

# **South Africa National Higher Education Equity Policy**

## **Governance**

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is responsible for defining national policies in higher education under the authority of the Minister of Higher Education. It relies on the Council for Higher Education for policy advice and quality assurance matters.

## **Higher Education Policy Documents**

What are the current official documents defining the national higher education strategy / policies?

- 2013 White Paper for Post-Secondary Education and Training
- A National Strategic Plan is currently under preparation (expected December 2018)
- Higher Education Act of 1997

## **Equity in Policy Documents**

What broad and specific equity objectives do the policy documents identify?

The first policy objective is to develop “a post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa”. The government of South Africa is keen on improving access and success for “those groups whose race, gender or disability status had previously disadvantaged them”. The government is also committed to making education free for the poor “as resources become available”.

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Poor students
- Gender groups
- Black students
- Students with disability

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups?

- South Africa has targets for increasing the participation rates in universities, expected to grow from 17.3 per cent in 2011 to 25 per cent by 2030.

South Africa does not have a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Are there specific anti-discrimination provisions?

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (the Equality Act) is the principal instrument to prevent and punish discriminatory policies in education in South Africa. The Act was accompanied by the establishment of a network of Equality Courts for the quick and effective resolution of discrimination disputes.

What specific interventions and/or instruments of equity promotion are included in the official strategy and policy documents (monetary and non-monetary)?

### ***Monetary Policy Instruments***

- No tuition fees for certain groups: since December 2017, students from households with a combined income of less than the equivalent of 2,000\$ per month (350,000 Rands per year) are exempt from paying tuition fees. This corresponds approximately to the bottom 64% of those currently at university. Implementation of the new policy started in 2018 and will be phased in through 2022. Low-income students (including Black students) enrolled in private higher education institutions are not eligible for free tuition.
- Needs-based grants and student loans: until the new tuition fee policy was put in place, low-income students could receive grants and loans.
- Equity-linked financial incentives built into the funding formula to allocate public resources to higher education institutions: the formula takes the proportion of Black students into consideration to compensate for apartheid-time discrimination. The government of South Africa also earmarks funds to support underprivileged students needing additional academic help and historically deprived institutions.

### ***Non-Monetary Policy Instruments***

- Distance education available to equity groups living in remote areas through UNISA, the South African online university.
- Specialized institutions targeting underrepresented groups
- Outreach and bridge programs
- Academic and career guidance and counseling

- Flexible pathways and transfers through the National Qualifications Framework.
- Retention programs: support for underprivileged students needing academic help.

### **Financial Resources**

What financial resources does the country devote to equity promotion measures?

Not available.

### **Quality Assurance**

The quality assurance criteria do not take equity elements into consideration.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- DHET is responsible for monitoring the impact of equity promotion measures.

### **Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency**

South Africa does not have an agency dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

### **Sources**

Council of Higher Education (2016). South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy.

Department of Higher Education and Training (2013). White Paper for Post-Secondary Education and Training.

<http://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Latest%20News/White%20paper%20for%20post-school%20education%20and%20training.pdf>

Government of South Africa (1997). Higher Education Act.

<https://www.gov.za/documents/higher-education-act>

Heher Commission (2017). Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training. Pretoria: Government of South Africa.

Van der Berg, S. (2016). "Funding university studies: Who benefits?" Kagisano 10. Special Issue on Student Funding. Council for Higher Education. March 2016.