

NSFAS FUNDED PROGRAMMES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR 2013-14

Research paper by

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It was in the mid-1990s, when South Africa embarked on a reform process towards becoming a democratic country after 46 years of economic and racial segregation. The problem of outstanding student debt threatened to create a situation where certain higher education institutions would have been unable to continue their activities. Some form of financial aid had to be put in place to help students from previously disadvantaged communities to enter and complete higher education. The provision of additional financial aid to poor students was an effort to create equal opportunities and access to higher institutions and to eradicate the extreme racial imbalances that characterised registration in these institutions.

In principle, NSFAS aims to ensure that most citizens have access to and can afford higher education and training. NSFAS receives allocations from the state as well as donations from local and international donors, and then provides assistance to disadvantaged students by means of bursaries and/or loans. According to the NSFAS Act, any student may apply in writing for financial assistance, but, in order to be eligible for a NSFAS loan, a student must:

- Be a citizen of South Africa;
- Be accepted as a registered student at a traditional university, comprehensive university or a university of technology in South Africa when the award is made;
- Be studying for a first tertiary qualification, or be studying for a second educational qualification provided that this second qualification would enable the student to practice chosen profession;
- Be judged to have the potential to succeed; and
- Be regarded as financially needy¹.

¹NSFAS undergraduate application form

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To determine number of students funded through NSFAS in the health and social development programmes
- To estimate the total amount of funding needed by students in the next financial year.

METHODOLOGY

NSFAS receives funding from various government departments and the 21 SETAs. Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training (HWSETA) funds students who are eligible or currently studying degrees and diplomas in the Health and or Social Development. A database of students funded by NSFAS through HWSETA during the current financial year 2013-2014 was used to as a data source. Simple descriptive and cross tabulation was used in order to achieve objectives of the study.

RESULTS

Qualification	Number of students funded by NSFAS		
	Non final year students	Final year students	Total
B tech: Nursing	2	0	2
Bachelor of Nursing: Basic	72	1	73
B cur Nursing Science	3	0	3
Bachelor of community and Development studies	17	0	17
Bachelor of Social Science	2	0	2
Bachelor of Social Work	6	0	6
BCMP: Clinical Medical Practice	1	0	1
B PHA	42	0	42
Brad: Diagnostics	1	0	1
BSc: Audiology	23	0	23
BSc: Occupational Therapy	20	0	20
BSc: Physiotherapy	21	0	21
BSc: Speech-Language Pathology	13	0	13
MBChB	66	0	66
ND: Radiography: Diagnostic	5	0	5
B Med Sci	14	11	25
B Med: Clinical Practice	8	0	8
BSc Health Promotion	56	52	108
Bachelor of Medical Sciences	2	4	6
Total	374	68	442

Figure 1: Number of students funded by NSFAS enrolled for health and social developments related programmes in 2013-14 financial year.

A total of 442 students enrolled for health and social development programmes are currently being funded through NSFAS in the 2013/2014 financial year. It is well documented that South Africa lacks medical doctors and nurses, however, the table above shows that priority is given to those programmes as shown by the number students being funded in medicine (66) and nursing (72) as opposed to other programmes.

A total **R 17, 545,306.73** is currently being funded to 374 non-final year students. To estimate the total of amount needed to fund students in the next financial year assuming the same number of students in the next financial year.

R 17, 545,306.73 * 10% percent annual university fee increase

= R 1,754,530.67

R 17, 545,306.73 + 1,754,530.67 = R 19,299,839.40

An estimated sum of **R 19,299,839.40** will be needed in the next financial year to fund students.

CONCLUSION

Results showed that priority is being given to medicine and nursing as it has been indicated in various publications to be South Africa's most skill shortage. It is recommended that NSFAS continue to fund the indicated amount of students and probably increase as the need arises. This can actually reduce skills shortage in medicine and nursing, although this is not a major recommendation as there are reports that have indicated that most nurses and doctors that are funded by NSFAS do not work for the public sector for more than a year. They open a private practice and or work for private hospitals and leave. Other interventions and policies are needed to help reduce the shortages of doctors and nurses.