higher education & training
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MEDIA STATEMENT
06 OCTOBER 2026

NSFAS INSPECTIONS OF POOR-QUALITY AND NON-COMPLIANT STUDENT RESIDENCES TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK FOLLOWING DEPUTY MINISTER CASSIM'S VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training Yusuf Cassim has agreed with the University of Fort Hare, student leaders, the Department and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) on practical follow-up actions to improve residence conditions and student safety, and address delays in student funding. The agreed action plan includes a commitment by NSFAS to conduct monitoring and evaluation compliance inspections at alleged poor-quality residences at the institution.

This follows Deputy Minister Cassim's oversight visit to the Fort Hare University East London Campus on Monday to address concerns raised by students through the Deputy Minister's Helpdesk. Issues included the poor condition of student residences, student safety, and prolonged Gap investigations, among other challenges that adversely affected students.

During the visit, Deputy Minister Cassim met with the institution's management, led by the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof Mzukisi Njotini, the SRC, student leaders and other stakeholders.

After the formal engagements, the delegation inspected two East London-based residences identified by the SRC. One of the residences was a NSFAS-accredited in a horrific condition, with no proper showers, study or laundry rooms, and the other residence was an Institution leased residence with equally concerning conditions.

AGREED ACTION STEPS:

- The SRC accommodation officers for East London and Alice will provide lists of residences and the specific problems at each. NSFAS will begin monitoring and evaluation compliance inspections at these residences, starting next week. The Deputy Minister's Office will receive progress updates with a particular emphasis on what consequences are being levelled against those responsible for accrediting these residences.
- University financial aid officials, working with NSFAS, will update qualification codes for extended programmes so that funding assessments reflect the correct programmes. This is necessary to ensure that students whose funding was discontinued due to the incorrect calculation of the N+ rule, have their funding reinstated.

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- University financial aid officials and NSFAS will meet virtually to address the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme allowance delays, the Extended programme, and other outstanding bursary matters.
- The Deputy Minister's Office will follow up on the outstanding Wholesale and Retail SETA bursary complaint.
- The Chief Financial Officer will provide a list of unpaid residences, the number of affected students and the student case list for tracking, with NSFAS involved. The Institution has committed to expediting payments to these residences and to keep the Deputy Minister updated in this regard.

"Students cannot study properly in residences with sewage problems, no hot water and no proper place to cook or study, and they should not wait months for funding that has already been allocated to them. I thank the University, the SRC and NSFAS for engaging constructively. What matters now is the inspections, lists, meetings and the dates and actions that we have agreed on. My Office will track these actions, and I will return to Alice to see the residences at that campus for myself," said Deputy Minister Cassim.

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