

# Government refuses to reveal how it will pay for free higher education

By [Sipho Mabena](#)

5 Jan 2018

The government has refused point-blank to reveal how much the free higher education announced by President Jacob Zuma is likely to cost, and where the money will come from, only that it will be within the approved national budget.



Image source: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

The president announced in December that students from poor and working-class families with a combined annual income of up to R350,000 will be fully subsidised for their Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET) or university fees.

Briefing the media in Pretoria ahead of the release of matric results on Thursday, 4 January, Higher Education Minister Hlengiwe Mkhize said that Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba was very much part of the process and had made a plea for the government not to delve into the funding details of the new higher education funding policy.

Pressed for answers, Mkhize said: "I may not be able to give you an exact amount... I do not want to be in conflict with the finance minister. He made a plea to [Zuma] not to delve into that space.

"He made a plea to all of us, the [inter-ministerial] committee, to communicate, address issues [but to] leave the nitty-gritty

to him, but the technical team assured us this is not going to affect the limits. That means this will not go beyond the approved budget voted for in Parliament."

She said there had been a due process, with Gigaba and his team at the centre, and there had been back-to-back meetings held on weekends and after hours. After all the work was done, Gigaba was the one who helped the committee make a breakthrough on the financing of free higher education for students from poor and working-class families.

She said the budgeting process started with the Fees Must Fall campaign and there were already funds identified and pumped into the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

NSFAS has already received more than 300,000 applications for first year students for the 2018 academic year at universities and TVETs.

All applicants in possession of a firm offer from a higher learning institution will be assessed for funding using the revised criteria, Mkhize said; those in possession of a firm offer from a tertiary institution but who did not apply for funding will be assisted; students who may not have applied at an institution or NSFAS and are looking for space in the post-school system will be assisted through the central applications clearing house.

Said Mkhize: "We believe this will go a long way in the fight against the perennial challenge of the skills deficit that has bedeviled the country since the dawn of our democracy.

"The investment in our youth will result in the production of a youthful workforce, armed with relevant skills critical for our endeavour as a country to create inclusive economic growth."

*Source: BDpro*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>