



**MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION
UPDATE STATEMENT FOLLOWING PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA
ADDRESSING THE NATION ON THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
COVID 19**

28 March 2020

Fellow Ministers

Director Generals present

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Afternoon

My report today will reflect on our reporting on measures taken by the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Science and Innovation in response to COVID 19.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reunification of South Africans from Wuhan City

The 14-day quarantine period for the 114 South African citizens repatriated from Wuhan City in China ended on Friday, 27 March 2020. The Department of Health is working on the modalities for their release home.

The Department is responsible for transporting the students to their respective provinces and to ensure that they are reunited with their families. Buses and mini vans have been secured to transport the citizens from the Ranch in Limpopo to the rest of the country. Transportation of the citizens will commence on Monday, 30 March 2020.

Work Placement Students from China

As reported previously on Friday, 20 March 2020, 76 TVET college students returned from China after having being in work placement at Chinese companies arranged through various Sector Education and Training Authorities.

On arrival, the students were placed in quarantine at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre in Kempton Park, for 14 days. Three DHET officials have been deployed to oversee the students over this period. In addition, a circular has been sent to all colleges on the requirement for all students to be placed in a quarantine facility following their return from placements abroad.

<p>On 23 March 2020, a further four students arrived from China and were placed in quarantine at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre. Two of these students tested positive for Tuberculosis before landing in South Africa, and were discharged from observation back into the quarantine facility at Birchwood on 26 March 2020. Both tested negative for COVID-19.</p>

<p>The students at Birchwood will be transported back to their homes once their quarantine period is over. Clearance letters have been prepared for transportation arrangements to be facilitated. The Gauteng/Free State Regional Manager is assisting in this regard.</p>

<p>Online Learning</p>

<p>We are engaging with colleges on pursuing online learning modalities where possible, whilst also looking at the possibility of using readily available study guides for the trimester and semester programmes. Am in discussions with Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Stella Ndabeni Abrahams, on how to deal with access to data for expansion of online learning.</p>

<p>On 26 March 2020, we have made available e-Learning Guides to all our TVET Colleges throughout the country. These guides can be downloaded on smartphones, tablets and laptops.</p>

We will further develop a structured catch-up programme for the annual National Curriculum (Vocational) programmes will be developed once colleges reopen.

A process is underway to upload previous examination papers for students to work through in preparation for examinations. Colleges will be informed in the coming week on how students can access these examination question papers.
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As previously reported, the Department has requested all universities to complete an updated survey on their IT capability for offering online learning. As a Department, together with the Tertiary Education and Research Network of South Africa (TENET), we now have started to analyse the survey results to identify any institutions that require immediate assistance to enhance their capability.
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STUDENTS REMAINING ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

As we implementing measure to ensure our institution are not adversely affected by the virus, we are also putting measures to ensure that students who remains on our residences comply to the regulations.

As previously reported, I indicated that all students who could not return home were being accommodated in residences. This also includes instances where some universities were allowing students with exceptional circumstances to stay on campus together with international students who could not vacate. Institutions note mentioned below, are those whose

students have completely vacated the residences.

We have the following students remaining on our residences:

University of Fort Hare – 30 students

University of Johannesburg – 940 students

University of the Western Cape - 370 students

North West University – 64 students

Central University of Technology – 27 students

University of Pretoria – 236 students

Sol Plaatje University - 0

Vaal University of Technology – 18 students

Mangosuthu University of Technology – 6 students

Rhodes University – 36 students

Walter Sisulu University – 23 students

Stellenbosch University – 971

Cape Peninsula University - 1853 students

Wits University - approximately 100 students

Sefako Makgatho University – approximately 20 students

University of Limpopo – 50 students

University of Venda – 14 students

University of the Free State – 105 students

University of Cape Town – under 100 students

Nelson Mandela University - 382 students

University of KwaZulu-Natal – 11 students

University of Zululand - 26 students

Tshwane University of Technology to submit

Durban University of Technology to submit

University of Mpumalanga - 0

My department working together through our COVID 19 Task team, led by the Deputy Minister Bhuti Manamela, comprising of Universities South Africa (USAF), South African College Principals Organisation (SACPO), the South African Union of Students (SAUS), Labour Unions, Higher Health and the Department of Health have a well-coordinated response as a PSET sector to the virus.

NSFAS COVID-19 CONTIGENCY PLAN AND DISBURSEMENTS

All NSFAS funded and registered students will receive their allowances during the recess.

According to the report I received from the NSFAS Administrator, Dr Randall Carolissen, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, has processed almost all the applications received to date including the TVETs and University walk-ins received during the first quarter of 2020.

NSFAS made provisional funding available to four-hundred and forty-eight

thousand and thirty-eight (**448 038**) university students for the academic year 2020, of which three hundred and fifty thousand and two hundred and eighty-nine (**350 289**) registration records from institutions have been received.

Total upfront payments made to institutions to date is an amount of **R4,2 billion**. This amount includes the 2nd upfront payment of **R677 million** which was paid to assist with transport and accommodation during the registration period.

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

As reported in my previous statement, through the Department of Science and Innovation through the CSIR we have successfully commissioned and finalized the physical set-up of a core situational awareness platform.

Currently, the core of the platform is health data but over time, we intend to integrated the system with other types of data to provide a more robust platform that can provide holistic decision support to the National Command Centre.

A joint CSIR and Department of Health team are hard at work in creating a range of data warehouses including the current geographic spread of the disease, current cases, health vulnerabilities, and location of health and

other facilities, amongst others.

Initial visualisations have been completed and these will be continuously enhanced and improved. We thank the team which worked on this system for the efforts and commitments.

Protocols and arrangements are also being facilitated by the DSI to enable the situational awareness platform to draw in information from other sources. This includes the results of the modelling efforts of various modelling teams on a regular basis,

Initial work, led by a team at the University of Pretoria, have also started mobilizing continent-wide networks to build databases on covid-19 cases. Of particular strategic importance for the South African response effort is the situation in our neighbouring countries.

Over the next few days, protocols and improved management arrangements for the facility will be finalized to protect the health and wellness of the core team.

The team has also identified opportunities for accessing key data sets held by the private sector for the explicit purpose of strengthening our situational capacity capabilities. We count on the support of our private sector partners in this regard.

The situational awareness platform is flexible and dynamic and will be improved and customized based on the prevailing decision support requirements of the National Command Centre

Building an evidence base on behavior and perceptions

Thought the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) w are currently conducting an online survey to better understand current behaviours and patterns.

As at 27 March, about 2,400 people have responded to the survey. The sample size has increased but a statistician has been commissioned to assess the quality of the responses and data after which analysis can be done. This will happen over the next 2 days.

well keep the public informed on the outcome of the results of this survey.

The HSRC is also currently pulling together a range of efforts in this space including work specifically focus on rural communities (SAPRIN), social media sentiment analysis using natural language processing techniques.

A number of researchers as well as private sector players have expressed a willingness to assist. Follow-ups are being made on how best they can support a national effort.

We therefore are making a call to survey companies in the private sector to join hands with government to better understand the behaviours and perceptions of our people.

Through the HSRC we will also introduce a system of dynamic updates on behavior and perception issues as these will change on an almost daily basis.

In this regard, we will continue to update the public on our measures that we will continue to introduce working together with other government departments and our social partners.

I THANK YOU