

NSFAS opens bursary applications for 2024 academic year

Higher Education and Training Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, has urged all learners who wish to enter the post-school system and students, who do not have financial assistance to continue their studies, to submit their applications for 2024 funding.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Nzimande made the call as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) officially opened the bursary application season for the 2024 academic year.

The bursary application season, which opened on 21 November 2023, will close on 31 January 2024.

Nzimande said the reason for opening the applications period now is that NSFAS was awaiting South African Revenue Service (SARS) completion of the tax period, which is important to enable NSFAS to have the necessary and updated information available during the application season.

"Furthermore, this is done to afford the beneficiaries shorter turnaround times for decision making which is aligned to NSFAS financial eligibility assessment which requires updated SARS information," Nzimande explained.

Nzimande urged all students who wish to study in any of the public universities and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges to apply timeously and not to wait until the last day.

Nzimande emphasised that students do not have to wait for matric in order to apply for NSFAS.

The Minister reiterated that NSFAS is mandated to make funding available to poor and working-class families, and in adhering to this mandate, the scheme will continue to make immediate funding decisions for South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) First Time Entering (FTEN) students.

As part of improving the services to students, Nzimande said this application period, there will be no supporting documents required at time of application.

"The reason for this is due to our improve third-party relations, including SASSA, SARS and the Department of Home Affairs. They will be providing NSFAS with information to verify what the student would have declared in the application.

"The only time supporting documents will be required, is when prompted by NSFAS in case where they cannot verify the parental relationship. Communication will be sent directly by NSFAS to a student to initiate this process," Nzimande explained.

In the case where a student is submitting an appeal, documents required will be based on the NSFAS declaration form available on the NSFAS website.

In addition, disabled students will be required to submit the disability annexure form, as they are assessed at R600,000 threshold.

"All these improvements will ensure that funding decisions are confirmed timeously," the minister said.

The Minister also urged students to provide accurate information, particularly parental information, when applying so that when validations occur with Home Affairs, students can be funded timeously.

He said NSFAS will reject or request additional supporting documentation, where validations with third parties have failed, and all the first-time applicants will be able to appeal, as soon as they are rejected.

However, the Minister noted that the returning students and continuing students will only be able to appeal from the end of November, as NSFAS is still improving the processes so that students have multiple reject reasons and appeal at once, instead of the current process where they have been rejected at different points in the funding value chain.

Nzimande added that the scheme continues to improve its controls in ensuring that those who do not qualify do not access the funding, noting this is done in collaboration with other public entities, including SARS and the Department of Home Affairs.

In preparation for the 2024 funding cycle, NSFAS has already engaged the Department of Basic Education and a number of students who are in matric are SASSA beneficiaries.

Nzimande reminded the students that applying does not mean the applicants have been confirmed for funding.

"You still need to be registered first, in a public university or TVET College for a funded qualification to be confirmed."

Among the new features for the 2024 application period include the NSFAS mobile application which will be rolled out

initially for iPhone operating system (IOs), Android, and in due course of Huawei devices.

The student app will include a biometric capability, which will be rolled out later in the year.

The entity is also planning to roll out a strategy that would improve its query-handling processes.

“The intention is to provide additional services on the WhatsApp functionality, USSD, and introduce additional solutions such as chatbots. The introduction of these applications will enable students to receive responses directly and reduce the reliance on calls,” Nzimande said.

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