

W&RSETA PARTNERS WITH NSFAS TO PROVIDE BURSARIES TO STUDENTS WHO WANT A CAREER IN THE WHOLESALE & RETAIL SECTOR

The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&RSETA) has entered into a landmark agreement with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to provide financial assistance to students for two groundbreaking bursary programmes.

The **FIRST** is for students who completed their studies in 2011 and qualified for the NSFAS Final Year Programme. This Programme will provide bursaries for up to 3 000 students, thus enabling them to graduate and find employment in the Wholesale & Retail Sector through the W&RSETA Workplace Experience Employment Grant (WEEG) Project.

The **SECOND** is for an additional 1667 bursaries for first year students who passed Matric in 2011 or in previous years, these bursaries will cover three years of study, linked to work placements in the Wholesale and Retail Sector throughout their studies.

This landmark agreement is a response by the W&RSETA to the call by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, to SETAs, other public entities and social partners to help students who need financial aid in order to graduate. "Final year undergraduate students have received loans equivalent to the full cost of study, and if they pass and graduate, this loan will be converted to a full bursary and will not be repaid", the Minister announced at the Ministerial Road Show to meet stakeholders in the post-school education and training system, held in Durban in November 2011. The Minister said that the aim of the Department of Higher Education and Training was to conceptualise and bring together all the major sub-sectors of higher and further education and training "into a single system in which the parts complement the whole, work together to strengthen one another and articulate seamlessly with one another."

At his official launch of the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training on 12 January 2012 in Pretoria, the Minister called on government departments and agencies as well as municipalities to increase their intake of various types of trainees who are either still studying or have recently completed their studies. The Minister further called on the private sector to contribute more effectively in addressing the skills needs in the country by providing opportunities for graduates.

FINAL YEAR BURSARIES

The W&RSETA Sector Skills Plan (SSP) has identified a number of scarce skills for which there is a dire need in the Sector. To address this gap, W&RSETA has provided R185 million for bursaries in the Final Year Programme to university students who completed their studies in 2011 in disciplines related to the Sector. These bursaries which include stipends for workplace experience will assist the Wholesale and Retail Sector by providing a pool of potential employees with the requisite skills, thus narrowing the supply and demand gap. It will further promote Wholesale and Retail as a career of choice to suitably qualified young graduates.

Students who received NSFAS loans for the Final Year Programme in 2011 and who graduated with qualifications in any of the following retail-related disciplines will be eligible for these bursaries:

- Accounting;
- Human Resource Management (specialisation in Industrial relations);
- Marketing and sales
- Logistics;
- Operations Management;
- Retail Management;
- Credit Management;
- Clothing Technology;
- Food Technology;
- Purchasing Management (buyers and planners);
- Information Technology; and
- Supply Chain Management.

"The Minister made an impassioned plea on behalf of the students and we as the W&RSETA heeded that call. This is the first time since the inception of this SETA that we will be funding bursaries for post-matric education. As a skills development institution, we are of the view that our mandate should not end with the learnerships and skills programmes at workplaces but should also go beyond that to support needy university and FET college students who are passionate about the Sector. This is what we call positioning the Sector as a career of choice," said Joel Dikgole, W&RSETA Chief Executive Officer.

This financial assistance will provide a full bursary. Students must meet the following conditions in order to apply for these bursaries:

- Graduated from the NSFAS Final Year Programme in 2011
- Qualified in any of the disciplines mentioned above
- South African citizens; and
- Willing to be placed in the Wholesale and Retail Sector for Workplace Experience

As part of the W&RSETA's Workplace Experience Employment Grant Project, students will be placed in the Wholesale and Retail Sector for a period of up to 12 months after graduating and will receive monthly stipends from the SETA for the period. "We have noted with regret that students complete their studies only to stay at home unemployed, rendering all other interventions futile. It is for this reason that the W&RSETA has taken a decision to integrate formal learning with practical workplace experiential training," said Mr Dikgole.

Any student who meets the above criteria and who wishes to apply for a W&RSETA Final Year Programme bursary and WEEG placement in 2012 should apply directly to NSFAS by completing the application form on the NSFAS website www.nsfas.org.za; or via email at retail@nsfas.org.za. For queries, please contact the NSFAS Call Centre on (021)763 3232. W&RSETA will not deal directly with student applications, all enquiries must be made to NSFAS.

FIRST YEAR BURSARIES

Through the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III), SETAs have been asked to re-orient their funding to channel more resources into full occupational programmes at public FET colleges and universities. SETAs are required to increasingly channel training resources into tackling the shortage of artisans, technicians, professionals, administrators, managers and others needed to build the economy. This is what this bursary scheme seeks to achieve.

One of the most exciting and innovative aspects about the W&RSETA Bursary Scheme is that the learners will be required to undergo workplace experiential learning during the period of their studies to ensure that when they graduate they have the requisite skills, qualifications and are employable.

While Bursary Schemes are typically only open to students who want to study at Universities, students who want to further their studies through Further Education and Training (FET) colleges in disciplines related to the Wholesale and Retail sector, may also apply for this Bursary Scheme.

University and FET College students who apply for First Year Bursaries to study in the fields mentioned above will qualify for a bursary that covers the Full Cost of Study in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Students will participate in workplace experiential learning in the Wholesale and Retail Sector throughout their studies.

Any student who meets the above criteria and who wishes to apply for a W&RSETA First Year Programme bursary and WEEG placement in 2012 should apply to the Financial Aid Office at the university or college where they are registered. Bursaries will be given to students with the best academic potential to succeed and who are passionate about a career in the Wholesale and Retail Sector. Students from rural areas will be given preference.

Closing Date for applications for both bursaries is 28 February 2012

ABOUT W&RSETA

The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (www.wrseta.org.za) is a public entity which was established to address skills development within the Wholesale and Retail sector through the implementation of learnerships, disbursement of grants and monitoring of education and training. The W&RSETA aims to increase the level of investment in education and training in the sector and to improve the return on that investment. Our mission is to develop a skilled and capable workforce in the Wholesale and Retail Sector, thereby contributing to the sustainable socio-economic development and growth of the country.