# MINISTERIAL DESK

**WEEK IN REVIEW**
28 SEPTEMBER–
2 OCTOBER 2026

MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

## Accountability that protects opportunity

From Parliament to the workplace, the week's central question was the same: what changes for the people who depend on public education and training?

This week brought two responsibilities into sharp focus: opening opportunities and protecting the public resources that make them possible.At Parliament, the Auditor-General and Members asked difficult questions about performance, governance and the implementation of earlier recommendations. We welcome that scrutiny. Our responsibility is to respond with decisions, follow-through and evidence of improvement.There is progress to build on, including in TVET college audit outcomes. There is also regression elsewhere that must be confronted honestly. A student waiting for an allowance or a graduate waiting for a certificate needs more than an explanation. They need the system to work.The skills partnerships featured in this edition show the other side of that responsibility: employers, public institutions and SETAs opening routes into workplace learning and economic participation. Their success must be judged beyond the launch—by what learners complete, the capabilities they acquire and the opportunities they can use afterwards.

We also celebrate South African excellence on the world stage, from Matthew Bowen's WorldSkills silver medal to UCT's international recognition.

The task is to make opportunity more widely available, and our institutions more reliable for everyone who depends on them.

Buti Manamela
**MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

THE MEASURE OF THIS WEEK

*Good governance must be felt in people's lives.*

# South African excellence on the world stage

## WORLDSKILLS SHANGHAI 2026

### WorldSkills silver for Matthew Bowen

South Africa's Matthew Bowen won silver in Aircraft Maintenance at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. WorldSkills' official results confirm the medal, with South Africa represented by 29 competitors across 27 skills.

The Ministry congratulates Matthew and recognises the wider team of experts, trainers, employers, families and supporters who help young competitors prepare for international standards.The achievement offers a visible example of what technical skill, sustained preparation and workplace learning can make possible. It should encourage young people to consider vocational and occupational careers alongside the other pathways available after school.

The developmental task is to turn this example of excellence into a wider opportunity: more learners with access to well-equipped training environments, expert mentorship and employers willing to open their workplaces.

**29**
COMPETITORS IN TEAM SOUTH AFRICA

**27**
SKILLS CONTESTED

**Silver**
AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE

# Welcoming scrutiny. Acting on the findings

The Ministry's engagement with Parliament on 2 October placed the public purpose of accountability at the centre of the review of the Department's 2025/26 Annual Report and portfolio audit outcomes.

The Auditor-General's assessment presents a mixed picture: modest progress in TVET college audit outcomes, alongside regression in the group covering DHET, SETAs and other entities. Improvement in one part of the system cannot be used to obscure weaknesses elsewhere.

For the Ministry, the response must go beyond noting a report. Recommendations directed to the Minister require executive consideration, decisions and oversight of implementation. Departmental management, boards, councils and administrators must account for their responsibilities; ministerial decisions must also remain open to scrutiny.

Earlier commitments made through Parliament's Budgetary Review and Recommendation Report process must remain under review until there is evidence that they have been completed. An appointment, an action plan or an investigation is a step—not proof that a problem has been resolved. The public test is practical: reliable funding decisions, timely payments, credible certificates, properly managed training and institutions that can deliver their mandates.

DDG Nolwazi Gasa led the departmental presentation. The Ministry recognises the contribution of the Deputy Ministers, including Deputy Minister Nomusa Dube-Ncube, who remained throughout the engagement. Each branch is to record the issues raised within its responsibility and prepare the further responses requested by the Committee.

**THE AUDIT PICTURE — READ THE MEASURES CORRECTLY**

| MEASURE | WHAT THE REPORT SHOWS |
|---|---|
| **TVET colleges** | 13 of 50 obtained clean audits, up from 12. In total, 39 of 50 received unqualified financial-statement opinions; these include clean audits and opinions with findings. |
| **DHET / entity group** | Clean audit outcomes declined from 11 to 9 in AGSA's 28-auditee group. NSFAS's audit was outstanding at the assessment cut-off. |
| **Annual expenditure findings** | The departmental-and-entity assessment reports R466 million in irregular expenditure and R246 million in fruitless-and-wasteful expenditure. These are not DHET-only figures. |

Source: Auditor-General South Africa, Higher Education and Training Portfolio Audit Outcomes 2025/26. Assessment cut-off 31 August 2026.

**READING THE FINDINGS**

An unqualified opinion with findings is not a clean audit. Irregular expenditure does not automatically mean theft. It does require proper assessment and an appropriate response. A reduction in a register is not, by itself, proof that money was recovered.

**THE PUBLIC TEST**

*An audit finding must lead to action—and evidence of what changed.*

# Government at work: connecting learning to earning

The SABC–MICT SETA and Services SETA–Takealot partnerships sit within government's wider Skills Revolution. In the 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa called for a dual-training model integrating education with workplace experience, stronger industry participation and an outcomes-driven National Skills Fund.

DHET provides policy and coordination; SETAs support sector skills development and employer participation; the NSF supports development priorities; universities and colleges develop knowledge and capability; and employers provide workplaces, mentorship and routes into economic activity. The challenge is to make these parts function as a connected system.The SABC welcomed its new internship intake on 1 October through its partnership with MICT SETA. The broadcaster reported 47,000 internship applications this year and an intake of 120 interns—figures that underline the demand for meaningful workplace opportunities.

The programme creates space for graduates to acquire experience in a public institution where broadcasting, technology, production and professional support functions meet.

The Ministry's standard is that an internship should offer more than time on a CV. Learners need structured work, mentoring, clear learning goals and evidence of the capability they have acquired.

Tracking must continue beyond completion. The proposed tracer approach would follow the cohort's progression into employment, enterprise or further learning, including at six and twelve months after completion. This is a proposal for agreement with the partners, not a claim that the tracking arrangement is already operational.

1 OCTOBER 2026 · PUBLIC BROADCASTING

**SABC–MICT: the first workplace door**

**47,000**
INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS REPORTED THIS YEAR

**120**
INTERNS IN THE NEW INTAKE

**6 + 12**
MONTHS AFTER COMPLETION — PROPOSED TRACER CHECK-INS

29 SEPTEMBER 2026 · DIGITAL ECONOMY

# Services SETA–Takealot: opportunity in the digital economy

**R103.3** million
APPROXIMATE SERVICES SETA COMMITMENT OVER THREE YEARS

**159**
TVET LEARNERS IN PLANNED TWELVE-MONTH WORKPLACE PLACEMENTS

**20,000**
JOBS AND INCOME-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES — THE PROGRAMME'S AMBITION

The partnership launched on 29 September at Ekurhuleni West TVET College's Kathorus Campus. It brings together workplace learning, skills development and support for participation in e-commerce. The announced ambition is to contribute towards 20,000 jobs and income-generating opportunities over the implementation period. This is a programme ambition, not a claim that 20,000 permanent jobs have already been created.

The programme includes planned twelve-month workplace placements for 159 TVET learners. Its wider scope covers bursaries, digital skills, driver and rider development, personal-shopping opportunities and support for township enterprises accessing wider markets.

The next test is implementation: who enters, who completes, which enterprises gain market access and whether the opportunities lead to sustainable livelihoods. Programme-specific calls and eligibility information should be obtained through the partners' official channels.

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION · RANKINGS 2027

# UCT recognition — and a wider conversation about public value

The Minister congratulated the University of Cape Town on its return to the global top 150 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2027. UCT moved from joint 164th to joint 147th.

The recognition came as UCT hosted the first Times Higher Education World Academic Summit held on African soil, in partnership with the University of Bristol. The Minister participated in the summit's university–government dialogue.

His prepared contribution centred on universities as a public good, academic freedom, public accountability, innovation and equitable international partnerships. It also posed a wider question for the age of artificial intelligence: who produces knowledge, whose languages and priorities are represented, and who benefits?

Global recognition deserves celebration. It should also strengthen the ambition to widen access, improve student success and ensure that African institutions help shape the questions that international research addresses.

**=147th**

THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2027 — FROM JOINT 164TH

**First**

THE WORLD ACADEMIC SUMMIT ON AFRICAN SOIL, WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

**BEYOND THE RANKING TABLE**

The Council on Higher Education's September *Briefly Speaking* paper argues that rankings do not fully capture contributions to access, redress, teaching and regional development. It proposes a more ethical and developmental approach to evaluating universities. Rankings are one perspective; public value requires a wider view.

# Protecting learners while fixing the system

NATIONAL SKILLS FUND · DENEL TRAINING ACADEMY PROJECT

## NSF: learner support and project accountability remain under scrutiny

Parliament's 30 September engagement with the National Skills Fund highlighted the consequences of delayed stipends for learners in the Denel Training Academy rescue project.

The Committee's follow-up letter requires verification of outstanding payments, a clear transition and recovery plan, supporting records and monthly reporting until verified arrears are settled. A comprehensive response is due on 12 October.

The Ministry's priority is that learners are protected while the contractual, financial and governance matters are addressed. A provider transition must be managed in a way that sustains training, communication and support.

The required follow-through must distinguish a payment promised from a payment completed, an amount identified for recovery from money recovered, and a learner registered from one who has completed the intended training.

The September stipend payment was scheduled for 2 October. Further payment updates must distinguish the scheduled commitment from completed payments and be supported by verified transaction and beneficiary records.

STUDENT FUNDING · 2027 APPLICATION CYCLE

## NSFAS 2027: apply early and keep track of your application

The 2027 NSFAS application cycle is open. Prospective students should apply early through official NSFAS channels, submit complete information and keep checking their application status.Use the official NSFAS website to reach myNSFAS. Complete the application, submit it and retain confirmation. Check for requests for supporting documents and respond through the official system. Protect your password and personal information.

Applying for funding and applying for admission are separate steps. Check each university or college's own admission requirements and closing dates; do not assume that all institutions use one deadline.

For the Ministry, readiness extends beyond an open portal. Funding decisions, appeals, registration information, accommodation and allowance arrangements must work together. The immediate task is to address current difficulties while preparing for the next academic year.

**1**
**APPLY EARLY**
Use the official NSFAS website to reach myNSFAS and begin your application.

**2**
**SUBMIT COMPLETELY**
Complete every section, submit and retain your confirmation.

**3**
**KEEP YOUR REFERENCE**
Check your application status regularly through the official system.

**4**
**RESPOND OFFICIALLY**
Answer supporting-document requests via myNSFAS. Protect your password and personal information.

**KNOW THE DIFFERENCE**

NSFAS supports eligible students with financial aid. The National Skills Fund — NSF — supports skills-development priorities and projects. They are different institutions. A query about NSFAS funding should not be confused with a stipend issue in an NSF-funded training project.

FOR EVERY APPLICANT

*Apply early. Submit completely. Keep your reference. Use official channels.*

FOLLOW-THROUGH

# From this week’s commitments to next week’s work

The work does not end when the Committee adjourns or the launch programme closes.

Following the parliamentary engagement, each departmental branch is to record the issues raised under its responsibility, follow through on undertakings and prepare the further written responses requested by the Committee.

The Ministry’s oversight will focus on implementation: what has been completed, what remains delayed, who is responsible and what evidence demonstrates improvement.

The same discipline applies to new partnerships. A funding commitment must become an implemented programme. A placement must provide real learning. A completed programme must be followed by an honest account of the learner’s next step.

ON THE RECORD

## What this newsletter will follow

| | |
|---|---|
| AUDIT FOLLOW-THROUGH | Progress against current findings and unfinished commitments from the previous parliamentary review. |
| LEARNER PROTECTION | Verified stipend outcomes and the NSF's response to the Denel project questions. |
| SKILLS TO WORK | Implementation of workplace-learning and enterprise partnerships, with beneficiaries and outcomes clearly distinguished. |
| 2027 READINESS | Student-facing information on applications, funding, accommodation and the responsibilities of institutions. |

THE MINISTRY'S STANDARD

## What should a quality internship provide?

- A named mentor and a structured learning plan.
- Relevant work and feedback.
- Clear learning milestones.
- A safe workplace, accessible support and the agreed stipend paid on time.
- Evidence of skills acquired, and preparation for the next step after the programme.

These are the standards the Ministry wants partners to build into delivery — not a promise that an internship guarantees a permanent job.

PARTNERS IN DELIVERY

## An invitation to employers

Colleges and universities cannot create workplace experience without employers. Businesses and public institutions can contribute by providing appropriate placements, developing mentors and working with the relevant SETA and education institution. The aim is a credible pathway from learning to productive participation, not temporary headcount alone.

THE BOTTOM LINE

*Public money must be traceable to public value.*

higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
2030
NDP
higher education
& training
Department:
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