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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 296**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 17/02/2023**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 2 OF 2023**

**Mr S S Zondo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

(1) What surety can his department provide to students, with the start of the year being marked by registration complications such as the delay by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, to successfully clear them for registration before the start of the academic year at universities such as Rhodes University, to ensure that they will not be left wanting after they have waited long into the start of the academic period to be cleared;

(2) whether any arrangements, other than his plea to institutions of higher learning, have been made with universities to allow students to register; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

**NW309E**

**REPLY:**

1. The late closure of NSFAS applications (31 January 2023) coupled with a significant increase in applications for first time entering places system wide and NSFAS system challenges contributed to some of the delays. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) utilising a monitoring toolkit embarked on oversight visits to universities to assess the state of readiness about registration, admissions, funding as well as any other challenges institutions might have encountered. The Department has closely monitored the state of readiness regarding the 2023 registration cycle at 26 universities following the Minister’s consultation with the sector, regarding the start of the 2023 academic year. These monitoring oversight visits allowed the Department to engage with universities and student leaders as well as NSFAS to deal with any matters including the delay in NSFAS funding confirmations. NSFAS reported to the Portfolio Committee on 22 February 2023 that 1 084 574 students have been provisionally funded at universities and TVET Colleges. Confirmed funding for universities and TVET Colleges where registration data is received is 350 014 and 81 281 students respectively. The exchange of registration data between NSFAS and institutions are ongoing.

The closing date for appeals to be lodged at NSFAS was extended to 28 February to accommodate students that are currently being evaluated through NSFAS processes.

NSFAS also made upfront payments to both Universities and TVET Colleges with prior periods’ savings and recovery funds.

1. Measures that universities have put in place to allow provisionally funded students to register are as follows:

* Some universities allowed students who are provisionally funded to register while waiting for the funded list from NSFAS.
* Some universities granted an extension to accommodate the late release of results for Grade 12s, delayed NSFAS funding decisions and minimum payments for registrations.
* Some universities had to adjust orientation schedules to accommodate late registering students, as well as to ensure opportunity for extended registration for those students who require it.
* Majority of institutions use online registration with opportunities also for face to face and assisted registration on campus.
* At most institutions, there are mechanisms in place to ensure that students can sign Acknowledgements of Debt, and to (in most cases) access the start of the academic year and accommodation.