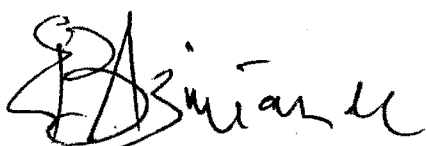

GENERAL NOTICE

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MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

REPORT ON THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF STUDENT HOUSING AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande MP, Minister of Higher Education and Training, hereby publish an extract from the report on the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities, September 2011. The full report is available on the website of the Department of Higher Education and Training, www.dhet.gov.za.



Dr BE Nzimande MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training

Date: 23/05/12

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Acronyms

ACUHO-I(SAC)	Association of College & University Housing Officers International (SA Chapter)
ASAG	African Student Accommodation Group
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CNOUS	Centre National des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CUT	Central University of Technology
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DUT	Durban University of Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
REAP	Rural Education Access Programme
RU	Rhodes University
SRC	Student Representative Council
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UFS	University of the Free State
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UL	University of Limpopo
UNISA	University of South Africa
NWU or UNW	North West University
UP	University of Pretoria
USB	Stellenbosch University
UV	University of Venda
UWC	University of the Western Cape
UZ	University of Zululand
VUT	Vaal University of Technology
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

The provision of accessible, decent, safe and academically conducive student accommodation in South African Universities is of great importance to the quality of the higher education system and the success of our students, especially those from a rural and poor background. Many of our students, particularly those studying in our historically black institutions, have been living in very poor conditions and this has often hampered their ability to succeed. We have also in the past witnessed boycotts and protests over the conditions in student residences. On taking office and visiting some of the institutions, it was glaringly apparent to me that student housing was a major problem in our public university system and that something needed to be done.

I therefore appointed a Ministerial Committee in August 2010 to review the provision of student accommodation at our universities and to benchmark South African universities against each other as well as against international institutions operating in similar environments. I requested the Committee to undertake research to determine the real need for student accommodation across all our public universities, to assess the various models of provision already in the system and to make recommendations on how to improve the situation.

The work of the Committee included an assessment of the various types of housing currently provided for university students, possibilities for the future, as well as potential funding models which could assist in alleviating the problem while simultaneously ensuring that the provision is affordable and does not detrimentally affect the operating budgets of our universities in the future. In undertaking these important tasks, the Committee engaged and consulted universities, student organisations, financial services organisations, Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and other key stakeholders.

The report does indeed confirm that there are major backlogs in the provision of student accommodation, and that in some instances students are living in appalling conditions. Many of our institutions have not been able to make sufficient investments in maintaining their infrastructure, and far too few students are accommodated. It is clear that massive investments are required to address the backlog that currently exists. This is primarily the responsibility of the state and, where feasible the universities themselves.

Private providers could play an important role in filling the gap that exists in the provision of affordable student accommodation. However, the report indicates that the provision of private student accommodation is unregulated, allowing widespread exploitation of students and exposure of students to various types and levels of risks. The private sector involvement must be seen as a response to the social need that exists. Private involvement in student housing projects can make a useful contribution but only if it is regulated to ensure sure that students are provided with quality accommodation which is affordable, academically conducive and sustainable into the future.

Research evidence suggests that being housed in a safe, well-managed residence is both socially and academically beneficial for students, particularly those from poorer backgrounds. It means that they do not have to spend hours commuting to and from the

university and that they live in conditions that are conducive to academic study. This is particularly important for first year students who are the most vulnerable group and need the most assistance to succeed academically. Decent and affordable student accommodation thus allows students to focus their energies on their academic endeavours, thereby improving the chances of success.

The importance of well managed and administered student accommodation cannot be over-emphasised as data provides conclusive proof that the throughput of students in residences is far better than those that reside off-campus and commute to universities. Furthermore, support in student residences plays an important role as it is far easier to access these students and provide support necessary for academic success. Closely linked to affordable student accommodation is the need to ensure that all students are provided with balanced meals of good nutritional value. There is evidence of hunger among students, something which we should never allow for both moral and academic reasons. The report makes recommendations in this regard as well.

The report makes far reaching and comprehensive recommendations which include, amongst others, the setting of minimum standards for student housing and accommodation, professionalisation of housing staff, and the setting of comprehensive residence admission and allocation policies. These recommendations have already been very useful for the Ministry particularly in guiding the resource allocations for the next round of infrastructure funding. In immediately responding to the challenges outlined in the report, special allocations have been made for student accommodation with focus being rightly placed on historically disadvantaged institutions and campuses so that they can improve their standards of student accommodation.

While the funds allocated thus far are inevitably still insufficient to address all the backlogs highlighted in the report, the department has already begun exploring sources of funding other than the fiscus. I expect to make some major announcements in this respect during 2012.

I am very pleased with the outcome of the work of the committee and would like to thank Professor Rensburg, all committee members, the researchers and departmental officials who contributed to the development of this important report.

Dr B.E. Nzimande, MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training
February 2012

Chairperson's Introduction

On receiving the call from Minister Nzimande to chair a Ministerial Committee on Student Housing, I pondered over the significance of such a study given the several other challenges that confound our university system, ranging from the long-run per capita decline in funding, the imperative of more purposeful and strategic institutional differentiation to support institutional and national ambitions, through the contributions of the public schooling system to students' low success rates at universities as well as the nature of the formal and actual school curriculum, to the perennial governance and leadership crises, to mention only a few such matters.

Thus the questions arose: why establish such a Ministerial Committee, and what is the national crisis that sparked Minister Nzimande into establishing it? The Committee began its approach to these challenging questions by seeking an answer to the next question – or is it the prior one? – which is: why is planned student accommodation important?

As we are well aware, the university system that exists today emerged from an eclectic set of elite and historically disadvantaged institutions inherited from our apartheid past. Mergers of some universities with different historical funding arrangements, it was believed, would provide the opportunity to create from the bottom-up a more equitable system. The establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009 added a new dimension to the transformative possibilities in higher education, such as the prospect of providing a single, seamless post school education and training system that will meet the aspirations of young people and adults. At the same time education and training initiatives would be challenged to respond to national imperatives that include enhancing economic growth, addressing rural development and contributing to the development of a well informed and critical citizenry. Achieving these goals has been no easy task, and many remain elusive. We know from various studies that participation, retention, throughput and graduation rates are low, and postgraduate enrolment must increase.

It is now well documented that the last decade has seen an explosion in student enrolment in our residential university system, with enrolment reaching 535 433 in 2010 (538 210 in 2011) and expected to grow at a rate of about 2%. Strikingly, the number of beds available at residential universities in 2010 totalled 107 598, or 20% of total enrolment. Research suggests that, internationally, about 50% of students live at home or with relatives; however, given the high levels of poverty in Africa and the unsuitability of the home environment for academic endeavour for the majority of students, suitable student accommodation needs to be provided for up to 100% of students in some contexts. The *ideal* bed capacity target recommended by the Committee ranges from 50% to 80%. This situation translates by 2013 into a shortage of 207 800 beds. This is a fundamental assumption that informs this work. The motivation is simple yet critical, if the university system is to achieve one of its fundamental goals, i.e., in respect of under-graduate education to create the conditions that will enable dependent adolescents to become wise adults – men and women of dignity and honour – who will be the country's future leaders, whose discoveries and innovations will be the source of national prosperity in the coming

centuries, and whose personal ethics will be the standards both of government and of corporate South Africa.¹

Importantly for the work of this Committee, a large proportion of this enrolment growth is accounted for by young, black, low income, first generation university entrants, especially female entrants. Given the significant economic and social distributional value of university education, this is an extremely positive development for South Africa. However, given the twin factors of very slow growth in residential places in the university system over the last decade and the severely limited capacity of many parents and students to fully finance residential accommodation and meals, much of the potential of this positive development has been wasted since first year drop-out rates have remained stubbornly high, and it is incumbent upon us to explore and develop a fundamentally new approach to student accommodation that can remedy this situation. There is an additional rationale for this, too: spending one's first year at university in a well-led, well-managed, well-governed and well-maintained residence improves one's chance of graduating on time.

We have found that as a result of the exceedingly high demand for student housing, on-campus accommodation has been under pressure, often resulting in informal and unmanaged over-accommodation including 'squatting' and significant overuse and decay of existing infrastructure and utility services. Notwithstanding goodwill, much of the recent provision of off-campus student accommodation has been unplanned and reactive, with complicated and even questionable lease agreements and public-private partnerships that see universities, not the private provider, carrying risk. Often, such accommodation is simply bad and located in the worst and most unsafe parts of downtown metropolitan areas or in rural areas at a distance from campuses. Often, too, students, whether in on- or off-campus accommodation, go hungry or live on inadequate and unbalanced meals with very little nutritional value.

On-campus student residences are frequently poorly governed and managed or even not at all governed and managed. Many staff in charge of accommodation have not had the requisite training to manage their responsibilities, resulting in incompetent practices or simply inaction. Thus, instead of always providing our students with the best environments, on- or off-campus, within which they can flourish and achieve their, their families' and our ambitions, we are simply reproducing the cycle of incompetence, lack of compassion and poverty. As this report notes, residences located in university campuses are much more than bricks and mortar. They are living social communities that can either advance or detract from our shared university or societal goals. These communities also reflect and contest the diverse range of social and economic class paradoxes that exist in our society, including racism and gender-based and sexual orientation related violence.

Given such instances of squatting and decay, one wonders why there is such reluctance to act and why this situation has so quickly become the norm. Is it because of indifference, or because officials turn a blind eye, or because executives have simply allowed themselves to be bullied into inaction by some stakeholders? Whatever the reasons, we know that clear

¹ Lewis, H.R., *Excellence without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2006), pp. 17-19.

and deliberate action is urgently required so that we can provide the very best circumstances under which (especially undergraduate) students can flourish.

We have also found very good practices on all of these counts, some of which we record in this report and which inform our advice to the Minister. These very good practices demonstrate the value of well-considered and planned approaches to the provision of on- and off-campus accommodation. This report thus provides critical support for arguments for the success of South Africa's higher education ambitions for its citizens and of the collective nation-state. We intend for this report to stand out in eight aspects, viz.:

- To make the case for student residences to be living and learning communities that are critical to the success of the academic project;
- To develop the idea of student villages in metropolitan areas as appropriate environments for students to flourish socially, intellectually and academically;
- To establish the scale of the student accommodation quandary;
- To offer a well-motivated and justifiable differentiated framework for redressing this student accommodation quandary through establishing a typology of need based on relative access to private sector led provision and historical disadvantage;
- To provide government with a medium to long term financing framework within a fifteen year timeframe, in order to intercede in this situation;
- To provide ways in which the National Student Financial Aid Scheme loans can be improved to address qualifying students' dire states;
- To provide minimum standards for student accommodation, whether on- or off-campus; and
- To tackle poor student nutrition and hunger in our universities.

The dearth of research and knowledge in the field of student accommodation hampered the Committee's progress, and the establishment of a domestic centre of excellence in all dimensions of student accommodation is thus an urgent priority.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of members of the Committee. First, for their insights and wisdom, I am grateful to senior officials in the Department of Higher Education and Training, viz., Kirti Menon, Brenda Swart, Leonardo Cloete and, more recently, Shai Makgoba. I am also most indebted to our researchers, Dr Iain L'Ange and Michele Berger, for their detailed preparation and systematic approach to the work; and I wish to thank Rhodes University and its Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) for seconding Dr L'Ange for this work. Finally, I wish to express personal appreciation to Shireen Motala for her resolute stewardship of the research, and to my office staff, Thembeke Dlungwane, Annah Sekwele and, more recently, Thabo Mamabolo, for all of the fine logistical arrangements.



Professor Ihron Rensburg

Chairperson: Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing

Executive summary

This report documents the findings of the review of the provision of student housing in the public university education system in South Africa undertaken by the Ministerial Committee established in August 2010 by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. The scope of the review called for an assessment of the following specific aspects of student housing:

- Demand for student accommodation at university and national levels.
- Current mix of students in residences.
- Benchmarked findings across universities in South Africa and worldwide.
- Current and potential types of physical accommodation.
- Models of securing physical accommodation.
- Current levels of student payment for accommodation, including NSFAS provision.
- Sources of finance available to universities.
- Minimum standards for all residences.
- True ownership cost of new accommodation buildings and its impact on future operational budgets.
- Possible changes to funding frameworks.

Due to the complexity and the inter-relatedness of these aspects, an analytical and interpretive framework was developed which identifies the key and fundamental elements pertaining to the provision of university student housing and accommodation in South Africa today. The framework, which comprises of the following elements, also expresses the need to keep these elements in equilibrium, or creative tension:

- Access/equity/redress.
- Quality/standards.
- Cost/financing.
- Learning/success.
- Inclusion/integration.
- Governance/management.

A number of methods of data collection were utilised. First, an extensive desktop review of relevant literature in the areas specified by the Minister was conducted. Second, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed in consultation with senior officials of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and distributed to the Vice Chancellors of the twenty two universities with residences. Third, site visits to each campus of the twenty two universities were conducted, during which residences and related components of the residential system were inspected. Interviews with a number of relevant stakeholders were also conducted during the site visits. A total of 49 campuses were visited.

The literature review reflects the fact that most literature on student housing derives from Europe and North America and, to a lesser extent, Australia, with little research on student housing in developing country contexts, including South Africa. In Europe, most students live

at home, with relatives or on their own, rather than in residences; however, there are distinct regional and national differences in each of these categories.

In most countries, the demand for student housing currently tends to outstrip supply, and public funding of higher education is under increasing pressure everywhere. Student housing models range from traditional university residences to public-private partnerships (PPPs), city-university partnerships and the reuse of old buildings; and recent trends include an emphasis on residential learning (or 'living-learning') communities, more mixed and flexible housing forms, a focus on safety and security, sustainable and green campus developments, and greater consideration for the diversity of student housing needs.

While a large body of international research suggests that residence life can make a substantial positive contribution to student success, these findings are neither conclusive nor necessarily generalisable to a developing world context. More rigorous and focused research is needed in the South African context.

Nationally, the racial demographic profile of students in university provided accommodation is close to that of the national demographic. As might be expected, there are more female than male students accommodated. The number of university residence beds in 2010 was 107 598, which accommodated 20% of the total number of full-time contact students enrolled at the twenty two universities with residences. However, only 5.3% of first year students, those arguably in greatest need of accommodation, are in residences.

In 2010 some 71% of students housed in university residences received some form of financial assistance. Regarding students' geographic origins, the highest percentage of students housed in residences in 2010 originated from KwaZulu-Natal, followed by the Eastern Cape, and third highest were students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

While campuses are more or less evenly split between those with dining hall facilities and those which are self-catering, poor nutrition and student hunger are issues at all universities. The maldistribution of NSFAS funding for student accommodation at a number of universities is the direct cause of much suffering and hardship to students.

Residence staff-student ratios vary between 1:19 and 1:535, with staff remuneration and training varying just as widely.

Around a quarter of all infrastructure, fixtures, fittings and dining hall facilities are assessed by the universities concerned to be in an unsatisfactory or poor condition. Based on university estimates, the value of the current national maintenance and refurbishment backlog is R2.5 billion. If the existing residence stock is to be modernised to render the residences 'fit-for-purpose', then a further R1.9 billion is required.

In addition to these costs for maintenance, refurbishment and modernisation of existing residence stock, it is estimated that the current residence bed shortage is approximately 195 815. (This estimate is premised on the provision of residence accommodation for: 80% of full time contact student enrolments on campuses where off-campus accommodation is

unsuitable and/or unavailable, and for 50% of full time contact student enrolments on campuses where limited off-campus accommodation is available and is suitable, all at a per bed construction cost of R240 000.) In these terms, the cost of overcoming this shortage over a period of ten years is estimated at R82.4 billion, or R109.6 billion over fifteen years.

Universities reported a total of 39 incidents of student-housing related protests, of varying intensity and scope, during the past five years, several of which were sparked by dissatisfaction with residence maintenance and facilities.

The lack of sufficient and adequate on-campus housing is resulting in overcrowding, jeopardising students' academic endeavours and creating significant health and safety risks.

The private sector is a significant contributor and stakeholder in the provision of accommodation to university students in South Africa, as is the case internationally. Leaving aside those students who live at home or in their own accommodation, it is estimated that the number of student beds currently made available by both small and large scale private providers in South Africa is close to 10% of the total full-time contact enrolment at universities in 2010.

However, the conditions under which students are being housed in some university-leased buildings can only be described as squalid. Private student housing in the country appears to be completely unregulated.

The few existing partnerships between universities and private student housing developers offer high quality but also relatively expensive accommodation. Until now most universities have been using their own funds to finance residence infrastructure development, but variations on such public-private partnerships, perhaps involving multiple universities, existing state infrastructural development mechanisms and private sector funding, have the potential to be more cost-effective.

South African universities generated an overall surplus from their residence operations totalling R251.5 million from 2008 to 2010; this includes universities that recorded surpluses – four universities account for R316 million of the R450 million surplus – as well as universities that recorded losses – five universities account for R167 million of the R200 million loss.

Total student residence debt has grown from approximately R67 million in 2006 to approximately R85 million in 2009.

In 2010 the average residence fee without food was R13 283, and the average residence fee including meals was R30 924.

The challenges facing universities are enormous, making it all the more essential that each institution develops a proper student housing and accommodation strategic plan. The focus needs to shift to the development of strategies and mechanisms to increase access to university residences by poor working class and rural students and to develop sensitive support mechanisms for these students which empower and enable them to participate

fully in the academic, social and cultural life of the university, so that they too receive a holistic educative university experience.

Summary of recommendations

Residence admissions and allocations policies

1. A comprehensive residence admissions and allocations policy needs to be developed by each university, and rigorously implemented, managed and monitored.
2. Strategies and mechanisms need to be developed to increase and support access to university residences by poor working class and rural students.
3. Strategies and mechanisms need to be established to allow all new first year contact students in need of accommodation to be allocated to a residence for their first year.

Minimum standards for student housing and accommodation

4. Minimum standards for the accommodation and housing of students must be developed and made applicable to all providers of student housing, both public and private.

Private student housing and accommodation

5. Given the dire shortage of suitable student accommodation, public-private partnerships in the form of student villages, particularly in the metropolitan areas, should be explored further.
6. Mechanisms designed to foster and enhance cooperation between all stakeholders involved in the provision of student housing and accommodation need to be established, under the auspices of the DHET.

Residence management and administration

7. Residence staff to resident student ratios should not normally exceed 1:150 in the case of wardens, house parents, residence managers or the equivalent, and 1:100 in the case of student sub-wardens or the equivalent.
8. All universities should establish a board, council or similar body which represents all residences and oversees residence life.
9. Improving the professionalism, compensation and training of university housing staff is an urgent priority.
10. All complaints and allegations of maladministration, corruption and nepotism must be rigorously investigated by the DHET and strict action taken against offenders.

Role of residences in the academic project

11. Research needs to be conducted to explore ways in which the social and cultural milieu in residence systems impacts upon the ability of black working class students to succeed academically.

12. Research needs to be conducted to explore the broad and complex relationship between student housing and academic success.
13. Residences must become an integral part of the academic project and promoted as sites of academic endeavour.

Financing of student housing and funding of student accommodation

14. Residence bed capacities to accommodate 80% of full time contact student enrolment on campuses where off-campus accommodation is unsuitable and/or unavailable, and 50% of full time contact student enrolment on campuses where limited off-campus accommodation is available and is suitable, should be targeted.
15. Once the state has indicated what proportion of this target it is able to fund, the private sector should be invited to meet the remaining bed capacity target, in accord with minimum standards for the provision of student housing.
16. The complete separation of the residence budget and management accounts from the university budget and management accounts is needed.
17. Residence management accounts should be submitted on a quarterly basis to the University Council, and annual financial reporting must be standardised.
18. A 'wealth tax' mechanism should be explored as a way of increasing residence access to disadvantaged students.
19. An investigation into universities' use of reserves for priorities such as student housing should be undertaken.
20. An annual fixed national NSFAS residence fee for student board and lodging which meets minimum standards (including a minimum of two balanced meals per day) should be set at R30 500 for 2011.
21. The current range of NSFAS funding for residence accommodation should be increased.
22. Stricter guidelines should be developed for the administration of NSFAS funding, especially accommodation funding, by the universities.
23. The current system of infrastructure grants from the DHET should be maintained and strengthened, with clear guidelines and funding allocation criteria.
24. Requests for funding for new residence development and residence refurbishment must be accompanied by a comprehensive assessment and cost estimate from a registered quantity surveyor.
25. A differentiated or sliding residence infrastructure funding mechanism should be developed to enable campuses with low bed capacities to receive a higher percentage of the infrastructure funding 'pie' until they have caught up.

Condition of residence infrastructure

26. All universities are to conduct a professional quantity surveyor-led assessment of their residence infrastructure.
27. National minimum standards and service level agreement guidelines for the maintenance and refurbishment of residence infrastructure should be established.
28. Modular residence construction methodologies should be fully researched.

Future planning

29. All universities should develop a multi-year strategic plan (including a financial plan) for residence maintenance and refurbishment.
 30. Those who are accountable for university student housing should be part of the planning process. The Chief Housing Officer should report directly to a member of the senior management team of the university.
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