

Higher Education, universities reach fee compact

Higher Education and Training Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, says the department and universities have reached another fee compact to ensure fee increases for the 2021 academic year are kept at affordable levels.



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The compact is also aimed at ensuring the sustainability of universities.

Responding to the South African Union of Students (SAUS) letter of demands, which includes a 0% fee increase for the 2021 academic year, Nzimande said institutions rely on student fees for their core operational income.

The Minister, however, said additional funding is not available from government to support a 0% fee increase.

“Fee consultations take place at institutional level. In addition, student leaders are represented on university councils, where budgeting and fee decisions are taken.

“Institutions have to remain financially sustainable in order to meet their operational commitments and their academic responsibilities,” Nzimande said.

Return of students to campuses

On the students’ demand for a 100% return of all students to campuses under lockdown level 1, Nzimande said students who have challenges with connectivity should be able to return to campuses, where they are able to access the relevant connectivity and support from institutions.

However, the Minister emphasised that individual institutions must manage these processes in line with their own resources and strategies, and the ability to provide a safe environment for the return of students and staff, given the Covid-19 pandemic.

“I will be releasing directions to support and guide institutions in managing the return of students and the start of the 2021 academic year,” Nzimande said.

NSFAS working hard to finalise appeals

Giving an update on NSFAS appeals, Nzimande said NSFAS is working hard to finalise appeals, so that students are not prevented from registering in time to start the 2021 academic year.

The Minister urged student structures to continue engaging with the management teams of all public universities, using the communication structures that are already in place.

He said many of the matters raised by student leaders require that students and university management work together at institutional level.

“Many of the issues that have been raised will require careful consideration and planning at national level, and will be addressed through the work that the Department of Higher Education and Training, will be doing in collaboration with other government departments, including National Treasury, the Department of Science and Innovation and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation,” Nzimande said.

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