

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 01 December 2021

TO: All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reporters

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE STATEMENT ON THE USE OF LEARNING MATERIAL ALLOWANCES TO PURCHASE DIGITAL LEARNING DEVICES

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande confirms that the 2021 Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public universities, make provision for NSFAS students to utilise their learning material allowances for the purchase of a digital learning device (laptop or tablet).

The Minister says that all university students qualify for a learning materials allowance, which is set at a maximum amount of R5 200.

In responding to a written Parliamentary question, Minister Nzimande said that the University of Zululand indicated that 438 students were notified that they erroneously received laptops as well as the R5 200 learning material allowances in April 2021.

“The University recovered the upfront R5 200 that students received as a once off payment. The University deducted the amount over the remaining period of the 2021 academic year from the students’ meal allowances,” confirmed Minister Nzimande.

The Minister said that these students received a laptop and the full meal allowances and did not forfeit any meal allowances to pay for laptops.

In responding to the data provision question, Minister Nzimande said that data provision for students required for online access for teaching and learning and for assessments remained high across the system.

“The average data provision requirement across the system for all undergraduate students was 90% and 91% for NSFAS students, as reported by institutions in the September 2021 monitoring reports,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said that fourteen (14) Universities (CPUT, MUT, SPU, UCT, UFS, UJ, UKZN, UMP, UP, UNISA, UNIZULU, UWC, WITS, and WSU) reported that 100% of their students have been provided with data.

Seven (7) universities (NMU, SMU, SUN, TUT, UFH, UL, and VUT) reported that 90-99% of their students were provided with data.

“DUT reported 85% of their students to have been provided with data. CPUT reported 73%, NWU reported that 70%, of their students to have been provided with data in the period. UNIVEN reported 45% of their students to have been provided with data in the period under review. RU reported 13% of their students to have been provided with data, said the Minister.

The Minister said that it should also be noted that students who are on campus and living in university residences have access to campus wi-fi, so many students do not require access to mobile data at all times.

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Issued by:
Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
DST Building (53), CSIR Campus
Meiring Naude Road
Brummeria
Pretoria
Enquiries: Ishmael Mnisi 0660378859