

CACH can help you find your place

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The Department of Higher Education and Training runs an Apply Now! Campaign starting in about April each year to encourage secondary school goers to think about their future careers and make informed choices in applying for further learning opportunities in the post school education and training system for the next year. The Campaign is linked to the DHET's Khetha Career Development Service (CDS), which runs throughout the year and offers career information and advice and runs the Khetha career programme on the radio. The aim is to assist young people to make the right choices and proactively decide on their future.

not confirmed. Equally there are many students who did not apply in time and who now find that it is very difficult to find a space in the PSET system. The most affected are poorer prospective students from rural contexts who may only have applied for one or two institutions and have not been successful. In the past this has led to students attempting to find spaces by walking into institutions, especially universities.

In the wake of a tragic incident in 2012 when prospective students and their parents stormed the University of Johannesburg, leading to death and injury, the Department and institutions agreed to limit walk-ins trying to make late applications. The DHET developed the Central Applications Clearing House

have applied for, or who are looking for PSET learning opportunities, can contact the CACH via a toll-free number (call 0800 356 635), the website (<http://cach.dhet.gov.za>) or via a standard SMS (sms name and ID to 49200).

The CACH service provides various options, including applications to PSET opportunities at colleges, universities and other skill development opportunities including artisan programmes, as well as career advice and information through the CDS.

Prospective students provide their information through the CACH, which makes the information available to all institutions in the PSET system. Where matches can be made the students are contacted and offered the opportunity

2016 we are expecting even greater use of the system and improvement in the placement ratio once again.

The CACH has been developed, as the first phase of an envisaged national Central Applications Service (CAS), that once fully implemented, will provide a single point of information on and access into the PSET system. It will be a 'one-stop-shop' for access to: career development services (information, advice and career planning); applications for learning opportunities in all PSET institutions (colleges, universities, work-based skills development); applications for accommodation; and, applications for financial aid/bursaries and scholarships. The service will enable a prospective student to apply for multiple institutions and a variety of programmes through one standardized process with one affordable fee. This will provide a solution to the current process whereby individual students apply to multiple institutions creating unnecessary risks and costs, especially for prospective students from poor and rural communities who do not have access to the economic and social capital to enable smooth access. The value of such a service for the public is unquestionable but will only be realised if all major stakeholders support its success through a process of transparent collaboration.

Such central services have been proven to be workable and valuable internationally. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal a central application office (CAO) has been in operation for the past 15 years and has been shown to be effective.

The CAS is currently being developed. It is envisaged that it will be established as a juristic entity through appropriate legislation by April 2018. Collaborative discussions with the KZN CAO in terms of its possible functional incorporation into the wider process are underway.

A steering committee is overseeing the development of the CAS, with all DHET Branches represented. An advisory committee has also been established that includes representatives from SETAs, Technical Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) colleges, community colleges, universities, as well as the National Skills

Fund (NSF), the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Consensus remains that a service of this nature will be beneficial to the public.

During the course of 2015, the draft enterprise architecture was designed for the function and service delivery of the CAS. The architecture will be extensively consulted with all major stakeholder representatives. The service model has already been presented to various stakeholders and has been approved by the Minister. Further consultation will take place at regional and provincial levels and is planned to take place from April to June this year.

The establishment of CAS will create an opportunity for one fee and one application process to enable applications for up to 10 different institutions at the very same time. Unsuccessful applicants will be offered related but alternate opportunities through the Central Application Clearing House (CACH) component of the CAS. This will ensure that every available space in the PSET taken up each year and minimize wastage in the system. The system will be able to collect accurate data on application trends in the PSET sectors which can be used to make informed policy decisions in the future.

All inputs and engagements in the development process are appreciated as they will assist in the successful implementation of the CAS. The establishment of this service must be an inclusive process if it is to ensure equitable access for all. It has not been, nor will it be a simple journey. All stakeholders and role players are encouraged to contribute to ensure a transparent and streamlined PSET system for future generations to come.

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The DHET's centralised application system and "Apply Now!" campaign are aimed at avoiding last minute rushes at universities after matric results are released

Each year thousands of prospective students find that while they have applied on time to their favoured institution for the programme that they dream to enter, they do not get always manage to get in, especially into programmes such as medicine and engineering where there is hot competition amongst the brightest young stars and limited spaces in the system. Thousands of students are disappointed in early January to find that a space in the institution of their choice is

(CACH), which was first implemented for the 2013 academic year, to assist young people by providing career advice and possible placement in a PSET opportunity. Since 2013 the CACH has grown from strength to strength.

The CACH is an accessible service that becomes live early in January at the time the NSC examination results are released and operates until the end of February each year. Students who have not received an offer of a space by the institutions they

to take up the space. The CACH register is provided to institutions so that they can consider prospective applicants that match spaces available.

In 2013 the CACH service captured 10 979 prospective applicants on its database, and confirmed places for 549 students (5% placement ratio). In 2015 CACH captured 14,044 prospective applicants and confirmed places for 4073 students (a placement ratio of 29%). Cooperation across institutions has resulted in the massive improvement. In