



SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS' FEDERATION

MEMORANDUM OF GRIEVANCES FROM SASF TO THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: DR NOBUHLE NKABANE

Date 25 May 2025

We, the South African Students Federation(SASF), are compelled to bring to your attention the dire situation facing thousands of students across the country due to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) crisis. The location of NSFAS offices in Cape Town, without decentralisation, forces us to travel extensively, highlighting our dissatisfaction with the organisation's structure. We question the rationale behind spending R2 million on rent while students struggle to access funding. This expenditure is not only extravagant but also highlights the organisation's misplaced priorities.

The NSFAS system has failed black students and the poor marginalised for over 20 years, despite changes in administration. Corruption has plagued the scheme, and current challenges persist. Students are compromised, unable to access better education, fulfil their dreams, or eradicate poverty. Some are homeless due to NSFAS's refusal to pay accommodation fees. We've written countless times to the Minister, but our proposals have been ignored. The lack of response from the Minister and NSFAS leadership demonstrates a lack of concern for the plight of students.

1. Defunding: NSFAS's defunding of students during the academic year is unacceptable. This disrupts their studies and future prospects. We demand transparency and accountability. The lack of transparency and accountability in NSFAS's decision-making processes is a major concern. Students are left in the dark about the reasons for defunding, and this lack of clarity is unacceptable.

2. Student Evictions/Student Accommodation: Students are being evicted due to NSFAS's failure to pay accommodation fees, particularly at TUT. This decision is unfair, biased, and corrupt. Service providers offer essential services but are left with no choice but to offload students. This is not only a problem in the Gauteng but in the KZN , Eastern Cape and other provinces in South Africa. We need answers to the following questions:

Has TUT submitted claims to NSFAS for students currently housed in private accommodation properties?

Has NSFAS paid TUT for students currently residing in private accommodation, even though they were blocked from onboarding them due to the Xiquel system?

If these claims have been submitted or paid, why have the actual service providers who are housing students and evicting them due to none payments not paid ?

We demand resolution within 48 hours. The eviction of students from their residences is a humanitarian crisis that requires immediate attention. Students are being forced to choose between their education and their basic survival needs.

3. Appeals: approval and rejection of appeals lack transparency. We demand clarity on the criteria used. The appeals process is a critical component of the NSFAS system, and its lack of transparency undermines the legitimacy of the organisation.

4. N+ Rule: Students who exceed their study timeframe but are close to completing their degrees require assistance. How can NSFAS assist these students without incurring debt? The N+ rule is a punitive measure that fails to account for the complexities of student life. Students who are close to completing their degrees should be assisted, not penalised.

5. Meal Allowances: Meal allowances are not disbursed on time, and some students don't receive their full allowances. With the challenging economy, why aren't allowances increased to assist students with essentials? The meal allowance is a critical component of the NSFAS funding package, and its delayed disbursement or non-payment has severe consequences for students.

6. TVET College Funding Cycles: NSFAS's failure to assist students enrolled in universities with TVET funding is a crisis. Historically, universities funded such students; what changed? The lack of clarity on TVET college funding cycles has created uncertainty and confusion among students.

7. Bad Communication: NSFAS's communication with students is inadequate, relying on an unreliable telephone system. The lack of effective communication between NSFAS and students is a major concern. Students are left without clear information about their funding status, and this lack of transparency undermines trust in the organisation.

The Constitution of South Africa guarantees the right to education. NSFAS's failures constitute a breach of this right. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) requires NSFAS to manage public funds effectively. The organisation's failures suggest a breach of this act. The lack of accountability and transparency in NSFAS's management of public funds is a serious concern.

NSFAS has assisted many students since its formation but today fails due to political control. The scheme is too big and has a huge responsibility; it must not fail. Despite its potential, NSFAS has failed to deliver on its mandate. The organisation's failures have severe consequences for students, and it is imperative that immediate action is taken to address these challenges.

We need answers to these questions within 24 hours. These systematic challenges occur year-in and year-out. We expect immediate attention to these issues. Failure to respond will lead to further action, including mobilising students to take a stand against the NSFAS crisis. We will not be silenced; we will not be deterred. We will fight for the rights of students, and we will demand justice.

Signed,

Keamogetswe Masike
President, South African Students Federation

Witness :

END.

Yours in the Struggle,
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