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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2403**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 12/11/2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 25 OF 2021**

**Ms H S Winkler (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

(1) Whether he has been informed that the University of Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal is deducting monthly payments from the food allowance of students who receive funds from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) as payment for laptops that they received from his department; if not, will he investigate the matter; if so, (a) on what date and (b) for what reason was a decision taken to deduct payment from NSFAS food allowances for the laptops that students received;

(2) in view of many NSFAS students saying that they have not received an allocation for data despite his department’s assurance that NSFAS students would receive laptops and data, (a) what data for online courses will be made available to students and (b) on what date will they receive the data? **NW2778E**

**REPLY:**

1. The 2021 Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public universities make provision for NSFAS students to utilise the learning material allowances for the purchase of a digital learning device (laptop or tablet). All university students qualify for a learning materials allowance, which is set at a maximum amount of R5 200. The University of Zululand indicated that 438 students were notified that they erroneously received laptops as well as the R5 200 learning material allowances in April 2021.  The University recovered the R5 200 that students received as a once off amount up front, by deducting it over the remaining period from the meal allowances. These students received a laptop and the full meal allowances and did not forfeit any meal allowances to pay for laptops. The balance of the R15 000 living allowances for the 2021 academic year is spread out over the academic year.
2. Data provision to students required for online access for teaching and learning and for assessments remained high across the system. The average across the system for all undergraduate students was 90% and 91% for NSFAS students, as reported by institutions in the September 2021 monitoring reports.

Below is the breakdown per university:

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| **Percentage of all undergraduate students and NSFAS students that have access to data off-campus for teaching and learning purposes.** | | |
|  | **% all** | **% NSFAS** |
| Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) | 73.0% | 73.0% |
| Central University of Technology (CUT) | 99.5% | 100.0% |
| Durban University of Technology (DUT) | 87.7% | 84.8% |
| Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Nelson Mandela University (NMU) | 99.0% | 99.0% |
| North West University (NWU) | 57.5% | 70.0% |
| Rhodes University (RU) | 16.8% | 12.9% |
| Sefako Makgato University (SMU) | 94.2% | 96.2% |
| Sol Plaatje University (SPU) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Stellenbosch University | 90.0% | 90.0% |
| Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) | 99.0% | 99.0% |
| University of Cape Town (UCT) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of Fort Hare (UFH) | 96.9% | 99.4% |
| University of Free State (UFS) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of Johannesburg (UJ) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) | 99.9% | 100.0% |
| University of Limpopo (UL) | 98.0% | 98.0% |
| University of Mpumalanga (UMP) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of Pretoria (UP) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of South Africa (UNISA) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of Venda (UNIVEN) | 45.0% | 45.0% |
| University of Zululand (UNIZULU) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of the Western Cape (UWC) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| University of the Witwatersrand (UWC) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Vaal University of Technology (VUT) | 99.0% | 99.0% |
| Walter Sisulu University (WSU) | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| **Average** | **90.60%** | **91.01%** |

14 Universities (CPUT, MUT, SPU, UCT, UFS, UJ, UKZN, UMP, UP, UNISA, UNIZULU, UWC, WITS, and WSU) reported that 100% of their students have been provided with data.  7 universities (NMU, SMU, SUN, TUT, UFH, UL, and VUT) reported that 90-99% of their students were provided with data. DUT reported 85% of their students to have been provided with data. CPUT reported 73%, NWU reported that 70%, of their students to have been provided with data in the period. UNIVEN reported 45% of their students to have been provided with data in the period under review. RU reported 13% of their students to have been provided with data.

It should also be noted that student who are on campus and living in university residences have access to campus wi-fi, so many students do not require access to mobile data at all times.