fees without providing recognised qualifications. Information on registered and accredited institutions is available on www.dhet.gov.za.

Minister Manamela has appealed to all private education providers to comply with the law and not mislead students, and has urged prospective students and parents to conduct due diligence before making any payments.

STUDENT WELLNESS AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

The Minister acknowledges that the transition from school to further study or training can be both exciting and emotionally challenging. Through Higher Health, the department provides free, confidential psychosocial and mental health support services to students and prospective students across the higher education system.

Students requiring emotional or mental health support are encouraged to contact the 24-hour Higher Health Helpline on 0800 36 36 36 for assistance with stress, anxiety or crisis-related concerns.

EXPANDED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES – SETA BURSARIES

The Minister further announced expanded funding support through the Sector Education and Training Authorities. More than 15 000 SETA bursaries have been made available to support students who do not qualify for NSFAS funding, particularly those in the “missing middle” and in scarce skills areas critical to economic growth.

These bursaries support studies at universities and TVET colleges and cover tuition, learning materials and other study-related costs, forming part of government’s broader strategy to widen access to post-school opportunities.

“As you embark on this next phase of education, training and upskilling, remain focused, disciplined and open to the many pathways available to you. Every route of learning matters, and each contributes to building a capable, inclusive and productive society,” said Minister Manamela.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The Department advises students and parents to rely only on official communication channels when engaging with institutions or funding bodies. Learners should regularly check emails, SMS notifications and institutional portals, and keep copies of

application reference numbers and correspondence. No individual or organisation can guarantee placement or accommodation in exchange for payment, and such claims should be treated with caution.

Students who do not immediately receive offers are encouraged to explore alternative pathways, including TVET colleges, Community Education and Training colleges, higher certificates, bridging programmes and learnerships, rather than abandoning post-school education altogether. Accommodation is limited and allocated separately from academic admission, and confirmation should always be secured before making travel arrangements.

Parents are encouraged to provide emotional support and reassurance during this period. Delays, waiting lists or initial disappointment do not mean the end of educational opportunities. South Africa's post-school education and training system offers multiple entry points and second-chance pathways, and informed, calm decision-making will help young people navigate this transition successfully.

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