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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1743**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 29 OF 2020**

**Dr SS Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

What steps has he taken to assist the tertiary institutions that are not yet ready to implement online learning for preparation of 2021 opening?

**NW2039E**

**REPLY:**

The Department is working with all 26 universities towards the successful completion of the 2020 academic year in a manner that does not compromise the safety of staff and students, and in a manner that provides a fair opportunity for all students to engage meaningfully with their study programmes. Universities have developed multimodal teaching and learning plans that implement a mix of strategies deemed suitable for the context of each university. Some universities are primarily delivering their teaching and learning programmes through online synchronous and asynchronous means whilst others are employing a mix of strategies that include online learning as well as the physical delivery of teaching and learning materials in digital form (memory sticks/USBs) or in print form.

A special COVID-19 Responsiveness Grant (CRG) has been created to assist universities to implement their multimodal plans, including the acquisition of laptops for students and staff, to ensure reasonable access to data, to strengthen their information and communication technology teaching and learning delivery platforms, and to develop staff and student capacity for online teaching and learning modalities.

Online learning is likely to remain part of every institution's teaching and learning strategy going forward. To this end, universities are being supported to enable all students to obtain a suitable device for online teaching and learning. Some universities have used Council-controlled funds, and/or CRG funds to procure laptops, and others are working with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to secure laptops for NSFAS-funded students through the national process led by NSFAS.

The Department has also negotiated with the major network service providers, and a data package at a significantly reduced cost has been put in place for students who are supported through NSFAS.