

Universities must stick to their enrolment plans as free education is rolled out

By [Tamar Kahn](#)

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It is vital that universities and technical and vocational education training (TVET) colleges stick to their enrolment plans as the government phases in free higher education, a senior higher education department official told Parliament on Wednesday, 28 February 2018.

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Last week former finance minister Malusi Gigaba announced that an additional R57bn had been allocated over the medium-term expenditure framework to realise former president Jacob Zuma's promise of free higher education for students from poor and working class families.

This followed Zuma's announcement on 16 December 2017, which also prompted political parties such as the EFF to call on aspirant students to descend on campuses and demand to be accommodated. But both higher education institutions and the government have been at pains to stress that they have a fixed number of places.



Zuma blindsided Treasury when he announced fee-free education, says Gigaba

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"This funding is based on agreed-upon enrolment plans. Tight management of these plans is essential," the Higher Education Department's deputy director-general for university education, Diane Parker, told MPs.

The lion's share of the R57bn allocation has been set aside for increasing bursaries for first time entrants to the university system. A total of R33bn is earmarked for this purpose over the next three years.



R57bn for free tertiary education

Thabo Mokone 21 Feb 2018



Parker emphasised that prospective students needed to first secure a place at a university or TVET college and then apply for financial assistance.

If they qualified for a bursary, they would be expected to sign a contract in which they committed to maintaining academic standards, performing 80 hours of community service, and remaining in SA after they graduated for a period matching the duration of their financial support.

"That will require an agreement with Home Affairs to make sure we can track people," said Parker.

Source: *BDpro*

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