

**DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 03, 2020**

**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**ATTENTION: NEWS EDITORS/ REPORTERS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE USE:**

**STATEMENT BY HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION MINISTER DR BLADE NZIMANDE ON THE OPENING OF NATIONAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID SCHEME 2021 APPLICATION CYCLE**

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, officially opened the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) 2021 Application cycle yesterday, August 03, 2020.

This year the NSFAS application cycle will run for a period of four months starting from August 03, 2020 to November 30, 2020.

NSFAS applications are open for students from poor and working-class backgrounds who wish to further their studies at any public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college or university. To qualify for NSFAS funding, the applicant must be a South African citizen; come from a family with a combined annual household income of not more than R350 000; for students with a disability, the combined annual household income of not more than R600 000.

"In the current academic year, NSFAS has funded over 700 000 students; 248 242 at TVET colleges and 481 339 at universities (students with registrations data), this is a 20% increase from the previous year after comparing registration data received in the same period in 2019, said Minister Nzimande.

The Minister further said that NSFAS accounts for 40% of the undergraduate population at universities, and 70% at TVET colleges respectively.

Applications for 2021 funding will be completed online via the myNSFAS portal as per previous years. The portal has undergone minor enhancements and changes informed by the lessons learned in the previous applications cycles. Some of the enhancements are for user experience, while some are security features the scheme has put in place.

New applicants need a copy of their ID or birth certificate to register and create a myNSFAS account or profile on the myNSFAS portal. Applicants with existing accounts must log onto their accounts to complete an application. Applicants are not allowed to create more than one profile on the portal. The applicant will be required to give consent for NSFAS to verify their personal information with third parties and will not be able to create a profile without giving this consent. This feature allows NSFAS to conduct a three-step verification process with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) where an ID number will be linked to the name and surname of the applicant, and parents' details.

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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.

In response to the status quo due to the COVID-19 pandemic, applicants will not be required to submit or upload the consent form, however, they will have to grant consent electronically during the application process, along with accepting the terms and conditions for funding.

Applicants will however still be required to submit their supporting documents, which comprise of own ID copy; parent/guardian's proof of income; parent/guardian's ID copies; and/or Annexure A for applicants with disabilities.

As part of new and exciting innovations, NSFAS is working on finalising its Virtual Outreach project. The virtual outreach platform is an interactive live streaming session, where a user can embark on a virtual tour of NSFAS products and services, exhibition simulation, real time engagement as well as watch application demonstration and live stream events.

“This is the greatest innovation by far, as it speaks to the current discussion around the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and how government can change lives by providing much needed services in far and wide locations using technology. NSFAS is leading in this space, Minister Nzimande said.

To benchmark the latest innovations, NSFAS launched a virtual contact centre in March this year, subsequent to the closure of its physical telephonic contact centre. The virtual contact centre provides the much-needed support to students by resolving queries via social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and NSFAS Chat; a live interactive platform accessible via the myNSFAS portal.

“I would like to thank the NSFAS Administrator Dr Randall Carolissen and his NSFAS team for his excellent leadership skills and turning around the scheme in just under two years. Dr Carolissen has been an integral part in the realisation of a much improved NSFAS, refining of critical skills, and forwarding thinking,” said the Minister.

To continue providing easy accessibility, reachability, and free access to information, NSFAS has refined and retained its existing stakeholder partnerships, while also forging new exciting partnerships which will provide customised links between an applicant and NSFAS during the application cycle and beyond.

The Minister added that he would like to share his sincere gratitude to the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). “NYDA has been instrumental in assisting applicants by allowing them to use their facilities as application centres, free of charge. NYDA has centres across nine provinces, offering a variety of services to students, and out of school youth. The NYDA centres will be fully operational and accessible to applicants from the September 01, 2020, during office hours”.

Through the National Integrated Social Protection Information System (NISPIIS), NSFAS has access to critical data exchange hub. The system allows NSFAS to exchange data with departments and agencies within the Government Social Cluster to verify information in real time.

This partnership has seen a dramatic improvement in approvals for South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) beneficiaries. In 2019, over 47 530 SASSA social welfare beneficiaries were funded. This year, a total of 240 000 beneficiaries are funded.

Minister Nzimande said that NSFAS has strengthened its partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to further increase NSFAS' footprint and reachability, specifically for learners in Grade 10 to 12. DBE will link NSFAS with provincial and district offices and provide the database of National Teachers Centres which will assist with applications. Through this partnership, NSFAS may

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also publish and incorporate its information on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) timetable. The training of District Curriculum Life Orientation Specialist on NSFAS funding is envisaged for subsequent application cycles.

“While great work for 2021 application cycle is underway, I want to reassure our current beneficiaries that the department, along with NSFAS, is working tirelessly to ensure that the 2020 academic year is saved and concluded to usher in the new academic year, said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande further urges qualifying students to make use of this opportunity and apply for funding on time. “We need to foster a culture of doing things on time and don’t leave them to the last hour. NSFAS has made arrangements to provide applications centres across the country, utilising facilities of generous stakeholders. These efforts are meant to bridge the gap in inequality”.

-End-

Issued by:

Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

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