



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Budget Vote 17: Higher Education – Speech by the
Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training,
Dr Mimmy Gondwe to the National Assembly**

3 July 2025 | 14h00

Chairperson, this Budget Vote is being considered in the wake of Youth Month, a poignant moment in our national calendar that does more than just commemorate the courage of past generations of young people. It also reminds us of our present and pressing obligation to ensure that the young people of this generation are given every available opportunity to thrive and prosper.

At the very core of this vision, is a post-school education and training system, that must not only educate but also empower.

Chairperson, more than 30 years into our constitutional democracy, poverty and unemployment remain persistent intergenerational realities. It is these very cycles of poverty and unemployment that we are determined to break as a sector.

The socio-economic challenges beleaguering our country, more especially the burden of youth unemployment, underpin the three priorities of the GNU which are: to drive inclusive growth and job creation; to reduce poverty and the high cost of living; and to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Since assuming office in July 2024, we have ensured that the work that we do and our interventions respond directly to these three priorities of the GNU.

Chairperson, we inherited a sector seriously marred by dysfunction from a failing NSFAS to SETAs embroiled in allegations of corruption and waste.

At the start of this academic year, we witnessed the manifestation of these systemic failures when students were left without funding, without accommodation, and without answers.

But we have not responded from behind a desk Chairperson. Over the past year, I have conducted executive oversight visits across all nine provinces, with a particular focus on TVET and CET Colleges.

These visits were not ceremonial in nature. They were opportunities to listen, to observe, and to act. The voices and challenges of students, lecturers, and institutional leaders have directly shaped the work and interventions I discuss here today.

In a time of constrained budgets and limited resources, we have turned to the private sector for strategic partnerships.

In the past year, we partnered with Old Mutual to expand industry and career exposure for students in rural institutions.

We are, presently, at the tail end of agreements with Shoprite, Microsoft, and Takealot designed to bridge the gap between the world of work and higher education.

During this time, I also engaged both the FP&M SETA and the Energy and Water SETA in an effort to ensure that their service level agreements with employers guarantee that students trained through learnerships are permanently placed and absorbed into the economy.

On the topic of infrastructure, Chairperson, we welcome Cabinet's allocation of over R1.2 billion over the next two years to expand student accommodation.

But beyond budgets Chairperson – we need innovation and “thinking that is outside of the box”. We are, therefore, grateful to the KZN Department of Public Works for its commitment to handover unused state buildings for student accommodation. We are also grateful to Harmony Gold, in the Free State, for making buildings available for student accommodation.

Chairperson, institutions like NSFAS must perform and function and this is a “non-negotiable”. As such, the new board of NSFAS must prioritise efficiency and accountability.

To support students in the sector, we proudly launched a Helpdesk in August 2024. Since its establishment the Helpdesk has processed approximately 25,000 queries, the majority of which are related to NSFAS. The Helpdesk has further maintained an impressive 89% resolution rate. This is not just a statistic Chairperson; it reflects our commitment to responsive, student-centred service delivery.

Gender-based violence remains a national crisis and last year’s CGE reports on sexual harassment and GBV in our higher education institutions were a stark reminder of this fact.

In response, we launched the “Safer Campuses, Safer Spaces” outreach and awareness campaign in collaboration with the CGE, Higher Health, NPA, SAPS, DSD, and NSFAS

to promote and create safer learning environments for all our students, particularly our female students.

We are also cracking down on bogus or illegal colleges Chairperson. Through partnerships with SAPS, Labour, Home Affairs, and municipalities such as Johannesburg, eThekweni, and soon Buffalo City, we are running awareness campaigns to ensure that students enrol in registered and accredited private institutions of higher education.

Chairperson, allow me to close with the story of two young women Matlhogonolo and Zinhle whom I met during oversight visits to Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Both young women became pregnant while at school and subsequently had to drop out of school.

Later, they both enrolled at a Community College in the hopes of completing their basic education and ultimately pursuing their dreams.

To the many Matlhogonolos and Zinhles across our country: you are not invisible. I see you and I will continue working for you.

In closing Chairperson, this budget must reflect more than numbers and expenditure – it must also reflect our resolve and undeterred determination to build an ethical, inclusive, and responsive post-school education and training system.

I thank you. Ke a leboga.