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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 116**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 21/02/2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 02 OF 2020**

**Mr A M Shaik Emam (NFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

In light of the briefing session he held in Pretoria on 23 January 2020 wherein he stated that the National Students Financial Aid Scheme process will remain open for students who have not applied and that those with historic debts will be allowed to register, what (a) are the reasons for the student protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and (b) measures are put in place to address the reasons?

**NW128E**

**REPLY:**

1. There are multiple reasons for the protests at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The University has reported that it is implementing the Minister’s announcement that the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS) would remain open for first time entry students accepted at the University who had for some reason or other not applied to NSFAS, and for NSFAS qualifying returning students who qualify for debt relief in terms of the 2018 due diligence process. These students can register without payment as long as they sign the Acknowledgement of Debt form.

One of the aspects that underlie the protests relates to students who do not fall into the NSFAS qualifying categories.

1. On 15 January 2020, UKZN communicated the financial clearance concessions for the 2020 academic year to all students. The key student demands following the communique are as follows and summarised in Table 1 below:

* All students whose annual family income is below R350 000 be registered without making payments for registration fees and towards their student debt.
* Significantly reduced payments towards historic debt for students above R350 000 and R600 000.
* The University to provide an additional 2 500 beds by leasing buildings from various property owners in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.
* Review cases of academically excluded students.

**Table 1**

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| **Category of students** | **Payments required to obtain financial clearance (UKZN APPROVED CONCESSIONS)** | **Payments required to obtain financial clearance (SRC PROPOSED CONCESSIONS) Revised 24 February 2020** |
| Below R350 000 | If self-funded, i.e. do not qualify for NSFAS funding/debt relief, registration fee and 15% of debt capped at R10 000 or R15 000 | No payment |
| Above R350 000 and below R600 000 | Registration fee (if self-funded) and 30% of debt capped at  R20 000 or R25 000 | Registration fee (if self-funded) and 15% of debt capped at R5 000 or  R10 000 |
| Above R600 000 | Registration fee (if self-funded) and 50% of debt capped at  R25 000 or R45 000 | No additional concessions proposed |

The University has reported that the financial clearance concessions for all students already in place has a cash flow implication in excess of R1 billion. The financial clearance concessions demanded by the SRC would have a total cost of R2.26 billion taking into consideration the provisioning of allowances and fees.

The University continues to implement the concessions to ensure that students of the University are not required to pay 100% of their debt before registration. Registration data provided by the University as at 24 February 2020 shows that 95% of undergraduates and 63% of postgraduates are registered as follows:

**Registration data as 24 February 2020 Planned Actual %**

* Undergraduate – First time entry 10 938 9 911 91%
* Undergraduate – Returning students 23 359 22 588 97%

**Undergraduate Total 34 297 32 499 95%**

**Postgraduate Total 12 741 8 019 63%**

**All students 47 038 40 518 86%**

The University has identified 1 435 unregistered students owing R72 million who are funded by NSFAS in 2020, but owe the University for previous year’s fees that do not qualify for NSFAS debt relief. A further analysis of the debt in this cohort is currently being performed to raise the funds required to immediately assist these students with payments required for registration and also the funds required to settle their historic debt during the course of the academic year.

The University currently provides 23 028 beds (8 135 owned and 14 893 leased), amounting to the provisioning of 49% beds of the planned enrolment. This is in line with the Norms and Standards for Student Housing, which indicates that 50% of the student population in urban-based universities should be in university-managed student housing. The University has indicated that the registration period is open until 6 March 2020, which will determine the extent of additional accommodation required.

The University reported that the academic exclusion processes of the University, which resulted in the exclusion of 31 students, have been adequately followed through the relevant committees of Senate. Notwithstanding the above, it has been resolved that Senate will be requested to consider whether the cases of the 31 excluded students could be re-considered by Senate through the appropriate Senate committee.