



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department of Higher Education and Training

**Guidelines for the
Department of Higher Education and Training
Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities**

2019

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Abbreviations

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FAO	Financial Aid Office
FTEN	First Time Entry
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency

Glossary of Terms

Approved funded university programmes:

Approved funded programmes at public universities are undergraduate whole qualifications. A funded undergraduate programme is one that has been accredited by the Council on Higher Education, approved by the Department for inclusion into the university's Programme Qualifications Mix, and may be offered by the university provided that it is registered on the National Qualifications Framework by the South African Qualifications Authority.

Bursary: financial support awarded to a student in need that does not need to be repaid, but has service conditions attached.

Combined gross family income: a measure of the combined income before taxes of parents/spouses and/or legal guardian **who earns** income, both from the formal and informal sector (e.g., salaries and wages, grant, pension or other sources of income including business and rental income).

DHET Bursary Scheme: The DHET Bursary Scheme is a financial aid programme that provides fully-subsidised funding for poor and working class students at public universities.

First-time entry (FTEN) students: An FTEN student is a student who is entering a public university for the first time, and has not previously studied at any public university.

Full cost of study: means the total cost of study for a student arising from tuition fees, accommodation and subsistence, and travel related to formal teaching and learning activities, as determined by the criteria contained in these Guidelines.

Funding cap: This is the maximum award size for an annual award to continuing university students who had entered the system and prior to 2018, and is determined and set annually by NSFAS.

Grant: means financial support awarded to a student in need that does not need to be repaid and has no service conditions attached.

Incidental expenses: means a monthly stipend to cover personal care items

National Bursary Agreement (NBA): The NBA is a written agreement between the student and NSFAS

Returning students: students who are continuing with their studies from a prior year of study.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following an announcement by former President Zuma in December 2017, and confirmed through budget allocations from National Treasury in February 2018, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) introduced the new DHET Bursary Scheme for 2018, providing fully-subsidised funding for poor and working class students at public universities. The Bursary Scheme is being implemented by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme from the 2018 academic year onwards.
- 1.2 The new Bursary Scheme gives effect to Government's vision to ensure that all academically-deserving students from poor and working class backgrounds, who are admitted to study at public universities, are provided with financial support for their undergraduate study programmes, and are supported to succeed. The bursary scheme supports the goals of the National Development Plan (2012) and the White Paper on Post School Education and Training (2013) to expand access to higher education for deserving students through financial support from Government, and to support greater student success and throughput.
- 1.3 The broad parameters of these Guidelines were initially outlined in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document produced in January 2018. The FAQs was an interim measure designed to ensure that key high level decisions could guide the implementation of the Scheme at universities in the 2018 academic year.
- 1.4 These Guidelines provide the implementation parameters for university student bursaries for the 2019 academic year, and will form the basis of a fully developed Student Funding Policy to be finalised during 2019.

2. Purpose of the DHET Bursary Scheme Guidelines

- 2.1 These Guidelines provide the framework for the implementation of the DHET Bursary Scheme in universities for 2019 and outline the roles and responsibilities of all implementing partners.
- 2.2 The Guidelines outline the scope and detail of the Bursary Scheme and the processes necessary to give effect to the student funding provided through NSFAS to deserving students in university education.
- 2.3 The Guidelines outline the high level rules applicable to the bursary programme.
- 2.4 The Guidelines will be updated annually.

3. Scope and Applicability of the Guidelines

- 3.1 The Guidelines are applicable to Bursary recipients as well as all implementing partners involved in the Bursary Scheme (including the DHET, NSFAS, and public universities).
- 3.2 All student recipients and potential recipients of the Bursary, as well as the implementing institutions, are subject to the Guidelines and must abide by the rules outlined in this document.
- 3.3 The Guidelines will lay the basis for formal agreements between institutions and NSFAS, and between NSFAS and student recipients. All other rules and guideline documents put in place by NSFAS, DHET and/or institutions will be subject to these Guidelines.

4. Policy and Legislative Context

- 4.1 The Guidelines are subject to the following legislation:
 - Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).
 - Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act 101 of 1997 as amended).
 - National Student Financial Aid Scheme Act, 1999 (as amended).
 - The Public Management Finance Act 1 of 1999
- 4.2 The Guidelines are linked to the implementation of the following policy documents:
 - The National Development Plan (2012).
 - The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013).

5. Qualifying Criteria for the DHET bursary scheme:

- 5.1 Recipients of the DHET Bursary Scheme must be South African citizens.
- 5.2 Recipients must have applied for, and been admitted into, a public higher education institution (university) to be eligible for funding.
- 5.3 Recipients must meet the financial qualification criteria for funding. That is, they must have a combined gross family income of up to R350 000 per annum, as assessed and verified by NSFAS.
- 5.4 Students must be formally registered to study for an approved funded programme at a public university **and** meet the financial qualification criteria, before a Bursary award will be confirmed.

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- 5.5 Any student who is a South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) recipient automatically meets the financial qualification criteria, and will be eligible for a bursary award provided that they are registered at a public higher education institution.
- 5.6 The financial need of the student will be assessed at the point of first application, and students will not need to re-apply annually.
- 5.7 A student can only be funded for one qualification at one institution at any one time.
- 5.8 Students only receive funding once they have met all the criteria and signed a NSFAS Bursary Agreement (NBA), which indicates that they accept the obligations and responsibilities of the Bursary programme.
- 5.9 The threshold of R350 000 family income per annum only applies to those who were first-time entry (FTEN) students in 2018 and will also apply to those who will be FTENs in 2019 and going forward.
- 5.10 University students who entered their studies prior to 2018 qualify for a grant according to the previous threshold of R122 000 family income per annum. The grants for these students from 2018 onwards are subject to a funding cap, as in prior years.
- 5.11 Students who have already studied at a university or obtained a prior university qualification do not qualify as FTEN students even if they are entering the first year of a new programme. Students starting a university qualification for the first time, but who have already achieved a TVET qualification may qualify as a university FTEN student¹.
- 5.12 In general a university student is eligible for funding for only **one** undergraduate qualification. There are a few exceptions where a second undergraduate qualification would be supported, such as those students who have obtained a Higher Certificate and go on to a Diploma or Degree.
- 5.13 Senior university students who apply for funding in 2019 for the first time, and returning NSFAS students (who commenced studies in 2017 or prior to that), may qualify for a grant in terms of the pre-2018 threshold and criteria.
- 5.14 Any funding received by a senior university student prior to 2018 is subject to the conditions of the Loan Agreement already signed. However, from 2018, funding is provided to all students as a grant, subject to the maximum funding “cap” determined on an annual basis by NSFAS. The funding cap will be R88 600 in 2019.

¹ Provided that they did not complete a higher education qualification (HEQSF diploma or degree) at the TVET College

- 5.15 Students with disabilities are subject to different criteria as set out in the NSFAS Policy. The NSFAS Disability Policy will be distributed to all stakeholders.

6. Scope of the DHET Bursary for university students:

6.1 Approved funded programmes for university students:

6.1.1 Approved funded programmes at universities are all undergraduate whole qualifications i.e. degree, diploma or higher certificate programme, offered by a public university.

6.1.2 Additional courses that are not core requirements of a whole qualification are not funded. Occasional programmes are not funded. However, a student that registers concurrently at a distance learning institution for a filler course that is required for their qualification, would be registered as an occasional student at the distance institution, and may be funded (see paragraph 7.1.5).

6.1.3 Postgraduate qualifications, including Post Graduate diplomas, honours degrees, masters and PhD degrees are not funded, with the exception of two qualification types:

- The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is funded; and
- The postgraduate qualification required to register with the professional body as a chartered accountant.

6.1.4 Only certain Bachelor of Technology (BTech) programmes are funded where there is a professional requirement for completion – a separate list of funded BTech programmes is provided (**Annexure A**).

6.2 Tuition fees

6.2.1 The tuition fee is the agreed institutional tuition fee for the actual programme of study for each student.

6.2.2 The registration fee or first upfront payment must be included in the tuition fee. This should reflect as one fee rather than as separate items, regardless of how institutions manage their payment processes. University students qualifying for NSFAS funding are not required to pay the initial registration/ upfront fee.

6.3 Allowances for contact and distance university students

6.3.1 Table 1 provides an indication of which allowances are applicable to different categories of accommodation for contact students.

Table 1: Allowances applicable to contact university students

Accommodation Type	Allowance type				
	Books	Living Allowance/meals	Rent	Transport	Incidental Expenses
University managed Catering residence	X				X
University managed Self-catering Residence	X	X			
Private off campus Accommodation	X	X	X		
Living at Home	X			X	X

6.3.2 Distance students qualify for book allowances only.

6.4 Living Allowance for contact university students in residences or private accommodation)

6.4.1 This applies to contact university students in university managed residences or private accommodation

6.4.2 A living allowance will be provided to all DHET bursary recipients at universities not accommodated in catering residences, to cover food and incidental expenses. In 2019, this allowance will be R 14 400². All NSFAS bursary/ grant recipients in university managed residences or private accommodation qualifies for this allowance, subject to the funding cap for returning students. The R14 400 includes the R2 750 incidental allowance.

6.4.3 Students in catered residences receive R275 a month for incidental expenses in addition to their catered accommodation.

6.5 Accommodation and travel allowances for contact university students

6.5.1 Students eligible for accommodation and travel allowances must be managed according to the institutions' qualifying criteria set by the financial aid committee.

² Any university that is providing DHET bursary students (2018 and 2019 FTEN cohorts) with amounts above this threshold must take responsibility for providing students with the additional support. They should phase out the higher than approved amounts to reach the standards set for the system as soon as practicable.

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- 6.5.2 Students living in university accommodation qualify for the actual costs of the accommodation charged by the institution.
- 6.5.3 Those living in university-managed off campus accommodation also receive the actual costs of accommodation, limited to the maximum cost of equivalent university owned on-campus accommodation at a particular institution.
- 6.5.4 In general, qualifying students whose home address is within a radius of 30 kilometres from the university campus would not be considered for an award for an accommodation allowance. These students qualify for a travel allowance determined by the institution, up to a maximum of R10 000 in 2019. This includes a R2750 incidental allowance.
- 6.5.5 University students living in private leased accommodation can qualify for an accommodation allowance. As with 2018, the maximum allowance for external accommodation is capped at the cost of internal university accommodation costs for an equivalent accommodation type. Proof of a lease agreement must be provided for a student to qualify.
- 6.5.6 Wherever possible, universities should accredit private providers of student accommodation and should monitor the quality of accommodation provision to students living off campus.

6.6 Learning material allowance for contact and distance education university students

- 6.6.1 All university students qualify for a learning material allowance, which is set at a maximum amount of R5000 for first and second year students who are supported under the new DHET Bursary Scheme for the 2019 academic year.
- 6.6.2 Students can utilise this allowance for academic books and materials or for computer-related expenses. Only one allowance is provided per student per academic year. Allowances for students in distance education programmes are calculated based on the number of courses registered up to a maximum of R5000.
- 6.6.3 Students receive a learning material allowance for each year of study, which can be utilised as they choose. However, each year the allowance is provided at a set amount.
- 6.6.4 Any costs relating to insurance, maintenance and/or repairs of computer equipment purchased, must be covered by the student. Institutions are not responsible for the safe-keeping or replacement of any equipment lost/ damaged.

6.7 Determination of bursary award amounts

- 6.7.1 Allowances will be subject to annual increases. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used to determine increases to food and transport allowances.

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- 6.7.2 Accommodation and tuition fee increases will be in line with agreed institutional increases, unless otherwise indicated³.
- 6.7.3 For private accommodation, annual increases will be capped at the amounts for internal university owned/ managed accommodation.
- 6.7.4 The intention is to introduce standard accommodation subsidies after sufficient research has been done.

7. Bursary conditions and obligations for recipients

7.1 General conditions

- 7.1.1 Students on a full DHET bursary may not receive another full cost of study bursary from another source at the same time.
- 7.1.2 If a student receives a partial bursary from another source, a NSFAS bursary may be awarded, but the allocations must be reduced accordingly, so that the student is supported fully for their studies. NSFAS may not pay for amounts already covered by another funder. Universities are obliged to report this information to NSFAS and to reduce the fee account accordingly.
- 7.1.3 If a student receives a merit award from their institution, the NSFAS funding will also be reduced accordingly, so that the full cost of study is covered, but the student does not receive an amount over and above the full cost of study, as outlined in these Guidelines.
- 7.1.4 It is the student's responsibility to inform NSFAS about any other funding that they may have been awarded. Failure to do so will be regarded as fraud, and will result in the termination of the bursary and return of any funding fraudulently received. Any exceptions will be dealt with on an appeal basis through the Financial Aid Office of an institution.
- 7.1.5 Students can only be funded for one qualification at one institution at any one time. Where a student is required to complete aspects of their programme at another institution, inter-institutional agreements must be in place to ensure that NSFAS payments are only made for one student to a single institution.
- 7.1.6 Returning NSFAS bursary recipients do not need to re-apply. NSFAS will process their bursary application for the following academic year, based on academic eligibility information received from their institution.

³ Any institution that implements increases above the sector wide agreements must discount the fees for all NSFAS qualifying students (on the DHET Bursary or Grant). These students will be required to pay only the agreed upon increases.

7.1.7 Bursary funding for university students is limited to the minimum period of study for the qualification they are registered for, plus one year (N+1).

7.1.8 Decisions on any changes to programmes are made on an appeal basis to the Financial Aid Office of an institution. Any changes, however, are subject to the original agreed maximum funding duration, that is, N+1 on the original course.

7.1.9 Students continuing to a first undergraduate degree programme following a higher certificate qualification are eligible for funding.

7.1.10 Students who have studied at a TVET College and who are entering a university qualification for the first time are eligible for funding support.

7.2 Academic progression criteria for university students

7.2.1 For all returning students funded on the pre-2018 criteria, who are on NSFAS grant funding, the criteria of 50% courses passed annually within the N+2 rule will continue to apply.

7.2.2 The progression criteria for returning 2018 FTEN students remains at 50% for 2018 only. Institutions will have to ensure that students are on track to completion within N+1. This will require institutions to submit detailed academic progression criteria for particular programmes to NSFAS during 2019, so that new criteria can be developed and implemented for 2020.

7.2.3 For the 2019 FTEN students, the new progression criteria will apply, to ensure completion within the N+1 limit. The criterion of completion within N+1 years must be clearly stated to all students upfront. Institutions are responsible for determining the academic progression rules for each qualification, and indicating to NSFAS whether students qualify for support in the following academic year. Academic data will be audited as part of the HEMIS audit.

7.2.4 University students who drop out of university studies before they complete a qualification, and wish to register at a TVET college, are allowed to transfer, but they will be supported at the TVET college for a maximum timeframe within the original agreement.

7.3 Service Work Obligations

7.3.1 From 2019, recipients of the DHET bursary in their second years of study will be expected to do at least 80 hours of service work per annum. The modalities for the service work options will be agreed to in consultation with institutions.

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- 7.3.2 Some service work could be done on campus during term time, in the community during the holidays, or through an institution-facilitated programme on/off campus. Campus service work could involve volunteering in the library or residence hall, tutoring/ mentoring other students, or volunteering for orientation of new students or on open days.
- 7.3.3 Safety issues, as well as practicality must be considered for all service work. NSFAS and DHET will engage with institutions about possibilities and options, with a view to developing clear guidelines for 2020.
- 7.3.4 In 2019, students will be required to fill in a report provided by the Financial Aid Office of an institution, and signed off by a staff member in the FAO. Work will be carried out during 2019 to develop an appropriate system for verification from 2020 onwards.
- 7.3.5 A firm policy on service work will be developed in collaboration with institutions and put in place from 2020 onwards.
- 7.3.6 Students in courses where some form of community engagement is already included may receive some credit for the hours of community on those courses.

7.4 Signing of agreements

- 7.4.1 Every new student recipient of the DHET Bursary Scheme must sign, upon registration, a NSFAS Bursary Agreement.
- 7.4.2 In signing the agreement, every student commits to abide by the conditions and obligations of the DHET Bursary Scheme, managed by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

8. Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Responsibilities of DHET

- 8.1.1 The DHET will ensure that NSFAS has access to the full programme qualification mix (PQM) for universities and the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) data to enable effective decisions/confirmations of FTEN students, and of funded programmes.
- 8.1.2 The DHET will lead a process to develop a fully-fledged student funding policy in 2019, and update the funding Guidelines on an annual basis. All policy decisions relating to the DHET Bursary Scheme must be approved by the DHET.
- 8.1.3 The DHET must provide oversight on the collection of data on bursary recipients.

8.2 Responsibilities of NSFAS

- 8.2.1 NSFAS will provide visible information on the bursary application process on their website and other avenues and keep this information updated. This includes making explicit the criteria for funded programmes.
- 8.2.2 NSFAS will receive and process applications via their online portal. Applicants can also apply through their provincial/regional National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) where they will be given a hard copy of the form to complete. The NYDA staff will explain the application process to students and help them complete the form. Students can also apply on campus at the financial aid office.
- 8.2.3 NSFAS is responsible for capturing student data accurately.
- 8.2.4 Applications will be evaluated in terms of the financial qualification criteria which will be based on the required supporting documentation and informed consent of the applicant.
- 8.2.5 NSFAS will make decisions on financial eligibility of candidates and provide an indication of the student status in relation to FTEN (2019), returning (FTENs 2018), new senior students (previous criteria), and returning students (previous criteria).
- 8.2.6 A full dataset of financially eligible students will be kept and shared with DHET and universities as appropriate, for use during registration and for planning purposes.
- 8.2.7 Agreements between NSFAS and students must be available for signing within one month of registration.
- 8.2.8 NSFAS must disburse an upfront payment to universities to allow them to make initial allowance payments to students who have registered and are confirmed for funding on the DHET bursary scheme.
- 8.2.9 NSFAS will determine which returning students will be funded based on audited HEMIS academic performance data.
- 8.2.10 NSFAS will sign a Memorandum of Agreement with each university covering the roles and obligations of both parties.

8.3 Responsibilities of universities

- 8.3.1 Universities must put mechanisms in place to enable students to sign NSFAS agreements within the agreed time period.

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- 8.3.2 Universities should notify NSFAS about students who drop out of the system, as well as students who enrol in semester courses.
- 8.3.3 Universities must identify students receiving funding from more than one source and inform NSFAS so that NSFAS allocations are adjusted accordingly based on the amounts of other funding received.
- 8.3.4 Universities must make it known to students that they cannot receive funding for the same qualification from more than one source without notifying the institution and NSFAS.
- 8.3.5 Universities must allow students who are recipients of DHET bursaries to register without paying an upfront or registration fee, if they have been confirmed as financially eligible, as this will be paid as part of their full tuition fee. No upfront payment at registration should be expected from students who have met the NSFAS financial qualification criteria.
- 8.3.6 Universities, utilising the upfront payments from NSFAS, must in the first instance, direct funding to first allowances to ensure that students are able to access funds for living expenses (accommodation, food, transport etc) and learning materials, and then secondly direct funding towards paying the first instalment of the tuition fee.
- 8.3.7 Universities must provide student academic data in the agreed format to NSFAS within the agreed time frames.
- 8.3.8 Universities are obliged to submit only the names and details of students for funding who are studying funded qualifications. If incorrect information is submitted the institution will be liable for the costs incurred.
- 8.3.9 Universities must confirm academic eligibility of all senior and returning students to NSFAS. If the information is incorrectly submitted, the institution could be liable for the costs incurred. During 2019, universities will be expected to submit detailed academic progression criteria for different programmes, to enable a transparent set of criteria to be developed. It is recognised that there cannot be a one size fits all approach for different programme types.
- 8.3.10 Institutions must abide by funding rules when disbursing funding to students.

8.4 Responsibilities of bursary recipients

- 8.4.1 Students must apply for the bursary on time, submitting all the required documents.

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- 8.4.2 Students must inform NSFAS and their institutions if they have other sources of funding.
- 8.4.3 Students must meet all academic and attendance requirements as well as the service work obligations.
- 8.4.4 Students must meet individual financial commitments, e.g. paying landlords on time, and managing living allowance.
- 8.4.5 Students must notify NSFAS through the financial aid office in the event of a change of programme or when they exit a programme.
- 8.4.6 All students in receipt of the DHET Bursary Scheme must signed a NSFAS Bursary Agreement.

9. Review of Guidelines

The guidelines will be reviewed on an annual basis. The student funding policy, to be finalised in 2019, will form the basis for the annual review of the guidelines.

ANNEXURE A

Funded BTech Programmes

B TECH: ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY
B TECH: ARCHITECTURE (PROFESSIONAL)
B TECH: BIOKINETICS
B TECH: BIOMEDICAL TECHNOLOGY
B TECH: BIOTECHNOLOGY
B TECH: CARTOGRAPHY
B TECH: CHIROPRACTIC
B TECH: CLINICAL TECHNOLOGY
B TECH: DENTAL TECHNOLOGY
B TECH: EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE
B TECH: ENGINEERING: CHEMICAL
B TECH: ENGINEERING: CIVIL
B TECH: ENGINEERING: ELECTRICAL
B TECH: ENGINEERING: INDUSTRIAL
B TECH: ENGINEERING: MECHANICAL
B TECH: ENGINEERING: MECHANICAL: MECHATRONICS
B TECH: ENGINEERING: METALLURGY
B TECH: ENGINEERING: REFRACTORIES
B TECH: FORESTRY
B TECH: HOMOEOPATHY
B TECH: NURSING
B TECH: NURSING SCIENCE
B TECH: NURSING: COMMUNITY NURSING
B TECH: NURSING: PRIMARY HEALTH CARE
B TECH: NURSING: OCCUPATIONAL NURSING