



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

MEDIA STATEMENT TO ALL EDITORS/EDUCATION REPORTS

WELCOME REMARKS BY THE ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF THE NSFAS BOARD NSFAS 2027 APPLICATIONS LAUNCH MQA, JOHANNESBURG | 18 SEPTEMBER 2026

Programme Director
Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training
Members of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training
Representatives of SAUS and SATVETSA
Vice-Chancellors and principals of our TVET Colleges
Members of the Media
Learners, Students, Parents and Guardians
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good morning.

I am requested to conduct a customary ritual of welcoming all of you to this important launch of the 2027 NSFAS Application Cycle.

As directed, I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Board of NSFAS, to welcome all of you to this important calendar event. Today is remarkably important for us as NSFAS, but is even more important to our prospective students, who are the reason we are gathered here today.

Colleagues - we have converged here to answer an all-important question - *is NSFAS ready for the 2027 application cycle?*

Yesterday at midnight, the team performed what we call a portal sanity check by conducting a live demonstration of the application system. They told me in the morning that as they were conducting that live demonstration of the system, over 260 students submitted their application.

It was supposed to be just a demonstration, but early birds could not wait for today's official opening of

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the system. This speaks to the passion and the thirst that young people have for an opportunity to study. Minister – we had to through these late-night meetings and briefing sessions, because we wanted to satisfy ourselves that the system we are opening today, for thousands of learners across the country, is fit for purpose, beyond doubt.

We wanted to eliminate any possibility of technical glitches. We had to make sure that no potential NSFAS beneficiary is excluded from funding because of errors or technical imperfections.

We wanted to place ourselves in a position where we could answer the question whether NSFAS ready for the 2027 application cycle in the affirmative – we wanted to be able to say YES, NSFAS is ready. Today we are confident to say that YES, NSFAS is ready, not only to receive, but also to process, adjudicate and timeously respond to all the applications that we envisage receiving.

The Board is satisfied that NSFAS has undertaken the necessary preparations to support the opening of applications and the organization is ready for the entire value chain until a student is funded or advised otherwise.

Our focus has been on ensuring that students are able to apply with ease and receive support whenever such support is required. More importantly we worked to ensure that students gain confidence that their applications will be processed through systems that are more responsive, more efficient and indeed, systems that are more student-centered.

Perhaps still on the concept of student-centered approach, I want to implore on all of us, particularly our dearest friends in the media, to make this day about students and nothing more.

I am not presupposing that any other thing is not important. As a matter of fact, we will soon be inviting you members of the media to talk about things that are not part of today's agenda.

Today, however, our focus is different.

Today is about the learner who is about to sit for her final high school examination yet troubled by the question whether her parents would be able to afford to finance her college or university studies.

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Today is literally about the student whose future depends on access to financial aid and support.

This day is about that parent or that guardian who know very well that without government support in the form of NSFAS, the chances of their children accessing higher education and training can only remain a pipedream.

Today is about ensuring that every eligible young person understands how to apply for funding and where to seek and obtain necessary assistance.

Today is about a solemn commitment that no rosy dream will translate into a haunting nightmare simply because one comes from a family that is unable to afford the cost of further or higher education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the lessons from previous application cycles is that students require more than funding. They require information, guidance, support and certainty.

For this reason, NSFAS has placed significant emphasis on improving the overall applicant's experience.

A major innovation for the 2027 application cycle is the enhanced use of the NSFAS Mobile Application Platform. **This year, students will be able to create a profile, submit an application, upload supporting information and receive confirmation directly on their mobile devices.**

We have tailored our application process to be more accessible, particularly for young people who rely primarily on smartphones as their means of accessing digital services.

As I have said, applicants can now create a profile, apply and receive a reference number through a simplified process designed to reduce any artificial barrier to funding.

Most importantly –

I want to take this opportunity to encourage applicants to ensure that all supporting documents requested during the application process are uploaded correctly – ensure that your uploaded documents are readable and are complete.



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Incomplete or unreadable documents remains one of the major causes of frustration and delays when we process applications.

Equally important in this regard is the **Consent Form**. This form enables us to verify the details of parents or guardians in order to determine financial eligibility.

We urge applicants to ensure that the consent form is completed accurately and submitted as required. Failure to provide a completed and signed consent form may result in an application being rejected.

It is important that you make sure that you finally press that submit button.

Once you have pressed the submit button you will receive a confirmation message together with a unique reference number. You can use this unique reference number to track the status of their application. Importantly, students with disabilities will continue to receive dedicated support, including provisions for assistive devices and other approved interventions aimed at enabling successful participation in higher education.

We will leave no one behind.

Colleagues, our take home today is our approved applications timetable. This timetable is rigid and not flexible. This is so to allow NSFAS staff sufficient time to receive applications, process applications, make funding decisions, review their own work/decisions, allow sufficient time for external audit on these funding decisions, correct mistakes and to ultimately publish a credible funding list.

The applications systems open today and will close on 31 October this year.

By 30 November we envisage to have concluded our decision on funding – this will be based on eligibility criteria.

From the 1st to the 9th of December, we will be conducting an audit of the funding decisions that we would have made, this is to ensure that only eligible students are funded and that no eligible student is denied funding because of an error or a mistake.

Once we are done with the audit process, we will then open a window for appeals for those who may not agree with a decision that we would have made.

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This appeal window will open from the 10th of December and close on the 24th of December. We intend to publish the outcomes of all appeals by the 9th of January 2027. We will then send a list of students to be funded by the 11th of January 2027.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our guiding philosophy is simple:

No eligible learner should fail to apply because they did not have access to information.

No prospective student should miss an opportunity because they did not know where to seek assistance.

No deserving young person should be left behind because they were unable to navigate the application process.

As the Board and management of NSFAS, we are pulling all the stops because we appreciate the fact that NSFAS occupies a unique position in the socio-economic life of our society.

For many families, NSFAS is more than a funding scheme.

It is a bridge between poverty and opportunity.

It is a bridge between potential and the realization of goals.

It is a bridge between aspiration and success.

Once again, in welcoming you to this event, I re-invite all of you to partner with NSFAS in spreading the message of early applications, correct documentation and no extensions.

Thank you.

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