



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION, YOUTH, SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE

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### IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBSIDIZED TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PUBLIC TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

**DATE: MONDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2025, 14:30**

**VENUE: NAMCOL - NAHAS ANGULA HALL**

#### PRESS STATEMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

On 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2025, Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, President of the Republic of Namibia, during her Maiden State of the Nation Address, stated:

*"I am pleased to announce that from the next Academic Year, commencing 2026, tertiary education will become 100 percent **subsidized** by the Government. That means, no registration fees and no tuition fees at **all public Universities and Technical & Vocational Education Centres**. While this will be a **gradual, phased-in approach**, your contribution as families and students for now will be towards accommodation and other related costs. We have heard your cries; the Fees have Fallen."*

This landmark public policy pronouncement signalled a bold policy shift aimed at widening access to tertiary education and advancing social equity.

In line with this pronouncement of H.E the President, the Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture appointed a Taskforce with the mandate to develop the

technical, financial, and policy framework necessary for the phased-in implementation of **Subsidized Funding for Students at Tertiary Education Institutions**.

The Taskforce Report was compiled after extensive deliberations and after consultations with diverse stakeholders in the tertiary education and other sectors.

The consulted stakeholders included the President of the Republic of Namibia, Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Hon. Ericah Shafudah, Minister of Finance and her team, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Association of Private Higher Education Institutions in Namibia (APHEIN), the Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions in Namibia (ATVETIN), Namibian National Students Organisation (NANSO), National African Student's Association (NASA), Student Union of Namibia (SUN), Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU), Bank Windhoek, Bankers Association of Namibia (BAN), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) and the Association of African Higher Education Financing Agencies (AAHEFA).

Following careful consideration, Cabinet approved the **SUBSIDIZED TERTIARY EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL**, in line with the President's pronouncement [31<sup>st</sup>/02.12.25/003].

**Students' Subsidized Tertiary Education** is defined as a funding model whereby students do not pay registration or tuition fees for their primary undergraduate qualifications (**NQF Levels 5 – 8, including Honours**) at **public and private higher** education institutions, and vocational training centres (**NQF Levels 1-6**).

To ensure fairness, equity, and inclusiveness across the whole tertiary education sector, the **Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model** was extended to include private institutions.

Furthermore, it was found necessary to maintain funding for **non-tuition fees such as accommodation, meals, transport, learning materials and other resources** for students in **public and private** tertiary education institutions as per the existing NSFAP modality. **The need was identified to ensure that needy students are covered in terms of providing non-tuition fees as loans through means-testing to enhance access through a holistic approach to student funding.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FUNDING

The following categories will be eligible for funding:

1. All **undergraduate students** (first primary qualification at **NQF Level 5 up to Level 8, including Honours**) at **public and private** higher education institutions receive 100% tuition and registration fee subsidy.

2. All **trainees** for the first primary trade (**NQF Levels 1 up to Level 6**) at TVET centres will be accorded with 100% tuition and registration subsidy.

*A first primary qualification is defined as the first qualification attained by a student at NQF levels 1 to 6 for those pursuing Technical Vocational and Training (TVET) education or for those pursuing higher education NQF levels 5 to 8, including Honours degrees. **A bridging programme that is required to qualify for the primary qualification is part of the primary qualification.***

3. Students pursuing courses abroad in **priority fields of study**, but such courses are not offered by tertiary education institutions in Namibia.

### **EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR FUNDING**

**The following categories will NOT be eligible for funding:**

1. Students pursuing **second or more qualifications** at the same or lower NQF level.
2. Funding for **repeating students** at any level shall be discontinued.
3. **Non-Namibian citizens** are not eligible for funding.
4. Students enrolled at institutions and/or in programmes not meeting legal and quality **standard requirements** according to approved National Quality Standards as implemented by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), and the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) shall not be eligible for funding.
5. Students pursuing courses abroad that are in **priority fields of study** but are offered in tertiary education institutions in Namibia.

### **POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Until further Notice, postgraduate studies will not be funded under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model.

The reason for this decision is to allow ample time for the development of a National List of Priority Fields of Study, which will serve as a key eligibility criterion for future postgraduate funding. In addition, other eligibility criteria will be identified and applied to the funding of postgraduate studies.

Postgraduate students currently funded through means-tested loans from the Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) will continue to receive support until they complete their studies in accordance with *the existing Student Financial Assistance and Debt Recovery Policy and its accompanying Procedures and the Priority Fields of Study 2021-2025*.

### NON-TUITION FEES

1. Students and trainees under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model in tertiary education institutions shall be accorded **non-tuition fees as loans through means-testing**.
2. Funding for non-tuition fees will be provided in line with the current approved Student Financial Assistance and Debt Recovery Policy and accompanying Procedures. The combined parental or guardian income threshold for funding is presently set at N\$500 000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand Namibia Dollar). This threshold will reduce to N\$100 000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Namibia Dollar) and therefore caters for the most needy students.
3. The non-tuition fee will be at an amount of **N\$ 17 000.00** (Seventeen Thousand Namibia Dollar) per annum.

### MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Only students enrolled at institutions that meet the **Minimum Standards for Higher Education Institutions**, the **National Policy on Qualification Standards** and the **Regulations for Registration of Vocational Education and Training Providers, 2012, Government Notice 300 of 2012** are eligible for funding under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model. This pertains to registration fees, tuition fees and non-tuition fees.

The **Minimum Standards for Higher Education Institutions** were approved by Cabinet in 2025 [26th/21.10.25/006]. The Standards set baseline requirements for all types of higher education providers in the system, hence promoting inclusion and enhancing equal access to quality education, while at the same time, ensuring integrity and trust in the Namibian higher education system nationally, regionally, and globally. These standards aim to establish a minimum uniform baseline for institutional quality and programme delivery, enhance public confidence, and promote regional and international recognition of Namibian qualifications.

In addition, the **National Policy on Qualifications Standards** was approved by Cabinet in 2025 [30th/25.11.25/002]. The Policy seeks to harmonise qualifications development and



establish a Minimum Body of Knowledge and Skills sets for each qualification area to ensure consistency, quality, and relevance in qualification standards across the country.

**Finally, the Regulations for Registration of Vocational Education and Training Providers, 2012, Government Notice 300 of 2012** establishes a framework for the registration and regulation of vocational education and training providers in Namibia. The purpose is to ensure that these providers meet specific standards and deliver quality education and training. The Regulations apply to all vocational education and training providers, and such providers will need to strictly comply with these regulations.

*Notwithstanding the above measures, other already existing mechanisms that ensure that quality of education is delivered will be strictly enforced.*

**Institutions are requested to contact the relevant authorities and to ensure prompt compliance with standards and regulatory requirements.**

### **CAPACITIES AT TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

All public and private tertiary education institutions must ensure that student intake is within their **current carrying capacities**. Any increase in enrolment beyond capacity must be avoided and discouraged, whilst institutions ensure reasonable human and infrastructure capacity developments without compromising the provision of quality education and training.

### **ADMISSION CRITERIA AT TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

The admission criteria at tertiary education institutions will continue to apply in terms of admission rules of the institutions and respective programme admission criteria, provided that such admissions **are in compliance with** the minimum standards and the NQF levels for the respective qualifications. Therefore, institutions are required to ensure **admission criteria** are aligned to national quality education standards and relevant other legislative and policy frameworks.

### **REGISTRATION AND TUITION FEES AT TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

During the 2026 Academic Year, tuition and registration fees for students enrolled at private institutions will be administered according to the current NSFAP Funding Policy. The tuition rates shall be based on a **pre-determined rate**. Tuition and registration fees for students at public institutions will not be charged to eligible students.

To ensure uniformity, a **standardised funding structure** will be applied across all eligible private institutions, based on the approved tuition benchmark rates and guided by the existing NSFAP Funding Policy.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL LIST OF PRIORITY FIELDS OF STUDY**

NSFAP has been identified as the lead institution, in collaboration with the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), to develop a National List of Priority Fields of Study that are eligible for funding at national and international levels at **accredited** institutions of tertiary education.

Categories eligible for funding as part of the phased-in approach under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model that depends on the availability of the National List of Priority Fields of Study will only be considered for funding, **from the year 2029**. These categories include the Mature Age / Recognition of Prior Learning (students not older than 50 years of age).

## **IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES**

### **1. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION, YOUTH, SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE (MEIYSAC)**

The Ministry has the following key responsibilities and will ensure to:

- 1.1 Provide strategic oversight and coordination into implementation;
- 1.2 Monitor and brief Cabinet on the implementation of Subsidized Tertiary Education;
- 1.3 Coordinate the review of the current Student Financial Assistance and Debt Recovery Policy and accompanying Procedures to include the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model;
- 1.4 Disburse funds for non-tuition loans; and
- 1.5 Disburse funds to institutions for students eligible under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model.

### **2. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (NCHE):**

The NCHE has the following key responsibilities:

- 2.1 In 2026, the NCHE is tasked with the finalisation of the **National Human Resource Development Strategy** [Cabinet No. 22<sup>nd</sup>/12.12.24.003]. The Strategy aims to provide the framework for ensuring a better alignment between the demand and supply of human resources.

2.2 The NCHE shall ensure implementation of the **Minimum Standards for Higher Education Institutions** by:

- Providing an updated Register of higher education institutions;
- Validating and enforcing compliance with the Minimum Standards by Higher Education Institutions; and
- Disseminating information on the Minimum Standards for Higher Education Institutions to all stakeholders.

2.3 In the year 2026, NCHE is tasked with the development of a costing mechanism for programmes or qualifications and the setting of nationally accepted fee structures. The estimated costs would be used for funding students at both public and private higher education institutions.

2.4 NCHE and NQA to ensure joint institutional accreditation of higher education institutions in full compliance with legislative frameworks.

### **3. NAMIBIA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (NQA):**

The NQA oversees the development and administration of national qualifications and standards in Namibia.

The NQA, which serves as a juristic body responsible for overseeing the qualifications framework of the nation, aims to set and administer national occupational and curriculum standards, promote academic performance benchmarks, review qualifications, and advise stakeholders on qualification-related matters.

The NQA will ensure that the **National Policy on Qualifications Standards** is implemented and enforced and that tertiary education institutions align to these standards.

### **4. NAMIBIA STUDENTS' FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FUND (NSFAF):**

NSFAF exists to expand access to higher education by providing financial assistance through loans, grants, and scholarships to Namibian students.

The Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund will be responsible for **implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model.

The Fund therefore has the following key responsibilities:

- 4.1 Ensuring compliance with eligibility criteria of the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model;
- 4.2 Awarding non-tuition loans through means-testing;
- 4.3 Recovery of any student loans due to the Fund until further notice;

4.4 Lead the process of developing the National List of Priority Fields of Studies with relevant stakeholders; and

4.5 Maintain records of students supported under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model.

## **5. NAMIBIA TRAINING AUTHORITY (NTA):**

The NTA is entrusted with the effective regulation and funding of the provision of Vocational Education and Training. It ensures strengthening a sustainable skills system aligned with labour market priorities, equipping Namibians with competencies that accelerate inclusive economic growth.

The NTA has the following key responsibilities and will ensure to:

5.1 Continue to oversee the effective regulation, **accreditation** and funding of the provision of Vocational Education and Training;

5.2 Strengthen the existing models for regulation and accreditation; and

5.3 Continue to implement the vocational education and training levy imposed under Section 35 of the Vocational Education and Training Act, 2008 (Act No. 1 of 2008) in line with established standards.

## **EXISTING CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS**

Students who owe tertiary education institutions are responsible for making necessary arrangements **to settle their debts** as the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model will not cover existing or future related debts.

### **NSFAF Continuing students**

Continuing students being supported by NSFAF and who are eligible under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model will be supported under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model from 2026 onwards. Those who are not eligible under the Subsidized Tertiary Education Funding Model will be supported under the current agreements with NSFAF.

***Any NSFAF student debt owed by the student will still be repayable in line with the existing signed agreements.***

## EXTERNAL PARTNERS AND THEIR EXISTING FUNDING MECHANISMS

The private sector is called upon in continuing with the provision of scholarships and education funding to support the Government's initiative to fund tertiary education as has been the practice over the years.

### CONTACTS

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Sanet L. Steenkamp, **MINISTER** 08. 12. 2025.  
