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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 967**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 17 OF 2020**

**Prof B Bozzoli (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

(1) What are the details of the differences in terms of performance of students who receive the National Student Financial Aid Scheme grant and those who do not;

(2) whether he will provide Prof B Bozzoli with statistical evidence of the students’ differential performance in the past three financial years; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

**NW1256E**

**REPLY:**

The Department started undertaking national cohort studies, including a specific study on NSFAS funded students in the 2016/17 financial year. The database of students who had received NSFAS funding in all previous years of study was mapped to the HEMIS dataset. The NSFAS cohort study considers any student who received NSFAS funding at any point in time during their studies. The NSFAS cohort study published on 13 March 2017 considered all cohorts that entered the public higher education sector, i.e. universities, for the first time from the 2000 to 2014 academic years. This report and subsequent reports show that students who have been funded by NSFAS perform better than the national cohort.  It should be noted that there is insufficient data to determine how the students on the new bursary scheme are performing, as at least 4 years of data would be required for 3-year qualifications and 5 years of data for 4-year qualifications.  This cohort only commenced their studies in the 2018 academic year. It should also be noted that the national cohort includes students funded by NSFAS.

The 2000 to 2014 first time entering undergraduate cohort studies for public higher education institutions, published in March 2017, shows that the dropout and throughput rates for the 2006 cohort are as follows for the:

* national cohort, 38.2% and 54.4% respectively;
* DHET NSFAS cohort, 28.5% and 62.5% respectively; and
* Thuthuka cohort, 10.4% and 85.8% respectively.

The 2000 to 2015 first time entering undergraduate cohort studies for public higher education institutions, published in March 2018, shows that the dropout and throughput rates for the 2007 cohort are as follows for the:

* national cohort, 37.9% and 55.6% respectively;
* DHET NSFAS cohort, 25.9% and 66.2% respectively; and
* Thuthuka cohort, 13.0% and 81.2% respectively.

The 2000 to 2016 first time entering undergraduate cohort studies for public higher education institutions, published in March 2019, shows that the dropout and throughput rates for the 2008 cohort are as follows for the:

* national cohort, 34.6% and 58.0% respectively;
* DHET NSFAS cohort, 22.4% and 68.9% respectively;
* Thuthuka cohort, 12.3% and 83.1% respectively; and
* Funza Lushaka cohort 8.2% and 87.0% respectively

The 2000 to 2017 first time entering undergraduate cohort studies for public higher education institutions, published in March 2020, shows that the dropout and throughput rates for the 2009 cohort are as follows for the:

* national cohort, 31.3% and 61.1% respectively;
* DHET NSFAS cohort, 22.2% and 69.7% respectively;
* for the Thuthuka cohort, 11.0% and 84.6% respectively; and
* Funza Lushaka cohort 8.6% and 86.8% respectively

It should be noted that the NSFAS cohorts in every cohort study have performed better than the national cohort. These cohorts of NSFAS funded students were from poor families earning up to R1220 000 per annum, and the students in the scheme did not necessarily receive full cost of study funding, as funding was capped and there was an expected family contribution.

In comparison, the Thuthuka cohort are students entering accounting studies and in general would include high performing students from the basic education sector. These students have also received full cost of study funding and tailored 'wrap around' support.

The Funza Lushaka cohort is also a selected (competitive) cohort and has always been fully funded for all aspects of their study.

The cohort study published by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) on 13 March 2017 did not focus on performance of NSFAS recipients in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The Department has been working closely with NSFAS to improve the capacity of NSFAS to administer and disburse bursaries to TVET college students and to respond to the uniqueness of the TVET college sector. NSFAS systems and processes require specific enhancements to adequately cater for the TVET college sector, especially the numerous and somewhat shorter academic cycles. This intervention will ultimately enable NSFAS to effectively report on performance of recipients in the TVET college sector with its numerous academic cycles. Notwithstanding this intervention, the Department has started gathering data on performance of NSFAS recipients in TVET colleges. However, this information is not readily available now as its analysis is still being undertaken.