



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X174, PRETORIA, 0001; 123 Francis Baard Street, PRETORIA, 0002, South Africa

Tel: (012) 312 5911, Fax (012) 312 6770

Private Bag X9192, CAPE TOWN, 8000; 103 Plein Street, CAPE TOWN, 8001, South Africa

Tel: (021) 469 5175, Fax (021) 461 4761

Dear Student

REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY

Your request for financial assistance is noted.

Kindly note that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) does not directly manage any financial aid or bursary programmes to support students in university studies. This letter will help you understand the options available to you and the processes you need to follow when seeking financial assistance for your studies.

In December 2017, the President of South Africa announced that government would be introducing “fully subsidised free higher education and training for poor and working class South Africans”, and that this would be provided through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to first-time entering undergraduate students at public universities who were from South African households with a combined annual income of up to R350 000 in the 2018 academic year.

The President’s pronouncement has resulted in the establishment of the DHET Bursary Scheme for poor and working class students wanting to study at a public university. The DHET has produced a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that will provide further clarity on the DHET Bursary Scheme. The FAQs document is attached for your information.

Please note that you cannot apply to the DHET for the bursary. The procedure described below must be followed if you wish to obtain funding.

First time entrants (FTEN) in 2018

1. If you are a first time entrant into a public university in 2018 (i.e. you applied to enter a public university for the first time in 2018) and you applied to NSFAS in 2017 for funding for the 2018 academic year, you will qualify for the DHET Bursary if you meet the following criteria:
 - You are a **South African citizen**;
 - You meet the financial eligibility criteria in that your combined **household income is not more than R350 000 per annum**;
 - You have a **firm academic offer/acceptance** to study from a public university; and
 - You subsequently **register** at the university.

If you meet the first three criteria in the bullets above, a funding decision will be confirmed by NSFAS; and once you have registered and accepted the conditions attached to the receiving the bursary, you will be awarded a DHET Bursary by NSFAS.

2. First time entry students who have received a firm academic offer from a university to study in 2018 but who did not apply to NSFAS in 2017 will have to present themselves to the financial aid offices at their institutions during registration for assistance as NSFAS is **NOT** re-opening a new on-line application process. You must also check your university online registration process where you will be assisted and advised on the process required to be considered for the DHET Bursary Scheme. NSFAS and universities have put a process in place to ensure that students with firm offers from universities identify themselves to the university as a student from a family earning a joint gross household income of up to R350 000 per annum. You will have to present the university with the following documentation for verification:
 - your ID;
 - your parents'/ legal guardians'/ spouse's IDs;
 - copies of your parents'/ legal guardians'/ spouse's salary slips; and
 - a signed consent form to allow NSFAS to verify household income.

NSFAS will assess your documentation and confirm funding if you are eligible in terms of the above criteria.

Returning Students

3. The new threshold of joint gross household income of R350 000 per annum **only applies to first time university entrants in 2018**. If you are a returning student and applied to NSFAS by 30 November 2017 for the first time, you will be considered for financial aid funding. However, you must meet **the 2017 NSFAS DHET general fund academic and financial eligibility** criteria. Your combined household income threshold will be assessed in terms of the 2017 criteria and must not be more than **R122 000** per annum. Please note that NSFAS **will not** re-open applications to returning students that failed to apply timeously.
4. All NSFAS qualifying students returning to study in 2018 who may have prior university debt will be allowed to register provided that they sign **an acknowledgement of debt form** with the university during registration.

Other Students with Debt

5. Returning students who do not qualify for NSFAS funding (i.e the student is from a family with a gross annual income above R122 000), who meet the academic requirements to proceed but owe the institution outstanding fees (i.e. have historic debt), will have to make arrangements with their institution to pay off their debt in order to register.
6. Your university can also provide information on other possible bursaries, loans and or scholarships available from the university or other donors.
7. If your gross household income is R600 000 or less per annum, then you will qualify for the fee adjustment grant provided by the DHET. To qualify for this grant you must ensure that you have applied to your university for the grant. If you qualify for the fee adjustment grant you will pay the 2016 fee and the Department will pay the difference between the 2016 fee and the 2018 fees. This will help keep your fees more affordable. Note that if you did apply in 2017 for the grant you do not need to reapply in 2018.

Post-graduate students

8. Please note that NSFAS only funds undergraduates studying towards their **first** higher education qualification. Students who intend studying for a postgraduate course that is

a requirement to practice in a professional field (e.g. Post Graduate Certificate in Education and certain Bachelor of Technology programmes) may also be funded. The financial aid office at your university or NSFAS will be able to advise you on which postgraduate programmes qualify for funding.

9. NSFAS does not fund Honours, Masters or Doctoral programmes. You are advised to contact the National Research Foundation for information on funding available for postgraduate study. You should also speak to the financial aid/ assistance office at the university where you intend studying for information on financial aid/ scholarship opportunities that may be available for postgraduate programmes.

Bursaries for international study and to study at private institutions

10. The DHET Bursary Scheme administered by the NSFAS does not cover South African citizens who intend studying abroad or at private institutions in the country. The DHET Bursary Scheme only funds qualifying South African citizens who are registered at one of the 26 public universities or 50 TVET colleges in South Africa.
11. The Department has established partnerships with a number of other countries which offer international scholarships to South Africans. A number of scholarship opportunities are currently available for South African students to undertake studies, research and exchanges in other countries.

Please visit <http://www.internationalscholarships.dhet.gov.za> for further information.

Yours sincerely



Dr DC Parker

Deputy Director-General: University Education

Date: 22 January 2018

CC

University Registrars

Dr A Bawa, CEO Universities South Africa

Mr G Qonde, Director- General: Department of Higher Education and Training

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Imfundo Ephakeme Nokuqeqesha • Imfundo ePhakamileyo noQeqesho • Dyondzo ya le Henhla na Vuleteri • Pfunzo ya Ntha na Vhugudisi
Thuto ya Godimo le Tlhahlo • Thuto e Phahameng le Thupelo • Thuto e Kgolwane le Katiso