

NSFAS board chair Ernest Khosa takes leave of absence

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) announced on Wednesday that its board chairperson, Ernest Khosa, has voluntarily tabled a notice of 30 days leave of absence.



This is after the NSFAS board held a special meeting to discuss the financial aid scheme's state of readiness for the beginning of the 2024 academic year.

The leave of absence, according to the NSFAS, will enable the board to deal with all the allegations against him as contained in the recordings distributed by the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA).

The OUTA is accusing both Khoza and Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Professor Blade Nzimande, of defrauding NSFAS through kickbacks from service providers.

“The Chairperson reiterated to the board that he had never received any financial gratification for his personal use or facilitated any for the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation or the South African Communist Party (SACP).

“The Board Chairperson also raised concerns about threats that have been made against his life and that of his family.”

According to the statement, the board has since informed the Minister of the leave of notice tabled by the board chairperson.

In terms of the NSFAS Act, the Minister has the fiduciary responsibility to appoint the acting board chairperson in the absence of the chairperson.

“The board takes this opportunity to thank Mr Khosa for his honourable, brave and responsible decision to voluntarily take leave of absence and hails his decision as a responsible and conscious step to advance good corporate governance, transparency and accountability.

“The board would like to emphasise that this decision should not be interpreted as an admission of guilt on the part of the chairperson.”

Meanwhile, the board resolved to appoint an independent legal firm to look into the veracity of the allegations against the board chairperson.



Higher education minister Blade Nzimande denies allegations of kickbacks

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The legal firm, which is yet to be announced, will be expected to submit its findings within 30 days of their appointment.

“The board would also like to assure all South Africans that this process will be handled with due diligence and integrity.”

NSFAS has since assured all South Africans that it will continue to work with all stakeholders within the post-school education and training sector to ensure that there is a seamless and successful beginning of the 2024 academic year.

Meanwhile, part of the board’s pre-occupation will be the appointment of a new chief executive officer.

“The board would also like to report to the public that the 2024 application process is proceeding extremely well, with applications having reached the 900 000 mark.”

The board is encouraging all prospective students to apply for the bursary while they are awaiting their final matriculation results.

Applications for financial aid for all learners who wish to enter the post-school system and students who do not have financial assistance to continue their studies in the 2024 academic year officially opened on 21 November 2023.

In a statement issued by NSFAS in November, NSFAS said applications for 2024 funding will close on 31 January 2024.

“Furthermore, the board extends its gratitude to Mr Khosa’s family for having supported him throughout this difficult period.”

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