

Universities SA wary of ANC's free tertiary tuition

By [Bekezela Phakathi](#)

4 Aug 2017

The ANC's proposal to provide free tertiary education for poor people from 2018 was unlikely to placate students, Universities SA warned on Wednesday, 2 August 2017.



© Brian Jackson – [123RF.com](#)

Universities SA represents the country's vice-chancellors.

The ANC has proposed that poor students receive higher education at no cost in 2018, but Universities SA says students want free education for all.

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said fully subsidised grants should be provided to qualifying poor students.

Mantashe was speaking during a briefing on the weekend's ANC national executive committee lekgotla at Luthuli House.

Poor students were those from families with a gross annual income of R150,000 or less. Students from families earning

R150,000-R600,000 a year can be subsidised through grants and loans, Mantashe said.

Students who failed to maintain high academic performance would be disqualified, he said.

Adam Habib, chairman of Universities SA and University of the Witwatersrand vicechancellor, said on Wednesday that the only fundamental difference between the latest ANC proposal and current government policy was that it moved the threshold for poor students to R150,000, up from the current R122,000.

"I do not think it will resolve the demands of the students." There will need to be a broader conversation among all stakeholders on this issue."

The other issue was that universities, which rely on fees as a core revenue stream, needed to be funded adequately to provide quality education.

"We need the money [from fees], otherwise we will end up with a similar situation we have in primary education, where there is complete access, but poor quality," said Habib.

A commission of inquiry looking into the feasibility of free higher education is due to release its report in August.

Economic analyst Dawie Roodt said the ANC proposal would consume R10bn-R20bn a year from the fiscus.

The prioritisation of tertiary education was "regressive" as it focused on the few, he said.

Source: Business Day

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>