

## HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITMENT TO FACILITATE INCREASED ACCESS TO AND AFFORDABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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The 23 universities in the public South African higher education system have committed themselves to facilitating increased access to higher education and to ensure that it remains affordable for most individuals and families. This commitment was shared with the Ministry of Higher Education and Training at a meeting on 7 January 2010.

Tuition fee increases across the sector for 2010 as a percentage of those in 2009 have been kept in the range 9-15% in line with inflationary pressures, as well as agreements and commitments within individual institutions as a result of internal consultation processes.

HESA is in the process of finalising guidelines aimed at assisting institution to arrive at affordable tuition fees whilst ensuring the maintenance of the quality of teaching and learning; research facilities; student support and other services; and the financial sustainability of our institutions.

We recognise the positive gesture from some of our institutions which have put in place a process to make provisions for financial assistance to academically deserving but needy students from their own operational budgets.

The sector has specifically committed to the following:

- Making available appropriate financial support to students who meet the relevant institutional criteria, in order to ensure that no deserving student is denied an educational opportunity on financial grounds;
- Expediting the processing of upfront payments in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) so that NSFAS supported students are in a position to pay first instalments of fees;
- Strengthening institutional systems for detecting early warning signals on student performance as well as mechanisms for re-directing underperforming students to other areas of study;
- Ensuring that the goal of being responsive in terms of facilitating is not by institutional inability to ensure effective collection of debt. The current student debt within the sector is in the region of R2.8 billion.
- Giving special attention to **broadening access for students from Quintile 1 Schools** which are located in poor communities in extremely disadvantaged rural areas of the country. Students from these schools are to get special support to enter into higher education as well as support to enhance their chances of success.

*Issued by  
Higher Education South Africa  
Date: 28 January 2010*

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