

## POLICY ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS

### 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 The University of South Africa (UNISA) intends to provide financial assistance to students on the basis of academic merit, financial need and any other requirements as set by individual donors.
- 1.2 Through this policy, UNISA undertakes to endeavour that no academically deserving and financial needy South African student is prohibited from studying with the university as a result of financial difficulties, as far as it is financially possible and meeting the donor criteria.
- 1.3 The provision of financial assistance is intended to contribute towards access to education and academic success for students enrolled for diplomas and degrees as included in the PQM. The approval and awarding of grants are subject to the availability of funds and donor criteria.
- 1.4 As prescribed in the donor agreement financial assistance in this regard will include, but is not limited to the payment of tuition fees, purchase of prescribed books, compulsory academic essentials as well as assistive devices for students with disabilities, practicals and research expenses which are an integral part of the approved programme of study.

### 2. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATION

Bursary	refers to that portion of the award that does not need to be repaid to the University or donor;
DHET	means the Department of Higher Education and Training;
Disadvantaged students	refer to students whose annual personal or household income falls within the annual means test;
Financial assistance	refers to funds awarded to students to assist them in cover all or part of their academic financial costs;
Means test	is a NSFAS tool used to determine the eligibility to qualify for financial assistance based on financial circumstances or affordability;
Merit award	is an award given to a student based on his/her academic achievement;
Previously disadvantaged student	refers to a student who matriculated from a Quantile 1 – 3 school as defined by DHET;
Study loan	refers to the money that the student borrows from institutions such as NSFAS and/or Eduloan to cover tuition and other specified

additional costs, and is required to be repaid by a student or parent.

### 3. TYPES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The following types of financial assistance are available to students and are managed and administered by the Division: Student Funding in the Finance Department.

#### 3.1 Donor bursaries

Funds received through the Division: Development and Special Projects of the Directorate: Institutional Advancement, and from other sponsors, companies and organisations for purposes of assisting students with tuition and other related learning needs:

3.1.1 subject to specific requirements set by the donor, or

3.1.2 without any specific requirements.

#### 3.2 Merit awards

Financial assistance which is awarded on the basis of excellent academic achievement. Merit awards will cover tuition and other learning essentials in part or in full, depending on the availability of funds.

#### 3.3 National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

3.3.1 Students apply directly to NSFAS for financial assistance.

3.3.2 NSFAS selects successful applicants based on their criteria and supply UNISA with the list of provisionally selected students.

3.3.3 UNISA allocates awards and confirms registration to NSFAS.

#### 3.4 UNISA bursary

These bursaries are awarded from UNISA funds to students who applied and who meet the criteria as set by each of the selection committees of the individual bursaries.

#### 3.5 External donors

3.5.1 External donors are private companies and/or National and Provincial Government Departments that donate funds to UNISA to be utilised for student bursaries based on criteria that meet their requirements.

3.5.2 Dependent on the agreement entered into with the donor, students are required to either apply directly to the donor or apply to UNISA.

a) When students apply directly to the donor, the donor sends the list of selected students to UNISA for processing.

b) When students apply directly to UNISA, a selection committee is established and selects students who best meet the criteria set by the donor.

## 4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the administration of financial assistance, the following principles are applied:

### 4.1 Equity

Consistent and fair application of the criteria set by donors.

### 4.2 Support for disadvantaged students

Financial assistance must be undertaken with an express view to help disadvantaged as well as previously disadvantaged students.

### 4.3 Donor agreed expectations and criteria

4.3.1 Available financial assistance must be used effectively and efficiently in line with the donor criteria.

4.3.2 Where no such criteria exist, the general criteria based on academic merit and financial need will be applied.

### 4.4 Access to financial assistance

Financial assistance should be made accessible to all eligible, deserving and academically successful students, subject to availability of funds.

### 4.5 Sustainability

Funding will be awarded responsibly to avoid wastage. A collegial relationship will be maintained with donors to facilitate continued funding.

### 4.6 Availability of funds

Approval and award of grants are subject to the availability of funds. Unless otherwise decided by Management Committee of UNISA, the Student Funding Committee, which is composed of institution-wide and relevant stakeholders and role players decides on or confirms the forms of allocation of available funds.

### 4.7 Application of means test

Where applicable, financial assistance will be granted after the application of a means test.

### 4.8 Reporting

Reports on fund utilisation will be provided to the donors as agreed within individual donor agreements.

## 5. ELIGIBILITY

Students' eligibility for funding is determined by the agreed criteria as set by individual donors.

## 6. APPLICATIONS

6.1 Where applicable (par 3.5.2) only completed applications submitted by the deadline will be considered for selection.

- 6.2 The applications received will be considered within reasonable time after the closing date for applications.
- 6.3 Information will be provided to students on how and where to apply for funding.
- 6.4 Funding will only be processed for students who have:
  - a) successfully applied
  - b) signed an agreement accepting the funding from either the donor or UNISA.

## 7. STRUCTURES

Where applicable, funding activities will be monitored by the relevant selection committee.

## 8. APPEALS

- 8.1 Where applicable, as per the agreement between UNISA and the donor, students who have applied for financial assistance and who are dissatisfied with the outcome will be provided with an avenue to appeal the decision.
- 8.2 Appeals will be dealt with in line with the fund structure and conditions and is dependent on the availability of funds.

## 9. AUDITING

The allocation of financial assistance shall be subject to an annual internal and/or external audit as part of the mandatory requirements.

## 10. POLICY REVIEW

This policy replaces the previously approved policy on financial assistance to students after approval by Council and its impact will be assessed on annual basis with a view to effect necessary amendments.

