Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister Dr Blade Nzimande delivered the DHET’s Budget Vote Speech to a virtual sitting of the National Assembly on 22 July 2020.

Data, Devices and Debt

- The DHET has begun the process of providing data to students through negotiated rates with Mobile Network Operators.
- The National Student Financial Aid Scheme is finalising the process to appoint a service provider for the provision of electronic devices, particularly laptops to NSFAS-funded students. This will add to the process of the provision of laptops by some 65% of our universities.
- The DHET is working on policy amendments that will allow for the NSFAS learning materials allowance to be utilised at all institutions to purchase devices for first-time NSFAS beneficiaries in future.
- Minister Nzimande is paying serious attention to issues regarding future student funding considerations, high levels of student debt, and funding for missing middle and postgraduate students.

Ministerial Task Teams

A Ministerial Task Team has been appointed on the remuneration of Vice-Chancellors and Senior Executives. The team will submit the research work undertaken and the findings by 31 March 2021. Minister Nzimande has also appointed a Ministerial Task Team to conduct an Independent Review of the University of South Africa.

Higher Education Act Review

The DHET is working on the review of the Higher Education Act to deal with among others, governance collapses in some institutions as a result of the conduct of some members of governance structures. Fifteen Independent Assessors have been appointed since 1998 for a number of universities in terms of the Act, as a result of poor institutional governance and management.

Central Application Service

The Draft Central Application Service Bill was published for comments in April 2019. The pilot of the CAS for the 2022 academic year will begin in this financial year.
Technical and Vocational Education and Training

All 50 public TVET colleges will assist over 20,000 learners with access to training opportunities through a R2.1 billion funding window. The National Skills Fund has allocated R2.5 billion to build/refurbish TVET infrastructure for 11 colleges in the coming months.

Revised curricula for TVET colleges are now in the evaluation phase in order to make the learning outcomes current and relevant to workplace practices. Lecturer development continues to receive focused attention with greater support from partners and stakeholders in the private sector. The early work for the establishment of a lecturer training institute in Gauteng has begun. The establishment of new TVET lecturer qualifications and the development of associated programmes and their offerings by universities is well underway.

Community Education and Training

The Community Education and Training College system adopted a national sector plan in 2019/20. It provides uniformity in the strategic thrust of the CET colleges towards the achievement of the CET vision and the pronouncements of the National Development Plan of reaching one million students by 2030. In order to achieve this, the Department is working on the development of a sustainable funding model for the CET college sector. Through the support of SETAs, R40 million has been committed towards the establishment of ICT laboratories in 54 identified CET centres.

University Infrastructure

In 2020/21, due to the challenges of COVID-19 and the need to re prioritize funds across government, a total of R750 million was cut from the infrastructure budget. Nevertheless, over the period 2020/21 to 2022/23, there will be an investment of R11.486 billion in infrastructure projects across our 26 universities.

COVID-19 Response

R2.1 billion from the state subsidy and transfer has been re prioritised as a COVID-19 response mechanism for universities, for both teaching and learning as well as campus-readiness.

For details, please read Minister Nzimande’s full speech on www.dhet.gov.za