



ISFAP

Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme

The 'missing middle' invited to apply for unique tertiary funding pilot

Dear Students,

Furthering one's studies and ultimately qualifying as a professional is a dream for many young South Africans. However, for most of the students deemed too affluent to qualify for government support, but too poor to afford tuition fees, further study at a higher education institution has remained just that – a dream.

Despite the great strides government has taken to increase in the number of students who have access to higher education in line with Chapter 2 Sub-section 29 (1) (b) of the Constitution, over the past ten years universities have become less affordable for students coming from poor and middle income families.

To rectify this situation, The Department of Higher Education and Training set up a Ministerial Task team to develop an efficient and robust model to help students from poor and middle income families – the so-called 'missing middle' – gain access to higher education institutions and to improve the success and graduation rates for all supported students ('missing middle' defined as those where the household income is greater the R122 000 and less than R600 000 per annum). This is while also addressing the lack of skills in occupations in high demand (OHD) as defined by the National Development Plan.

The Department of Higher Educations efforts have resulted in the formation of the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) – a programme that will be launching a pilot programme in 2017 to fund approximately 1 000 'missing middle' students for the duration of their studies..

What is ISFAP?

ISFAP was created to develop a model to fund the higher education costs of South Africa's poor and 'missing middle' students.

The programme aims to fast track South Africa's skills production for the 21st century by funding the higher education costs of more students studying towards a career in one of OHDs that have been identified as critical to South Africa's economic development by the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC). These include actuaries, accountants, artisans, engineers, medical doctors, pharmacists and prosthetists. This is in addition to supporting students pursuing humanities certificates, diplomas and degrees who will continue to be funded by NSFAS or under the new model with effect from 2018 if it is approved by government.

Since growing South Africa's skills base and supporting students from poor and middle income families is critical to the growth and development of South Africa's economy, both government and the private sector have come together to fund students as well as address issues of sustainable employment and decent work in the country post-qualification. So other than its aim to promote higher education, ISFAP also represents yet another public-private partnership aimed at driving national development.



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So what makes ISFAP different?

ISFAP, once approved by government and fully implemented, is a hybrid funding model structured in the form of grant/loan/family contribution. Means tested students who come from very poor backgrounds and who are supported by the programme will receive fully subsidised funding.

But ISFAP provides more than just funding to ensure a student's success.

Using a unique wrap-around support model, developed and successfully implemented by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants' (SAICA's) Thuthuka Bursary Fund, ISFAP provides funding for accommodation, meals, books, equipment and a stipend. The programme also offers additional academic, social and psychological support (such as mentoring and life skills training) to give students support in every area in order to ensure their success. This wrap-around support model is used due to the understanding that it takes more than the provision of financial support to make financially disadvantaged students successful in their studies. There is a need to provide individual and family security as well as both professional and social skills if students are to truly thrive. ISFAP, as with the Thuthuka Bursary Fund on which it is modelled, will provide all this, meaning that the only thing ISFAP funded students need to concentrate on is their studies.

The importance of this all-encompassing support is highlighted by task team member and SAICA Executive Director, Ms Chantyl Mulder, when she states that with the ISFAP model, "you are not just investing in students, you are investing in their success."

How can students apply to be part of the ISFAP pilot?

While the ISFAP model is due to formally roll out in full in 2019, the programme is looking for 20 students to take part in its 2017 pilot project. In order to qualify, students need to:

- Be entering their first year of study towards one of the following professions*:
 - Professional Artisan Studies:
 - Boiler Makers
 - Electricians
 - Be accepted to study these courses at:
 - ORBIT TVET College
 - Professional TVET College studies
- * Note that these specific courses and college have been chosen for the pilot only.
- Submit the ISFAP application form containing their parent(s)/guardian(s) signed consent as well a certified copy of their parent(s)/guardian(s) ID (the certified copy must contain the original stamp), which ISFAP will use to confirm financial needs according to its means test.
 - Be willing to put their studies first as they will be part of a pilot programme that, if successful, has the potential to change the lives of thousands of students in South Africa.



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- Remember that their full cost of funding will be made up of a grant.

Please kindly note that ISFAP aims to become a sustained funding programme. For this reason, eligible students who are not successful in their application for the 2017 pilot can reapply from 2018 onwards.

Applications are available at ORBIT College for you to complete and submit. Your completed application forms will be assessed and you will be informed whether you qualify to be one of the 20 students in the 2017 ISFAP pilot project.

Kind regards,

Chantyl Mulder

Executive Director: Nation Building