



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

PRESS RELEASE

APRIL 20, 2020

NSFAS ALLOWANCES UPDATE

Following the announcement by the President of the countrywide lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) activated a business continuity plan to facilitate uninterrupted funding to students, resolution of student applications queries, processing of appeals and general assistance to institutions with NSFAS administration. Ensuring that students receive their allowances during this time of general hardship and uncertainty is essential - students are entitled to their allowances in order to sustain themselves, continue with academic activities online, as well as to pay for learning materials.

Students become funded once a registration template has been received that will allow for a proper determination of their allowance structure. From end of March 2020 to date, NSFAS received registration data for 614,986 students from universities and TVET colleges across the sector. NSFAS is pleased to announce that it was able to process virtually all of the 150,000 applications received from the walk-in application process. The walk-in process in Quarter 1 was developed as a special consideration to assist students that registered for the 2020 academic year, but had not applied during the application cycle. This is a legacy issue that NSFAS has improved considerably as the large number of walk-ins from the TVET colleges was the de facto situation prevalent in prior years. Another important milestone is the record number of SASSA beneficiaries now funded by NSFAS of 334,868, a massive increase from that received in 2019.

On January 31, 2020 and March 25, 2020, NSFAS paid over R3.6 billion and R1.3 billion respectively, as upfront payments to institutions. This enabled NSFAS qualifying students to register without the burden of having to pay registration fees and further provide interim relief to students. By Friday, April 17, 2020, NSFAS disbursed in total over R7.2 billion (some 20% of the total DHET grant) for tuition and allowances to public institutions and qualifying students. In the week starting from April 20, NSFAS will distribute April 2020 allowances, based on actual registration data received to 376,659 university students, and 202,681 TVET college students.

For applications with outstanding and incorrect documents, NSFAS made significant strides in reducing the number from over 42,000 prior to lockdown to just under 12,882 to date. NSFAS would like to urge the remaining applicants who have been contacted to resubmit these documents to do so, as soon as possible through provided and authenticated platforms. For 9,224 applicant's additional information was required as the income verified by NSFAS exceeded income declared by the applicant. Cognizant of the fact that household circumstances can change over a relative short time, NSFAS contacted these applicants to re-submit additional information, to which just under 3,000 had responded in the affirmative.

Hitherto, NSFAS approved 4,980 appeals from first time entry applicants, and approved 14,117 of returning student appeals as recommended by the institutions. In the case of the latter this process of engagement with institutions is ongoing as some institutions are hamstrung by the lockdown to convene appeals committee meetings.

We are urging students to open bank accounts to ensure more efficient disbursements of funds from institutions where applicable. Going forward, NSFAS is working on a banking model that will eliminate all intermediaries in the disbursement value chain and facilitate direct deposits from NSFAS into student bank accounts. At present NSFAS, through its NSFAS Wallet, is already paying directly to students from 32 of the 50 TVET colleges. During this week NSFAS will be extending this facility to three additional colleges to ensure improved flow of funds directly to students – students will be informed accordingly.

Through an establishment of a virtual contact centre for operations during the lockdown, NSFAS has been processing 4,390 inquiries daily, with a large number emanating in case finalisation. We remain fully functional and accessible through these platforms to ensure that students inquiries are attended to as soon as possible.

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OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

The appointment of Dr Randall Carolissen as the Administrator to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme is in terms of Section 17A to 17D of the NSFAS Act (Act 56 of 1999 as amended), effective from August 21, 2019 as published in the Government Gazette by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP.

NSFAS is accessible on the below platforms from 08h30 to 17h00, Monday to Friday:

- Email: info@nsfas.org.za
- Facebook: National Student Financial Aid Scheme
- Twitter: myNSFAS
- Instagram: myNSFAS
- NSFAS Connect: www.nsfas.org.za and log into your myNSFAS account

Students who do not have myNSFAS accounts need to register to track their funding decisions, and to receive regular updates.

ISSUED BY: NSFAS ADMINISTRATOR, DR RANDALL CAROLISSEN

The above contact details are to be used for media purposes only. For any other inquiries contact 0800 067 327

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