

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

NO. 543

09 JUNE 2017

**SECTION 41 B OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT, 2006
(ACT NO.16 OF 2006)****CALL FOR COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON STUDENT
SUPPORT SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING
COLLEGES**

I, Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Training, in terms of the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No.16 of 2006), hereby invite public comments on the *Draft National Policy on Student Support Services for Community Education and Training Colleges*.

The draft policy aims to enable CET Colleges to:

- a. improve participation of adults and youth in CET College Programmes
- b. retain their students
- c. improve student success and throughput rate
- d. foster a focused climate supportive of the success of students.

All interested persons and organisations are invited to comment on the *Draft National policy on Student Support Services for Community Education and Training Colleges* in writing and direct their comments to:

The Director-General, Private Bag X174, Pretoria, 0001, for Attention: The Deputy Director-General, Dr EB Mahlobo, email: Mahlobo.B@dhet.gov.za or by fax to 012 324 2059.

Kindly provide the name, telephone number, fax number and email address of the person or organisation when submitting comments.

A copy of the Draft Policy is available on the website of the Department at www.dhet.gov.za. Hard copies will also be made available for collection in Room 631, Department of Higher Education and Training, 123 Francis Baard Street, Pretoria, on request.

The comments on the *Draft National policy on Student Support Services for Community Education and Training Colleges* should reach the Department within 21 calendar days after the publication of this Notice.



Dr BE Nzimande, MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training

Date:

09/01/2017



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON STUDENT SUPPORT
SERVICES
FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND
TRAINING COLLEGES**

Draft National Policy on Student Support Services for Community Education and Training Colleges

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1. LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Academic Advisor
AB	Academic Board
AS	Academic Support
CET	Community Education and Training
CSAP	College Student Administration Policy
CoC	Code of Conduct
DCS	Department of Correctional Services
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RO	Regional Office
OAA	Office for Academic Support
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSO	Support Services Officers
SSS	Student Support Services
SSSM	Student Support Services Modules

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to enable Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges to:

- 2.1 improve the participation of adults and youth in CET College Programmes;
- 2.2 retain their students;
- 2.3 improve student success and throughput rate; and
- 2.4 foster a focused climate supportive of the success of students.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The support systems which the CET Colleges put in place can have a significant influence on how well the students achieve. Students are likely to achieve when they are supported by colleges to make the correct programme choices, properly oriented to the college, supported and provided with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. These are some of the support services that colleges can offer students that will lead to higher retention and throughput rates.
- 3.2 The development of such support services in CET Colleges has not been prioritised. If colleges are to be truly 'student-centred', Student Support Services (SSS) should be treated as integral to the CET College education, training and development system.
- 3.3 This Policy for Student Support Services provides a guide to CET Colleges on how to support students. It is a practical set of guiding principles, procedures and strategies for the provision of an integrated SSS that meet the requirements of the Department of Higher Education and Training and the principles embodied in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

4. LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 The Constitution of South Africa states that *everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.*
- 4.2 The principle of the recognition of diversity is entrenched in all education legislation and policy. The provision of quality education for all depends on effective support services which are accessible to all students and lecturers. The emphasis is on developing such support as an integral part of an inclusive system which has the capacity to promote the participation of those students who were excluded by the previous system and who experience a wide range of barriers to education and training.
- 4.3 A clear commitment to the principles of redressing past inequalities and creating equal opportunities for all students has been made through the CET Act, 2006.
- 4.4 The Directive principles of national education policy as reflected in the CET Act, 2006 states that the starting point of defining SSS is that the education system should be able to contribute to the full development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- 4.5 Section 14 of the CET Act, 2006, further calls for student representation in governance structures such as the Council and Academic Board of the College. The Act also provides for the monitoring of financial support for the Student Representative Council. In so doing, the Act places student support as central to the success of the colleges.
- 4.6 The College Council must develop a College Student Admission Policy. Such a policy must determine entrance requirements in respect of various academic programmes, determine the number of students who may be admitted to a particular programme, the manner of selection and minimum requirements for admission at the college.
- 4.7 The Act further requires colleges to have a student Code of Conduct at registration. Such a Code of Conduct should be provided and signed at student registration. The Code of

Conduct commits a student to the type of behaviour expected of all students of a particular college. The Code of conduct should be incorporated into college *statutes*.

- 4.8 The above policy and legal provision show that Student Support Services is deeply embedded in legislation and in various policies governing the provision of continuing education and training in South Africa.

5. CONCEPTUALISING STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

5.1 Definition

5.1.1 The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (WP-PSET) sketches a new framework for CET Colleges that includes student support services as follows:

- a) Learner counselling and student support services will be established to help new entrants to CET College to make meaningful choices about their direction of study and to ensure that all learners, including previously excluded or disadvantaged groups are given every opportunity to succeed.
- b) Career guidance and support services must provide information on learning programmes, education and training providers, qualifications and job opportunities. In addition the Department propose that the new funding arrangements provide for academic development, guidance, counselling, health, welfare and other students support services.
- c) By this definition it is envisaged that the provision of SSS in full at CET Colleges should be a comprehensive service that responds to the overall needs of students. Student support service should be modelled in a manner that aims at developing a holistic person. Where colleges are unable to offer a particular service, referral systems must be in place.

6. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES MODEL

The CET Colleges student is a previously disadvantaged youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities.

Many of those who have not completed school need a second chance to do so by learning skills which will empower them to enter the labour market.

CET Colleges should provide holistic services to students that embrace the full range of any single student's interaction with the college. Such services are the responsibility of the entire college but there is a role for SSS Units to coordinate their provision.

The principal elements of SSS should be to provide all students with the three pillars student support services, namely; pre-entry, on-course and exit support

6.1 Pre-entry support

6.1.1 Profile the students

- a. Determine the age of students.
- b. Identify gender.
- c. Verify the student's marital status.
- d. Check whether or not the student has dependants.
- e. Enrolment form declaring the age of dependants as a mechanisms on how to support young adults.
- f. Background of students, e.g. former inmates so that the College should be able to extended support with the assistance of the Department of Correctional Services.
- g. Assists students with difficulties in completing admission forms.
- h. Pre-entry support needs to be more goal-oriented during recruitment campaigns to convince prospective applicants that their needs will be catered for when they arrive

at the centre. The approach must also cater for students who may want to transfer from one CET College to another.

6.1.2 Educational experience

- a. Students need to know and understand who they are and what their interests, personality attributes, abilities and motivations are. These are fundamental factors influencing the placement of students. If the personal information is available, it can ensure that students eventually end up in careers they are interested in and for which they have the required aptitude.
- b. All CET Colleges should administer selection and assessment/placement tests for new students. These tests identify prospective students who have basic fundamental knowledge of literacy and numeracy skills to cope with the demands of the academic learning material.
- c. It is important to compare the results of the placement test and level the student is applying for. If the results indicate that the preferred level will not be suitable for the student, the College need to advise the student on a suitable level. After the correct level has been identified, the registration process can be completed.

6.1.3 The focus of pre-entry guidance and placement of prospective students

- a. Numeracy and literacy level.
- b. Placement test, assuring students that this is not a test to evaluate them but an instrument used to place them in the relevant level.
- c. The medium of instruction has to be clearly communicated as it may differ from region to region.
- d. Identify home language.

6.2 On-course Support

This is the most critical stage of the student's life at the college. It is the stage where students are likely to make decisions whether they are on the path to success or not.

On-course support should incorporate study schemes, linguistic and numeric skills development, and access to information and communication technology for supportive and co-curricular learning.

6.2.1 Academic Support and Development

- a. All students need academic support and development. This does not mean that each student must get special attention over and above what lecturers are able to provide in their daily teaching. They need to adopt a broad approach to academic support and think of it as part of the curriculum, or as part of what happens in classrooms every day. Academic support can only be part of the mainstream of teaching and learning when it is systematically planned, such planning includes special interventions in areas of low achievement but this is by no means the only component.
- b. Academic support can only be part of the 'mainstream' of teaching and learning when it is systematically planned and integrated into the broader academic interventions in a particular college. Early identification of academic support needs is crucial. The planning and implementation of Academic Support programmes should not only be the responsibility of Student Support Service units but should be conducted jointly with the lecturer involvement.

6.2.2 Personal Development Support

- a. In addition to providing Academic Support, Colleges must also strive towards providing personal development support. The broad SSS needs to incorporate proactive programmes that develop the student in a holistic manner. Health and wellness programmes need to be more comprehensive to address challenges of mental health, students with disabilities, sexual orientation, and psychological challenges.
- b. The teaching of diversity and tolerance is very critical for creating conducive environment at the College. A healthy mind can only exist in a healthy body.
- c. The college SSS should support both formal and non-formal programmes for capacity building and life skills which can lead to formal employment and entrepreneurship.

6.2.3 Student Leadership Development

- a. The term of office of the members of the SRC must be one academic year. A member of the SRC may serve more than one term of office
- b. The college Student Representative Council and the entire student populace must participate fully in the provision of Student Support Services. The student populace, through the SRC, must be part of Council Sub-Committee on SSS and serve on the SSS Coordination Team. They must play a role at the beginning from induction and

orientation to the exit level. The SRC members should be empowered through student leadership development programmes to enhance their leaderships and governance skills. The provision of such programmes and training will assist in harmonizing relations between management and students.

- c. The SRC through the Council should form collaborations with different stakeholders for SSS e.g. Local municipality to access primary health care, safety and security, social services, transport, Early Childhood Development facilities, job opportunities, etc.
- d. Furthermore, the SRC should forged partnerships with the Department of Home Affairs for support in terms of identity documents and other related matters like birth certificates and study permits.

6.2.4 Learning and Teaching Support Material

A pre-requisite for getting the learning process started is a full set of carefully selected text/workbooks for each student. Subject specialists are required to make the appropriate selection from the list of Department approved textbooks titles. Procurement of textbooks should ideally happen at the end of the previous year, but at the very least must be available to students immediately the new academic year begins. All other provisioning of resources is over and above the compulsory provision of textbooks.

6.2.5 Examinations

Students support and preparation for examinations/assessment is important. CET Colleges must prepare students sufficiently for examinations/assessment by ensuring that revision happens. They must have access to previous question papers; familiarize them with examination terminology and instructions. Proper studying habits must be inculcated. The colleges should also organise transport for students residing far from the examination centre during examinations.

6.2.6 Support for Students with Special Needs

Working with students with special needs requires a level of training that specifically accommodates individuals with disabilities. Lecturers who work with students with special needs must learn how to identify disabilities and design tailored curriculums

based on assessment results and empirical data. Particular attention should be paid to the plight of women and students from poor families and the need for training and work-based opportunities for students both during and upon completion of their programmes.

6.3 Exit Support

Exit support is critical to the evaluation of the success of college programmes and systems. In order to further support students, colleges need to be proactive in developing strategic partnerships that will lead to their graduates accessing sustainable employment or becoming self-employed on completion of college programmes. This involves the provision of information and guidance on higher education and training opportunities; the identification of opportunities for job placements; entrepreneurial skills development opportunities and the introduction of a tracking system to assess student progression.

Tracking of students will assist colleges and the Department in determining the effectiveness of programmes in facilitating access to the labour market or to higher education.

6.4 Community Support

- a. The community education is about the community itself learning to work together to identify and solve developmental problems (personal, social, economic and political) – it is education for the community within the community for the purpose of building or animating that community, a process that stresses participation, shared decision making, and use of community resources.
- b. The College must integrate involvement of people of all ages, use of community learning resources and research to bring about community change and recognition that people can learn through, with and from each other to create a better world.” It is sometimes seen as a pre-requisite for community development and empowerment. Within this understanding, actual education provision, whether of a formal or non-formal nature, such as adult literacy or adult basic education, continuing education, skills training, extra-mural classes or cultural activities, is seen as subsidiary and instrumental to the broader community problem solving and development goals.

- c. The second set of understandings is that needed education can be provided to a community or in a community in appropriate and easily accessible ways. In this sense community education is more about approaches and methods of provision. It is not, *per se*, about education to build community, though that may be an outcome. The particular educational purpose, whether literacy or health education or skills training, etc., retains its primacy. Here it is the special form of delivery, community education, that is instrumental to the goal of providing the needed education and training (the 'need' often largely being determined by government or experts outside of the local community).

6.5 Career guidance

6.5.1 The College must:

- a. Develop a coherent career guidance profession, independent from psychological counselling and well-informed by labour market information.
- b. Provide adequate resources for career guidance and its pro-active delivery.
- c. Ensure an independent base to support objective career guidance.
- d. Provide good sources of information about careers and courses.
- e. Build a comprehensive framework of guidance through partnership with employers.
- f. Ensure that career guidance initiatives are properly evaluated.

7. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

7.1 Structures for Student Support Services

- 7.1.1 It is recommended that all colleges establish Student Support Services Units. The Units should develop a plan that has the following components:

- a. The vision and mission of the college should support the underlying principles of student support Services.
- b. Principles governing the Student Support Services Unit – a statement of values and underlying ethics by which the SSS Unit is governed.
- c. Identified priorities and key target areas for performance of duties and functions of student support services.
- d. Expected outcomes of delivery.
- e. Strategies and activities to achieve the outcomes.
- f. People responsible for implementation of the plan.
- g. Monitoring mechanism for implementation of the plan.
- h. Measureable indicators of success.

7.1.2 While it is not the intention of the policy to be prescriptive about the model for the setting up of student support services, certain principles for effective student support services of CET Colleges apply. It is recommended that the manner in which the Unit is structured should ensure that the following principles are addressed:

- a. Student support is a core function of CET Colleges.
- b. Student support should focus on academic support mainly for language, maths and maths literacy as well as part time qualifications.
- c. There should be an intergraded, multi-disciplinary approach to SSS.
- d. Focus should be on inclusive education and training with the emphasis on removing barriers.
- e. A whole college, community and partnership-based approach.
- f. External and internal support and development structure.

7.2 College Personnel

Lecturing staff should be involved in the academic component of student support services. Colleges should have Student Support Services Officers/Managers who will work closely with the academic staff of the college. While individual colleges will adapt and develop their student support services to existing contexts and restraints, it is clear that if SSS functions and responsibilities are to be effectively carried out, these must be written into job descriptions and designated personnel must be given the time and the resources to do them. In other words, the key principle that SSS becomes a core function of CET Colleges must be taken seriously in terms of funding and staff resources.

7.3 Organisational Structure

7.3.1 The organisational structure for the Student Support Services should take the following into account:

- a. Academic Advisor/Tutor
- b. Office for Academic Affairs: responsible for selection and placement of students into colleges' programmes
- c. Infrastructure
- d. Administration
- e. Equipment
- f. Running costs
- g. Office responsible for career guidance and personal counselling referrals
- h. Governance officer responsible for SRC, leadership and development programmes

7.3.2 While these are comprehensive programmes that require personnel, colleges are required to appoint a minimum of three people to coordinate these functions. Where resources allow, colleges should appoint more personnel. It is critical that these resources be located at college campuses.

7.3.3 In terms of facilities, it is also recommended that the college should explore what facilities can be made available for SSS.

7.3.4 Possible facilities could include:

- a. private room/office to conduct academic counselling sessions
- b. classrooms for group tutorials
- c. resource room with relevant material to assist students in making informed decisions
- d. computers
- e. internet facilities
- f. information bank on career opportunities, employers, bursaries, educational institutions, academic programmes, information on sources for help and referrals, database of youth organisations, etc.

7.3.5 A career section in a resource centre will suffice in the initial stages of structuring academic support. Consideration must also be given to the resources at the disposal of the college.

7.3.6 Many colleges will not have all these facilities, but they are encouraged to explore the possibilities and where resources that are not in place can be made available to the students through referrals and networks accessible to the college.

8. FUNDING

Funding for implementation of the minimum requirements for Student Support Services is a responsibility of the college and must be budgeted for through annual budgeting processes. Budgeting for SSS should form part of the college three-year and annual budgeting processes.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 A key aspect of developing quality is that colleges review the work that is being undertaken and consider ways in which it can continually grow in order to improve the services that the college offers. This review should be conducted in a manner that:-

- a. Demonstrates commitment to students
- b. Focuses on the whole student experience

- c. Ensures that strategic management decisions are based on reliable and valid information about learners' concerns
 - d. Provides a means for benchmarking services and programmes
 - e. Benchmarks with other SSS Units in other colleges in order to assist colleges to determine how well they are performing
- 9.2 Examinations and Site Based Assessment results are reliable mechanisms for monitoring student progress
- 9.3 The Regional Offices will be responsible for the overall implementation of Student Support Services. It is recommended that the Department in conjunction with regions develop a checklist that will assist CET Colleges to evaluate the effectiveness of their student support services plan and which can also be utilised for monitoring purposes.

10. CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of Student Support Services at CET Colleges is paramount to giving meaning to all the reforms that have taken place in the sector thus far. SSS must be an integral part of the planning and budgeting process of every college. This policy is a guide that will assist colleges in implementing programmes that will give effect to student support services. It is a five-year framework that could be used as a yardstick for evaluating the progress made with regard to Student Support Services.

11. SHORT TITLE

This policy shall be called the National Policy on Student Support Services for Community Education and Training Colleges.

12. POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed whenever necessary.