

To: All Media

For Immediate Release

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Statement by Minister of Higher Education and Training on the call to scrap registration fees, encourage walk-ins at universities, and bring the university system to a standstill.

In 2019 our 26 public universities will provide access to approximately 210 801 new entrants. There are a further 322 438 spaces within the TVET college system for new entrants. Universities and TVET colleges have prepared for their registration period and have systems in place to manage the influx of students.

Prospective students from across the country were well informed in 2018 that they needed to apply for university spaces by the closing dates (September/ October 2018) to secure a space at one of our institutions. They were also well informed to apply to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme by the closing date of 30 November 2018 if they wished to apply for funding to support them through their university studies.

It is therefore with distress that we have noted the irresponsible and dangerous calls for young people to flock to universities and demand entry. This call is unwarranted and without justification and has the potential to disrupt the system and deny deserving students their right to higher education and training.

It is worth noting that altogether there were 172 043 students who passed their national senior certificate (NSC) with a Bachelor's pass in 2018. Many of these students will want to access the available spaces at universities. There were a further 141 700 students who passed their NCS with a Diploma pass, and many of these students would want to access either a university diploma programme or a TVET college diploma programme. It is clear that there are sufficient spaces in the system to support students who achieved their NSC.

I want to emphasize that first time entry spaces in public universities and TVET colleges are subject to approved enrolment plans. This is important because it ensures that we can deliver quality higher education and training and avoid overcrowding and infrastructure degradation. Universities and colleges are held accountable for keeping to their targets because funding is allocated on the basis of these plans. Institutions cannot take more students than there is space to accommodate.

The Department is aware that not all students will be successful at securing a space at their institution of choice and in their programme of choice. There are admission requirements for different programmes and there are limited spaces and great competition for some of the sought after programmes such as medicine, engineering and teaching.

The Department has developed the Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) mechanism to assist prospective students who want to enter a university or TVET college but may be facing challenges with getting a space. The CACH service records information of prospective students without them having to stand in long queues at the entrance of each institution. This improves the chances of students finding a space in the post school system that matches their academic achievements and provides an opportunity for further study. This also assists to reduce walk-ins and to protect vulnerable students from wondering around the streets.

All public Universities, Colleges and SETAs have been requested to redirect students who walk into their institutions to the CACH. Students can access the CACH by sending a standard SMS indicating their name and ID number to 49200. Alternatively they can access the online system through the [www. cach.dhet.gov.za](http://www.cach.dhet.gov.za) to register their details.

Students and institutions must also note that no late applications by university students to NSFAS will be accepted. Students who have been allocated a space via CACH may be considered for NSFAS funding only where such a request is channelled through CACH as part of the feedback institutions provide on successful placements.

Planning for the 2019 registration process between universities and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme commenced in the latter part of 2018 to ensure a smooth 2019 registration process. Collaboration between universities, NSFAS and the Department has been ongoing and at a meeting held on 3 December 2018 with University Registrars and Financial Executive Directors, NSFAS, South African Union of Students and the Department plans for the 2019 registration processes were discussed and agreed upon. This collaboration will continue until the registration process, as well as the finalisation and confirmation of funding for registered NSFAS eligible students, is complete.

In 2018, government announced substantial new funding in the form of bursaries to support poor and working-class students from families earning up to R350 000 per annum into

universities. Government funding to assist new and returning qualifying, registered university students increased from R14.19 billion in 2018 to R24 billion in 2019.

All NSFAS returning students who meet the academic requirements for continued funding will not be required to pay a registration fee and will be registered. In the case of new students, universities and NSFAS have reached an agreement that NSFAS will confirm funding decisions for those that have applied, financially qualify for financial aid and have successfully registered at their institution. This process has been implemented at all universities and will run up to the closing date of registration at individual universities.

All universities will receive an upfront payment to cover registration fees and allowances for NSFAS qualifying students.

I would like to reiterate that mechanisms are in place to ensure that registration and admissions are effectively managed across the system. Government is putting in substantial funding to support qualifying poor and working class students, and none of these students is expected to pay the registration/ upfront fees. The CACH mechanism is in place to advise any prospective student on possible options and assist them to find spaces still available within the PSET system. Use these mechanisms rather than creating chaos at institutions when there is no need. Institutions, NSFAS, students and the Department must work collectively to ensure a smooth registration period and enable access to as many young people as possible and create the conditions for a successful 2019 academic year.

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