



MY STUDENT HOUSE

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SOUTH AFRICAN  
STUDENT ACCOMMODATION MONITOR

# THE BEDS, THE MONEY, AND THE GAP

An investor-led analysis of the South African student accommodation market: demand, supply, funding, returns and risk. Verified public data combined with proprietary evidence from national payment records, register censuses and the MSH portfolio.

INSIGHTS FOR  
**INVESTORS**  
WHO BUILD  
FUTURES



**511,600**

BED SHORTFALL



**R4,388–5,200**

NET PER FUNDED BED



**R1,622**

FULL COST TO SERVE

## INSIDE THIS EDITION



An investor dashboard  
and a worked  
twenty-bed example



A grade census of  
~9,600 accredited  
properties across  
seven provinces



1.4m NSFAS  
accommodation  
payment records  
analysed



Deeds-registry price  
and volume trends in  
the student suburbs



The measured cost  
to serve a bed,  
booked and full  
economic



Campus unrest,  
welfare and the  
funder's own  
audit record

My Student House (Pty) Ltd

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AN MSH INDUSTRY REPORT

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■ MSH proprietary data  
 ■ Exclusive analysis  
 ■ Verified public sources

# How the System Works

This is the Monitor's first edition, and many of its readers, including banks and foreign funders, are new to South African student accommodation. This page is the map; every figure on it is verified and sourced in the chapters that follow.

## Who studies where

South Africa's post-school system has three tiers, and each generates a different kind of accommodation demand. Public **universities** enrolled 1,071,715 students in 2023, concentrated in metros and established university towns.<sup>4</sup> Public **TVET colleges**, the vocational and occupational tier, enrolled 564,089 and are the fastest-growing segment at 8.8% a year, spread across peri-urban and rural towns the property market has largely ignored.<sup>4</sup> **Private colleges and universities** enrolled 286,454, more than a fifth of all higher education, growing quickly and concentrated in metros.<sup>24</sup>

## Who pays for the bed

| PAYER                  | HOW MANY STUDENTS                                                                                                                                                      | HOW THE MONEY FLOWS                                                                                                                               | WHAT IT MEANS FOR A BED                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NSFAS bursary</b>   | 770,000+ funded; 60%+ of university and 90%+ of TVET students qualify <sup>1</sup>                                                                                     | The state pays accredited landlords directly, up to a capped monthly rate per bed                                                                 | The volume market. The cap is the revenue ceiling; payment timing is the risk. Chapters 5 to 8.                                                           |
| <b>Other bursaries</b> | Roughly 100,000 to 150,000 (estimate): Funza Lushaka, SETAs, provincial funds such as Gauteng's GCRA, departmental schemes, corporate and trust sponsors <sup>32</sup> | Via university accounts, via administrators (Fundi, StudyTrust, Career Wise), or as allowances; accommodation caps often sit above the NSFAS rate | A smaller, better-paying pool concentrated at professional faculties and in Gauteng. No single register exists; this estimate is original to the Monitor. |
| <b>Private paying</b>  | All 286,454 private-college students (NSFAS-ineligible) plus self-funded public-university students <sup>24</sup>                                                      | Family pays the landlord at market rates                                                                                                          | The premium end of the market, priced in Chapters 6 and 9.                                                                                                |

Three kinds of money, three risk profiles: a provider's payer mix determines its revenue ceiling, payment timing and resilience more than its buildings do. A newer **NSFAS loan** serves the "missing middle" above the R350,000 threshold.<sup>19</sup>

## What NSFAS is, and why the state pays

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme is a statutory agency of the Department of Higher Education and Training, created by the NSFAS Act of 1999. It originally issued student loans; after the national student protests of 2015 to 2017, government announced fee-free higher education for poor and working-class students in December 2017, and NSFAS became a bursary scheme. In 2023 it supported roughly 770,000 students on an allocation of R44.6 billion, about a third of all public spending on post-school education.<sup>5</sup>

The state spends at this scale because post-school qualification remains the strongest route to employment in a country where youth unemployment exceeds 40%, and because expanding access is both redress policy and skills policy. The consequence for property is remarkable: through the accommodation allowance, the state is the sector's dominant paying tenant by proxy. That is why a housing report must begin with a funding scheme.

### HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Reading by payer: NSFAS money runs through Chapters 5 to 8. Bursary-funded students appear here and in Chapter 2. Private payers set the market rents of Chapters 6 and 9. Risks and the year ahead: Chapters 10 and 11.

## 01

# The Sector at a Glance

Six indices we track every edition: three from the MSH portfolio and the national payment record, three from the best-verified public data. Together they describe a sector where demand is structural, funding is tightening, and the cost of delivering a bed is outrunning the price the state will pay for it.

## MSH · PORTFOLIO

## 95.6%

MSH National Occupancy Index, at semester-one peak (May 2026)

Source: EazyLet, rooms basis

## MSH · PORTFOLIO

## 98.4%

MSH Collections Index: cash collected vs billed, trailing 16 months

Source: Xero (accrual vs cash)

## EXCLUSIVE

## R4,940

Median net actually received per NSFAS bed against the R5,200 cap

Source: MSH analysis of NSFAS records

## PUBLIC

## 62,958

Funded students in unaccredited accommodation, roughly R155m a month of state money

Source: NSFAS to Parliament, Aug 2026

## PUBLIC

## 511,600

National student bed shortfall (2020 modelled gap, →781k by 2025)

Source: IFC Market Assessment, 2021

## PUBLIC

## +51%

Rise in the cost to serve a bed, FY2021→FY2026

Source: MSH index; NERSA, metros, StatsSA

## The year in one paragraph

Student housing in South Africa is held up by one of the most reliable demand signals in property: government money. More than 60% of university students and over 90% of TVET students receive an annual NSFAS allowance,<sup>1</sup> and the modelled shortfall between what students need and what exists stood at roughly 511,600 beds in 2020, projected to reach 781,000 by 2025.<sup>2</sup> Yet 2025 was a year of tightening rather than expansion: in the corridor for which complete payment records were available, the number of students receiving accommodation funding fell 11.5%, the R5,200 ceiling became binding, and reversals more than doubled.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the cost of servicing a bed rose by roughly half over five years while the ceiling barely moved.

## THE THROUGH-LINE

Demand is structural and state-backed, supply is not keeping pace, and the economics of delivering a bed sit squeezed between a rising cost base and a capped price. This report sets out the evidence for each, and what it means for operators, landlords and funders.

## The investor dashboard

Four numbers decide whether a funded bed is worth owning. They are the first four tiles below, each measured in this report. The table beneath them answers the five questions an investment committee asks, with the chapter that carries the evidence.

|                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 · WHAT IT BILLS</b><br><b>R4,940</b><br>A Grade A metro bed a month, against the R5,200 cap observed in disbursements<br>Rates annexure; MSH records, Ch5 | <b>2 · WHAT LANDS</b><br><b>R4,869</b><br>Student-weighted net actually received; range R4,388 to R5,200 by institution<br>MSH billing, Ch5 | <b>3 · WHAT IT COSTS</b><br><b>R1,622</b><br>Full economic cost to run a bed a month, measured over twelve months<br>MSH books, Ch8 | <b>4 · WHAT IT SELLS FOR</b><br><b>R200k</b><br>Market asking per funded bed; observed range R148,000 to R273,000<br>Sale evidence, Ch6 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

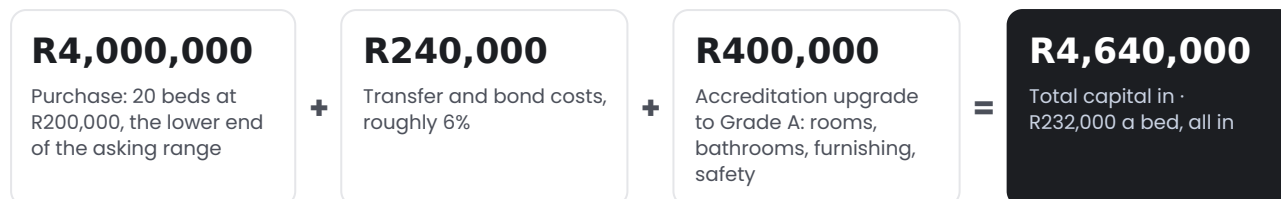
|                                        | INDICATOR                                                                 | READING                      | WHERE IT COMES FROM        |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>DEMAND</b><br>Is anyone in the bed? | Students NSFAS projects to fund in 2026                                   | <b>920,161</b>               | NSFAS to Parliament, Ch2   |
|                                        | National bed shortfall                                                    | <b>511,600</b> beds          | IFC, Ch3                   |
|                                        | Applications per available bed, MSH book                                  | <b>3.8</b> (Free State 9.1)  | MSH, Ch2                   |
|                                        | Students in unaccredited beds                                             | <b>62,958</b> confirmed      | NSFAS to Parliament, Ch5   |
| <b>INCOME</b><br>What does it earn?    | Blended billing across the observed grade mix                             | <b>R4,298</b> Cape register  | Register census, Ch5       |
|                                        | Private market rent, comparable rooms                                     | <b>R4,500 to R6,290</b>      | Live listings, Ch6         |
| <b>COSTS</b><br>What does it cost?     | Cost to serve as booked, before wage and replacement allocation           | <b>R1,441</b> /bed/month     | MSH books, Ch8             |
|                                        | Sector benchmark incl management (2022 uplifted) vs MSH on the same basis | <b>R2,390 vs R2,116</b>      | IFC, CPI; MSH, Ch8         |
| <b>RETURNS</b><br>What is left?        | Occupancy at semester-one peak                                            | <b>95.6%</b> portfolio       | MSH, Ch7                   |
|                                        | Collections against billed rent                                           | <b>98.4%</b>                 | MSH, Ch7                   |
|                                        | Net yield on the worked example overleaf                                  | <b>9.4%</b> before finance   | Worked example, p6         |
| <b>RISK</b><br>What can go wrong?      | NSFAS funding shortfall, 2026 (Minister's estimate)                       | <b>R15.0bn</b>               | Parliament, Aug 2026, Ch10 |
|                                        | Payment reversals as a share of gross                                     | <b>6.8%</b> , up from 2.8%   | MSH analysis, Ch5          |
|                                        | Funder audit outcome, latest                                              | <b>Disclaimer</b> of opinion | AGSA, Ch10                 |

### HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

Read the four tiles left to right and the shape of the deal is already visible: a bed bills R4,940, nets R4,869 at best, costs R1,622 to run, and sells for about R200,000. The page overleaf runs those four numbers end to end on a single property.

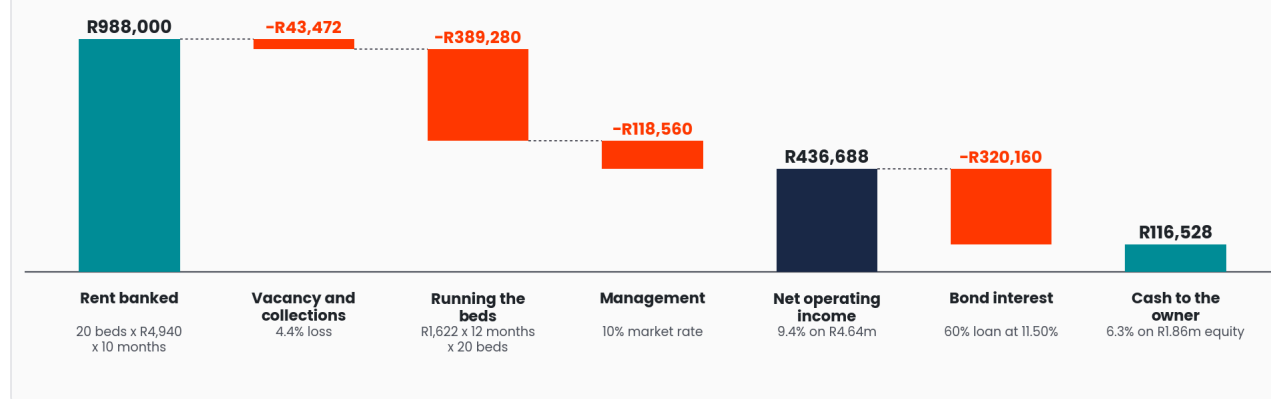
## A worked example: twenty funded beds

The dashboard in one transaction. A twenty-bed commune in a metro suburb, bought at the market's asking level, accredited at Grade A, let to funded students at the capped rate. Every figure is a measured input from this report, not a projection.



### The money path: one year, twenty funded beds

Teal is money arriving or remaining, orange is money leaving · all figures from the measured inputs on this page



One funding year, rands. Rent is banked for ten months; the beds are run and financed for twelve. Source: measured inputs, Ch5 to Ch8.

#### 9.4% net yield

NOI of R436,688 on all R4,640,000 of capital, above the 6.49% to 8.26% PBSA band and the top of Rode's grade-A range

#### 6.3% cash on cash

R116,528 on R1,856,000 of equity after a 60% bond at 11.50%, before capital repayment and tax

#### What moves it

Grade A to C in a non-metro town: under 6%. Buy at R150,000 a bed: above 12%. Everything else is detail

The example is deliberately unflattering: it buys at a real asking level, budgets a full accreditation upgrade, charges twelve months of cost against ten months of income, prices management at the market rate, and finances at a commercial margin. On those terms the deal still clears its hurdle, and the two numbers that move the answer most are the two this report exists to measure: the grade the building can reach, and the price paid per bed. <sup>17,20</sup>

#### THE INVESTOR'S FOUR QUESTIONS

What grade can this building reach, what will the institution actually pay against the cap, what does it truly cost to run for twelve months, and what am I paying per bed? The rest of this report is the evidence behind those four answers. This page is not a valuation and not advice; it is an illustration of the arithmetic.

## 02

# Demand

Student accommodation demand is a headcount rather than a forecast, and an increasingly funded one. Its composition is shifting away from universities toward the colleges the private sector has largely ignored.

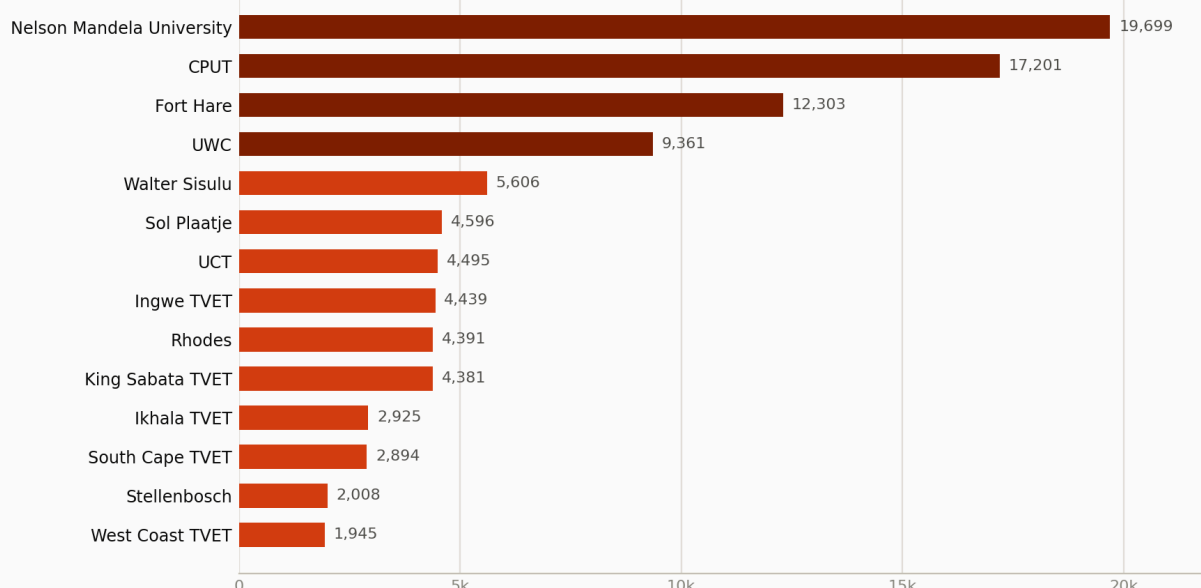
South Africa's public universities enrolled 1,071,715 students in 2023, a marginal 0.6% decline on the year before.<sup>4</sup> The growth is elsewhere: TVET colleges enrolled 564,089 students the same year, an 8.8% jump, making them the only public post-school segment expanding at pace.<sup>4</sup> This matters because TVET students are disproportionately NSFAS-funded and disproportionately located in the peri-urban and rural towns purpose-built developers have not reached.

The funding behind that demand is substantial. NSFAS supported roughly 770,000 students in 2023, on an allocation of R44.6 billion, about a third of all public post-school education spending.<sup>5</sup> Its 2026 projection, put to Parliament in August, is larger still: 920,161 funded students.<sup>28</sup> For accredited providers this is the closest thing the residential market has to a guaranteed tenant. Nationally, the largest demand pools sit at the big contact universities: TUT (~60,000 enrolled), NWU (55,000), UP and UJ (~54,000 each), Wits (42,000) and UFS (~40,000).<sup>4</sup>

Where payment records are available, in the Eastern, Western and Northern Cape, funded accommodation demand concentrates heavily: Nelson Mandela University, CPUT and Fort Hare alone carry nearly half the region's funded students.<sup>3</sup> The affordability picture underneath is stark: fewer than one in five students can comfortably afford the higher end of the private market near their institution.<sup>1</sup>

## Funded accommodation demand by institution: EC, WC and NC (2025)

NSFAS-funded students receiving accommodation payments · 22-institution payment-records extract only; Gauteng, Free State and North West not covered



Funded accommodation demand, 2025 (EC/WC/NC extract). Source: MSH analysis of NSFAS payment records.

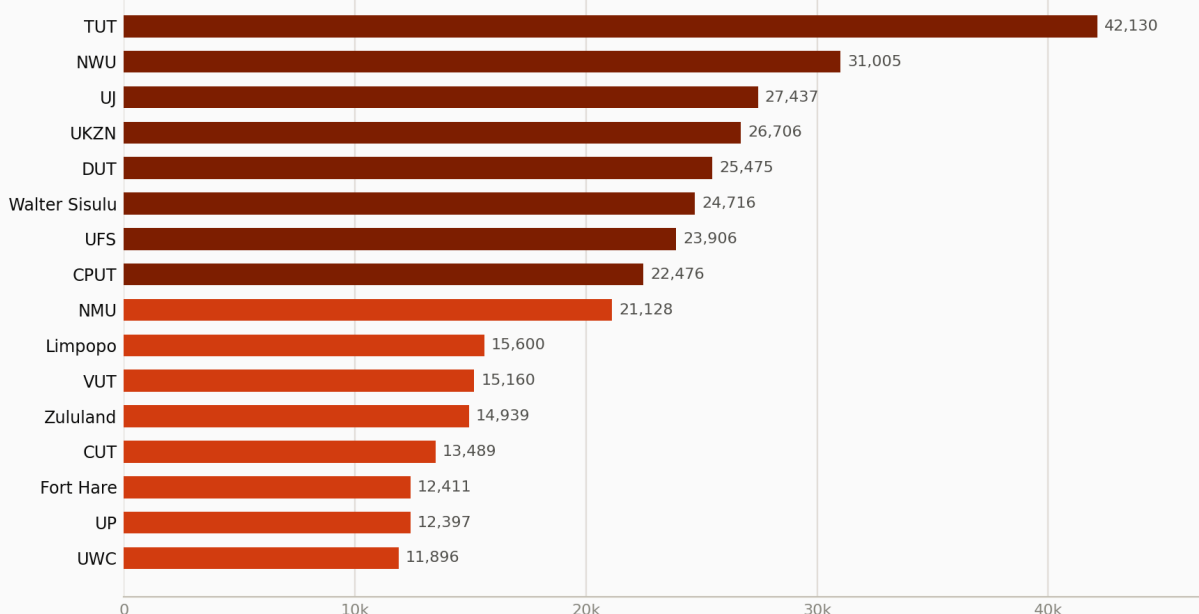
**The sector is short of the right stock, not of students or funding.**

## The national league

A parliamentary reply published in May 2026 provides, for the first time in one place, the NSFAS-funded student count at every public university and TVET college.<sup>19</sup> It confirms where the funded demand pools sit nationally: TUT leads the contact universities with 42,130 funded students, followed by North-West University, UJ, UKZN and DUT, with the technology universities and comprehensive institutions carrying far larger funded cohorts than the research-intensive campuses (Wits 11,114; UCT 5,613; Stellenbosch 2,179).

### The national league: NSFAS-funded students per university, 2025

All funding categories, contact universities (UNISA excluded: 188,762, distance) · top 16 of 26 shown · Source: Parliamentary reply NW874, 4 May 2026 (PMG)



NSFAS-funded students per university, 2025: all funding categories, national. The measure differs from the accommodation-payment extract on the previous page: this counts all funded students; that counts accommodation disbursements. Source: Parliamentary reply NW874 (4 May 2026).

Two further facts from the same reply frame the sector's funding backdrop: university disbursements of R47.9 billion in 2025 ran well ahead of the R39.9 billion budget, and loan recoveries have collapsed, from R388 million in 2020/21 to R126 million in 2024/25, against an outstanding loan book of R45.9 billion.<sup>19</sup> The funder's own arithmetic is under strain, a theme the risk chapter returns to.

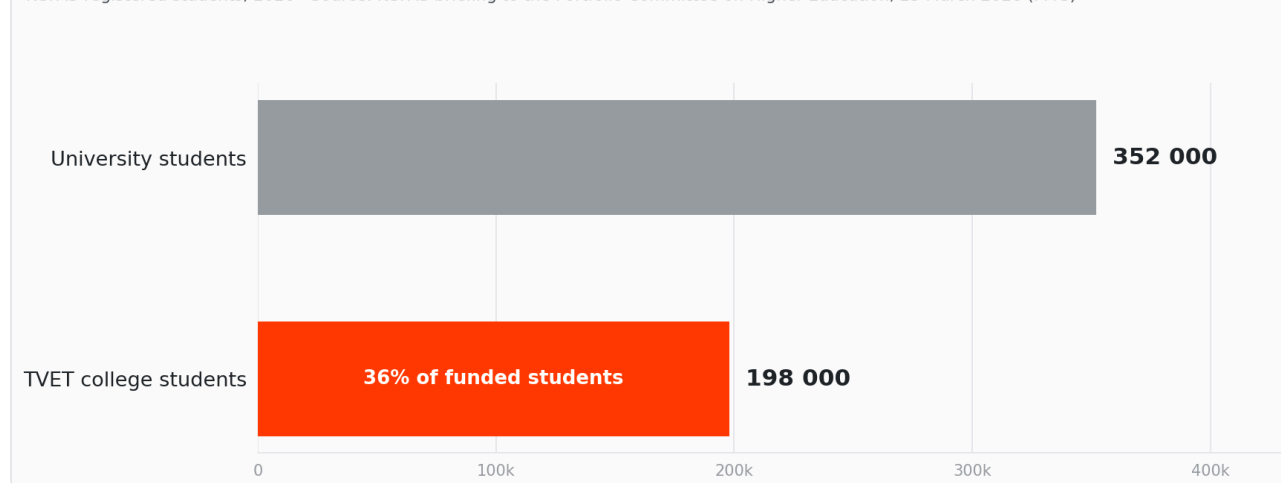
Private higher education adds a demand pool no shortage model counts. Private institutions enrolled 286,454 students in 2023, up 216% since 2010 against 20% growth at public universities; Eduvos alone teaches about 18,000 campus-based students and STADIO some 7,000, all NSFAS-ineligible and therefore private-pay by definition.<sup>24</sup> The IFC's bed-shortage models cover public institutions only, so this fast-growing cohort sits on top of every published deficit figure.<sup>24</sup>

## Spotlight: the TVET accommodation gap

Roughly 198,000 TVET college students are registered with NSFAS for 2026, about 36% of the funded student population, yet almost no accommodation supply has been built for them.<sup>21</sup> The sector competes hard over the other 64%.

### More than a third of NSFAS-funded students are at TVET colleges

NSFAS-registered students, 2026 · Source: NSFAS briefing to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, 25 March 2026 (PMG)



NSFAS-registered students, 2026. TVET students draw the same accommodation rate schedule as university students. Source: NSFAS briefing to Parliament, March 2026.

Public TVET colleges enrolled 564,089 students in 2023, the latest audited count.<sup>4</sup> Against that, institutional residence capacity is a rounding error: Parliament's KwaZulu-Natal oversight visit recorded a single 64-bed residence at Umfolozi's Nkandla campus and a 60-bed, female-only residence at Elangeni.<sup>21</sup> In practice, every TVET student living away from home is housed privately, informally, or not at all.

Landlords historically avoided the segment because of payment mechanics: TVET accommodation money was routed via the student, and too often left with the student mid-year. NSFAS now pays TVET accommodation providers directly, and the 2026 provider payment landed in late March.<sup>21</sup> The segment's defining credit risk is gone, and the market has not repriced for it. MSH's own book shows the opportunity: 378 TVET students, 23% of active tenants, on the same R5,200/R4,940 ceiling.<sup>11</sup>

The caveat is programme churn: DHET is phasing out 1,475 legacy qualifications and the NATED N4–N6 pipeline, so a location decision on today's programme mix carries real risk.<sup>21</sup> MSH's mid-2026 bed churn from TVET course cancellations (Chapter 7) shows that risk in practice.

The economics lean the same way. TVET campuses concentrate in cheaper, often non-metro markets, where the rate steps down roughly 18% while property prices fall much further, and buying-and-converting runs at R125,000–150,000 a bed against roughly R385,000 to build new (operator and developer figures).<sup>18</sup> The calendar adds a second lever: January and mid-year intakes give a landlord a second chance at occupancy that no university market offers. MSH's application data bears this out, with 68% of applications received from May 2026 onward coming from TVET students.<sup>11</sup>

### THE FUNDED MARKET NOBODY IS BUILDING FOR

Same rate, cheaper property, direct payment, two intakes a year, and a third of the funded population. The sector's focus on universities has left its largest gap unpriced.

## 03

# Supply & the Bed Shortage

The sector quotes a shortage number far more often than it cites one correctly. Tracing it to source is the first step to understanding the real gap, and what would close it.

The figure most often repeated, "a shortage of 300,000 to 500,000 beds", is in fact three numbers from three different documents, routinely conflated.<sup>6</sup> Separating them clarifies the whole supply debate.

## Three numbers, three different questions

The figures conflated as 'the student bed shortage': a measured shortage, a delivery target and a modelled market gap



The three numbers behind the "student bed shortage." Sources: DHET Ministerial Committee Report (2011); DHET/DBSA SHIP programme (2019); IFC Market Assessment (2021).

The original government estimate, in the 2011 DHET Ministerial Committee Report, put the 2010 residence-bed shortage at 195,815, against a national residence stock of 107,598 beds housing just 20% of contact students.<sup>6</sup> The widely quoted ~500,000 traces to the IFC's 2021 market assessment, which modelled a supply-demand gap of 511,600 beds in 2020, rising to 781,000 by 2025.<sup>2</sup> The 300,000 is not a shortage figure at all; it is the delivery target of the government's SHIP programme.<sup>6</sup>

SHIP itself has struggled: led by DHET with the DBSA, it has faced limited success attracting private-sector interest, and delivery has run at roughly 4,000 beds a year against a need many multiples higher.<sup>7</sup> SHIP lends exclusively to public institutions, so its beds are university-owned by design, while at the big metros the sector already leans the other way: at UJ and Wits, private accredited beds outnumber university-owned roughly three to four times over (UJ: 7,494 own vs ~26,000 private; Wits: ~6,000 vs ~26,000).<sup>7</sup>

Private developers, meanwhile, have concentrated on the mid-to-upper price bands in urban centres, leaving the genuinely affordable segment and the rural TVET catchment materially under-served.<sup>1</sup>

## THE REAL GAP

The shortage that matters is in **affordable, accredited** beds where funded students actually study: a narrower, more actionable gap than the headline half-million.

## The new-campus pipeline: public promises, private delivery

Where the next campuses open is where the next accommodation demand lands. On that question the public and private sectors are moving at entirely different speeds.<sup>26</sup>

The University of Science and Innovation promised for Ekurhuleni in the February 2020 State of the Nation Address was, six years later, still choosing its site. In June 2026 the Minister of Higher Education named four candidate sites in Boksburg; in July a delegation including the Finance Minister inspected the former Cinderella Prison grounds and the Denel Academy in Kempton Park, the latter flagged only as a possible interim teaching venue. The Minister's own assessment is that construction "realistically" begins in 2029, after remaining feasibility work, a Treasury application and procurement. The Hammanskraal policing university, announced in the same 2020 speech, has reported even less progress.<sup>26</sup>

The precedent for what happens when a public university does open is instructive. Sol Plaatje University and the University of Mpumalanga were proclaimed in August 2013 and opened in 2014 with first intakes of roughly 135 and 140 students; campus residence capacity took years longer, and private landlords in Kimberley and Mbombela carried most of the accommodation demand through the early years. A new Ekurhuleni institution would likely repeat that pattern from a slower start.

The private sector is not waiting. Private institutions enrolled 286,454 students in 2023, more than a fifth of all higher education, and the campuses below are funded, dated and in most cases already open.<sup>24</sup> Each is a real near-term demand node in its metro, several with their own residences attached.

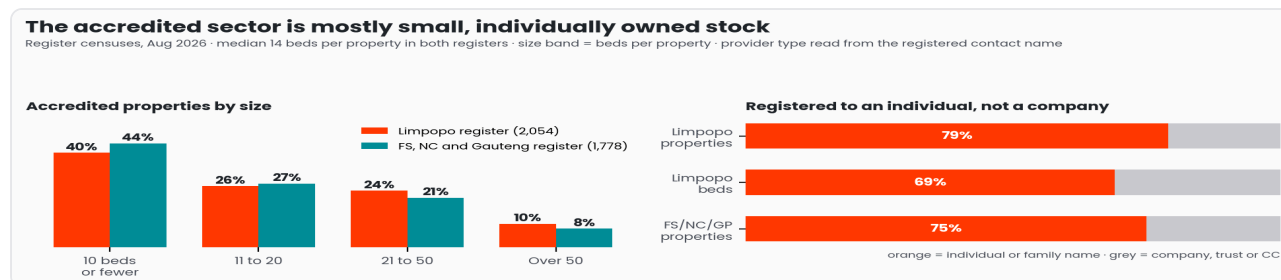
| CAMPUS                       | METRO         | STATUS                                 | SCALE                                                          |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eduvos Mowbray               | Cape Town     | Opened May 2024                        | 12th Eduvos campus nationally                                  |
| Sol-Tech Plaashuis residence | Centurion     | Opened Oct 2024                        | 400-bed dedicated residence                                    |
| STADIO Durbanville           | Cape Town     | Opened Oct 2025; first intake Feb 2026 | R370m · 13,000 m <sup>2</sup> · 4,000–5,000 students           |
| Emeris Sandton (ADVTECH)     | Johannesburg  | Opened Feb 2026                        | R420m · 47,000 m <sup>2</sup> · 9,000 students, 13,000 planned |
| Emeris Nelson Mandela Bay    | Gqeberha      | Opened Feb 2026                        | Former Varsity College NMB site                                |
| Akademia Paarl               | Paarl         | First intake 2026                      | ~340 first-years, 2,000+ projected by 2032                     |
| Akademia Toekomsbouer        | Pretoria east | Building from Jan 2026; students 2028  | R3.2bn · ~1,500 residence beds planned                         |
| Emeris Durban mega-campus    | Umhlanga      | Building 2027; phase 1 opens 2029      | 8,000 students · 500-bed residence, 1,000 by 2035              |

### READING THE PIPELINE

For accommodation planning, dated private openings are **demand**, public announcements are **options**. And when a public campus does finally open, the SPU and UMP precedent says private landlords house its first cohorts. Note the funding split: private-institution students are NSFAS-ineligible, so these nodes grow the private-paying market, not the funded one.

## Where the money lands: student housing as a local economy

The bed shortage is usually discussed as supply. It is also a distribution channel: R4.09bn of NSFAS accommodation money went to about 4,600 providers for 127,445 students in the first nine months of 2025, much of it to the smallest landlords in the country.<sup>37</sup>



Size and ownership profile of accredited stock in the Limpopo and Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng registers, August 2026. Provider type inferred from the registered contact name. Source: MSH register censuses.

The registers describe a sector of small operators. In Limpopo, 40% of accredited properties hold ten beds or fewer, 79% are registered to an individual, and those individuals hold 69% of the beds; the Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng register reads almost identically, and 39% of Limpopo addresses carry village or township names.<sup>27,33</sup>

The typical accredited landlord is a household, not a fund.

Around those beds sits a student economy the housing debate rarely counts: documented local multipliers run R1.81 per rand of student spend at Potchefstroom and 2.27 at Sol Plaatje; NSFAS-funded students report about R35,000 a year of spending beyond accommodation.<sup>37</sup> In Bloemfontein's student suburbs 83% to 100% of surveyed businesses' trade is student trade; in Mthatha, KwaDlangezwa and Soshanguve, households let rooms at R400 to R2,500 a month.<sup>37</sup>

The counterpoint belongs alongside: the same studies document nine-square-metre rooms, four pit toilets for thirty students and unpaid small operators.<sup>37</sup> Accreditation separates the two: it is how a household becomes an SMME with a state counterparty, and how a backyard room meets a standard or leaves the funded system.

Jobs are the other half of the argument, and the sector has claims but no measurement: no jobs-per-bed norm exists, and the state's programme documents promise "thousands of jobs" without a number. What can be anchored: a 1,440-bed university build reported 500 construction jobs, about 0.35 per bed; large operators disclose two to 3.5 property staff per 100 beds; and MSH's own payroll runs about 2.5 full-time-equivalent jobs per 100 beds, 1.6 of them property-facing.<sup>38</sup> On those ratios the 127,445 privately housed funded students of 2025 sustain roughly 2,500 to 4,500 direct operator jobs, and building out the half-million-bed gap would generate on the order of 180,000 construction job-years and 13,000 permanent posts.

The sector has been through one attempt to reward that. Section 12J, the venture-capital tax incentive that ran to June 2021, drew R11.5bn into qualifying funds, roughly half into hotel and student accommodation, before Treasury let it lapse: its review found 8,239 jobs against R1.8bn of tax foregone, only 37% of investees adding staff, and concluded that low-risk property deals had defeated the small-business intent.<sup>38</sup> The lesson for the next instrument: count the jobs and the household income first, then design the incentive around what is measured.

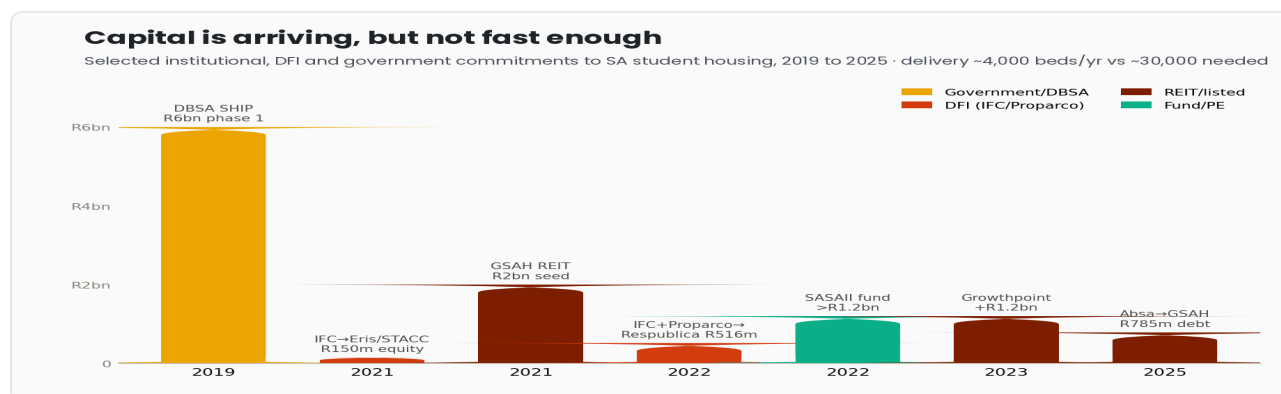
### THE REDISTRIBUTION NOBODY TRACKS

Most accredited landlords are households with a handful of beds, many in townships and villages, paid as business income, not grant: the public-interest case, and the case for measuring it.

## 04

# Capital Flows into Student Housing

The money has started to move. Development finance institutions, a listed REIT and government programmes have all committed capital to the sector since 2019, though nowhere near fast enough to close the gap.



Selected institutional, DFI and government commitments to SA student housing, 2019–2025. Sources: IFC, DBSA, Growthpoint, Absa, company reports.

Between 2021 and 2022, development finance arrived in force: the IFC took a R150m stake in Eris's student platform, IFC, Proparco and partners put R516m into Respublica, and RMB arranged a R1.13bn Respublica buyout, then the sector's largest transaction.<sup>8</sup>

The listed market followed: Growthpoint launched the first unlisted purpose-built student REIT in 2021, now roughly R3.5bn and 9,000 beds at 98% occupancy, with a JSE listing in view.<sup>8</sup> On the public side, the DBSA committed R6bn to SHIP's first phase against a need near R80bn.<sup>7</sup>

The largest private-bed tenants, though, are the universities themselves. CPUT carries a R1.08bn lease liability for leased residences, paying roughly R390m a year to private lessors; Walter Sisulu University houses about 20,000 of its 25,000 accommodated students in private and leased stock; the University of Limpopo is building 4,500 beds with R1.3bn committed.<sup>35</sup> With 5,000 owned beds for 25,000 housed students and lease books above R1bn, the public-versus-private question is settled: the most creditworthy counterparties depend structurally on private beds.

Yet the pace is the problem. Against a shortfall of half a million beds, delivery of roughly 4,000 accredited beds a year barely registers.<sup>7</sup> The capital pool is also thin and concentrated; a cautionary case is the Inkunzi fund, which targeted R1.4bn, raised a fraction, and built nothing.<sup>8</sup>

Who lends against a student bed matters as much as the headline commitments. TUHF finances student conversions but reports a disproportionate share of its impaired loans in the segment, citing NSFAS delays; Business Partners lists student accommodation among eligible uses; the NHFC funded over 1,000 Western Cape beds in 2025 at 10 to 20% equity; and Absa wrote a R785 million facility for Growthpoint's 2,400-bed KZN development.<sup>23</sup> The thread is caution about NSFAS-dependent income: capital follows accredited operators with collections infrastructure.

## THE HEADLINE

Capital from DFIs, a listed REIT and government programmes is arriving an order of magnitude too slow for a half-million-bed deficit.

## 05

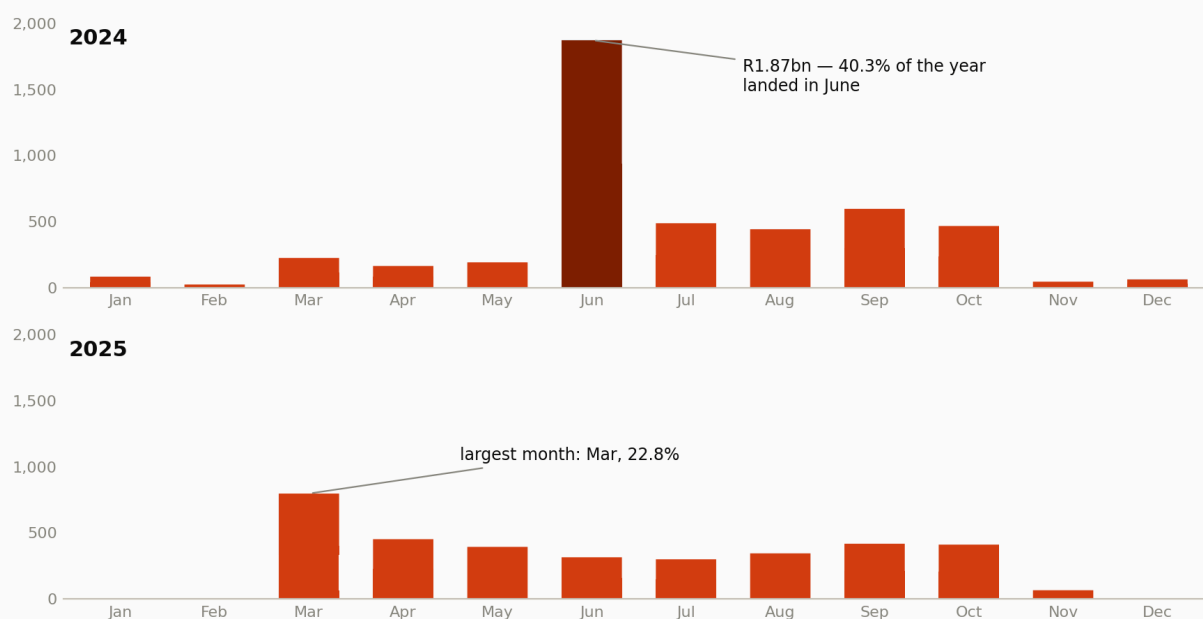
# The NSFAS Economy

This chapter is built on something no other industry report has published: the transaction-level record of NSFAS accommodation payments. It is the closest look yet at how student rent money really moves, and it explains, in the data, the cash-flow whiplash every student landlord has felt.

Working from 1.4 million disbursement records across 22 institutions, we can reconstruct NSFAS's outbound accommodation payments directly rather than by inference. Net of reversals, R4.52 billion was disbursed in 2024 and R3.49 billion through November 2025.<sup>3</sup> One scoping note matters throughout: these records show what NSFAS sends out. At most universities the allowance is then administered through third-party platforms such as Fundi and Intellimali, so the onward journey to the landlord happens off this dataset. This chapter reads both layers: the disbursement records for the state's side, and MSH's own billing for what actually arrives.

## NSFAS accommodation disbursements by month (R millions)

22 institutions, Eastern/Western/Northern Cape · reversals excluded · Source: NSFAS payment records, MSH analysis



NSFAS accommodation disbursements by month. In 2024, 40.3% of the year's money landed in a single month, June, after months of delay. 2025 was materially more even. Source: MSH analysis of NSFAS payment records (22-institution extract).

The 2024 pattern is the clearest picture of the cycle problem: 40% of the year's money arrived in June, R1.87 billion in one month, after a first quarter in which February disbursed just R23 million.<sup>3</sup> A landlord carrying NSFAS-funded students was, in effect, extending months of unsecured credit to the state. The encouraging signal is that 2025 normalised, with the worst single-month concentration roughly halving.

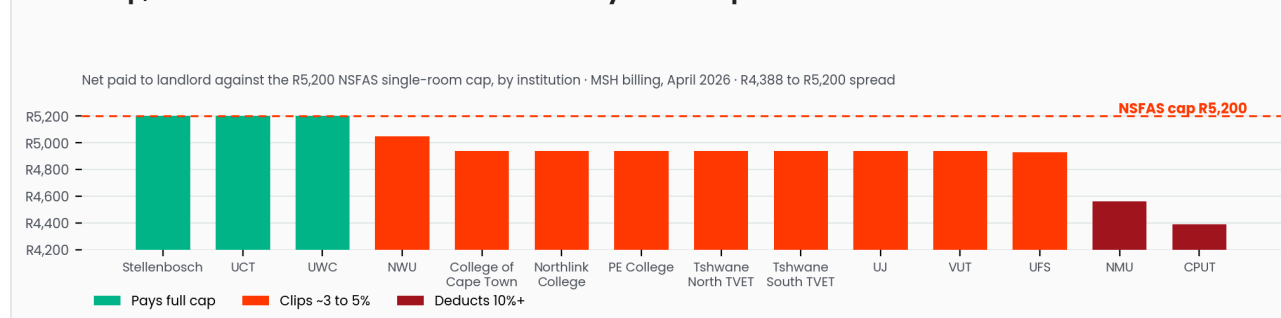
### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR CASH VS. ACCRUAL

Because invoicing and cash landing fall in different months, an accredited provider can look loss-making on a cash basis in a quarter where it is healthy on accrual. The distortion is timing rather than distress, and this chart is the proof.

## The ceiling is binding, but the cap is not what the landlord receives

In 2025 the median monthly disbursement NSFAS sent out was exactly R5,200, the gross ceiling, and more than half of all outbound payments sat at or above it.<sup>3</sup> The system has converged on the cap. But the cap is not what reaches the landlord. Between the disbursement and the bank account sit the accreditation partner's 5% and, at the universities, each institution's own rates and admin deductions applied through platforms like Fundi and Intellimali. MSH's own billing measures what survives that journey.

### Same cap, different net: what the landlord actually receives per bed



Net received per bed against the R5,200 single-room cap, by institution. Against one cap, landlords receive between R4,388 and R5,200, a spread driven by institutional admin deductions of 0% to 15.6%. Source: MSH billing, April 2026.

Against the R5,200 single-room cap, the net amount a landlord actually receives ranges from R4,388 to the full R5,200, with a student-weighted average of R4,869.<sup>3</sup> A few institutions pay the full cap; most clip the standard 5% to R4,940; some deduct far more, applying their own admin fees and rental rates. The "R5,200 cap" is a ceiling almost nobody pays in full.

A structural change compounds this. On the portal-administered channel, which carries most TVET college payments, NSFAS has moved from paying via intermediaries to paying landlords **directly**, while accreditation partners still deduct their fee. The universities remain a separate world: their allowances flow through third-party administrators, and what a landlord receives is set by each institution, not by the portal. The widest deduction in the chart has a structural cause: CPUT operates its own accreditation layer, accrediting only a small number of mostly high-end properties, and treats the rest, including properties holding NSFAS accreditation, as unaccredited, paying them the lower unaccredited rate.

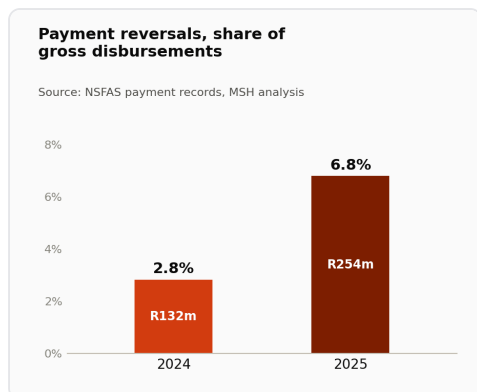
Two further movements tighten the picture. Reversals more than doubled as a share of gross, from 2.8% in 2024 to 6.8% in 2025.<sup>3</sup> And significant money flows outside the accreditation net: institutional estimates directly observe 16,681 students in unaccredited beds at just 16 institutions, or R41.7 million a month as a floor. The national figure is now on the record: NSFAS told Parliament in August 2026 that **62,958 funded students are in non-accredited accommodation**, 20,613 at ten universities and 42,345 at 34 TVET colleges, which at the R25,000-a-year unaccredited ceiling is roughly **R155 million a month** of state money paid for beds that were never accredited.<sup>28</sup> That ceiling, set by a March 2025 circular, is the first attempt to close the gap, and it prices an unaccredited bed at less than half an accredited one.<sup>9</sup>

### MODEL THE NET, NOT THE CAP

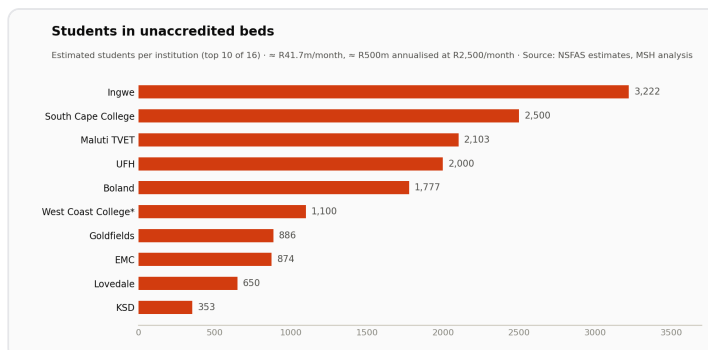
R5,200 is a ceiling, not a price. The student-weighted net actually received is **R4,869**, and at the widest institution it falls to R4,388: a R812 monthly difference on the same funded student, set by which institution they attend rather than by the property. Any underwriting built on the headline cap overstates income by up to 16% before a single cost is counted.

## Fewer students, more reversals

The number of unique students receiving accommodation funding fell 11.5% year on year in the extract, from 117,728 to 104,170.<sup>3</sup> Alongside rising reversals, the direction of travel through 2025 was a tightening of the funded base, a signal providers should read as heightened counterparty and occupancy risk on NSFAS-dependent beds.



Payment reversals as a share of gross disbursements, 2024 vs 2025. Source: MSH analysis of NSFAS payment records.



Students in unaccredited beds, directly observed at 16 institutions: the floor beneath the national figure of 62,958 that NSFAS confirmed to Parliament on 12 August 2026. Source: NSFAS; MSH analysis.

## What the money buys: completion, and the funding clock

The state funds beds so that students graduate, and the record on that is uneven. Of university entrants to three-year degrees, 23% finish in three years and 69% within six; diploma entrants fare worse; and in the TVET colleges that hold the fastest-growing funded population, throughput from NC(V) Level 2 to Level 4 within three years has run at 9% to 13% in every published cohort.<sup>36</sup> No NSFAS cohort series exists, but applying these rates to the spend implies that roughly R12bn to R16bn of the R42bn to R52bn annual budget funds students who will not complete, an MSH estimate. For those who do finish, the qualification holds its value: graduate unemployment is 12.4% against 36% for matriculants, though TVET tracer studies find most certificate holders still unemployed years later.<sup>36</sup>

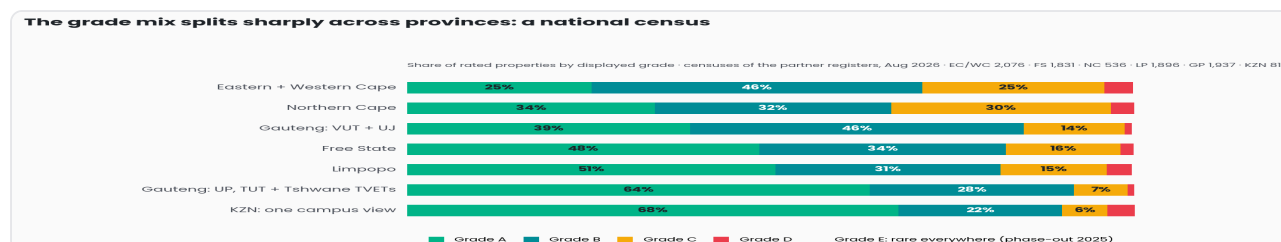
One cause is visible from the accommodation side and absent from the literature. NSFAS funds a qualification's minimum duration plus one year, and the clock starts at first registration and never resets: years spent in a first course, at another institution, or in a failed year all count. Operators see funded students change qualification after a first year without knowing this, then exhaust eligibility a year short of the new degree, having consumed three or four years of tuition, allowances and accommodation. Residence-based students complete at higher rates than off-campus peers in every study that has looked, but no study has yet measured accredited private accommodation; that gap is where the sector's strongest argument, and its accountability, both lie.<sup>36</sup>

### THE UNMEASURED RETURN

Perhaps a third of the NSFAS budget funds students who never complete, and part of that loss is a rule-design failure that a check-in conversation could prevent. Whether accredited private beds raise completion is the single most valuable unanswered question in this sector, and the operators hold the data to answer it.

## The grade mix: what accredited stock is really licensed to earn

Every accredited property carries a grade, and the grade sets the rate. No published statistic shows how the stock is distributed across those grades, so this edition measured it: censuses of the partner registers across seven provinces, roughly 9,600 properties in all: Eastern and Western Cape (2,076), Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng on one operator's book (4,412), Limpopo (2,054), VUT and UJ (1,012) and KwaZulu-Natal from one campus profile (81), all August 2026.<sup>27</sup>



Share of rated properties by displayed grade, August 2026, across five partner registers (word grades map to A–E, confirmed with the operator). Bars ordered by Grade A share. KZN reflects one campus profile's view. Source: MSH analysis.

| GRADE (SINGLE ROOM) | METRO RATE | NON-METRO RATE | SHARE (CAPE REGISTER)        |
|---------------------|------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| A                   | R4,940.00  | R4,050.80      | 25.3%                        |
| B                   | R4,693.00  | R3,848.26      | 45.5%                        |
| C                   | R4,458.35  | R3,655.85      | 25.0%                        |
| D                   | R4,235.43  | R3,473.05      | 3.9% · exits 2026            |
| E                   | R4,023.66  | R3,299.40      | 0.3% · six remain (out 2025) |

Three findings follow. First, the registers disagree sharply. In the Cape register the modal accredited property is Grade B (45.5%), and only one in four holds the top grade; non-metro stock grades lower still (17% A against 32% in the metros). The KwaZulu-Natal register inverts the picture: 68% of its properties carry Grade A, across the DUT, UKZN and Durban TVET catchments. A spread of that width is unlikely to be explained by stock quality alone; it is stated here as an anomaly that any national grading system should account for. Second, weighting the official rate ladder by the observed mixes puts blended single-room billing at **R4,298 a bed a month in the Cape register, 13% below the headline Grade A metro rate** this report's economics chapter is built on, against R4,784 in KZN. Third, the bottom of the ladder is going: six Grade E properties remain of 2,076 after the 2025 phase-out, and 80 Grade D follow in 2026.

The margin consequence is direct: cost does not fall with grade. Against the measured R1,622 stack, a Grade C non-metro single earning R3,655.85 keeps R1,000 a month less than the Grade A metro bed, before management and finance. Grades are contested terrain: NSFAS attributes part of its payment-delay backlog to properties "inaccurately accredited with high grades", and a 2025 parliamentary record contains an allegation of a broker offering to turn a Grade D into a Grade A for a fee.<sup>27</sup> The inland registers land between the coasts: Free State grades 48% A, Limpopo half A, Northern Cape a third, and Gauteng splits sharply by anchor (VUT 30% A, UJ 47%, the UP and TUT book 64%). Caveats: KZN is one campus profile's view; shares are property-weighted.

### THE REALISTIC NUMBER

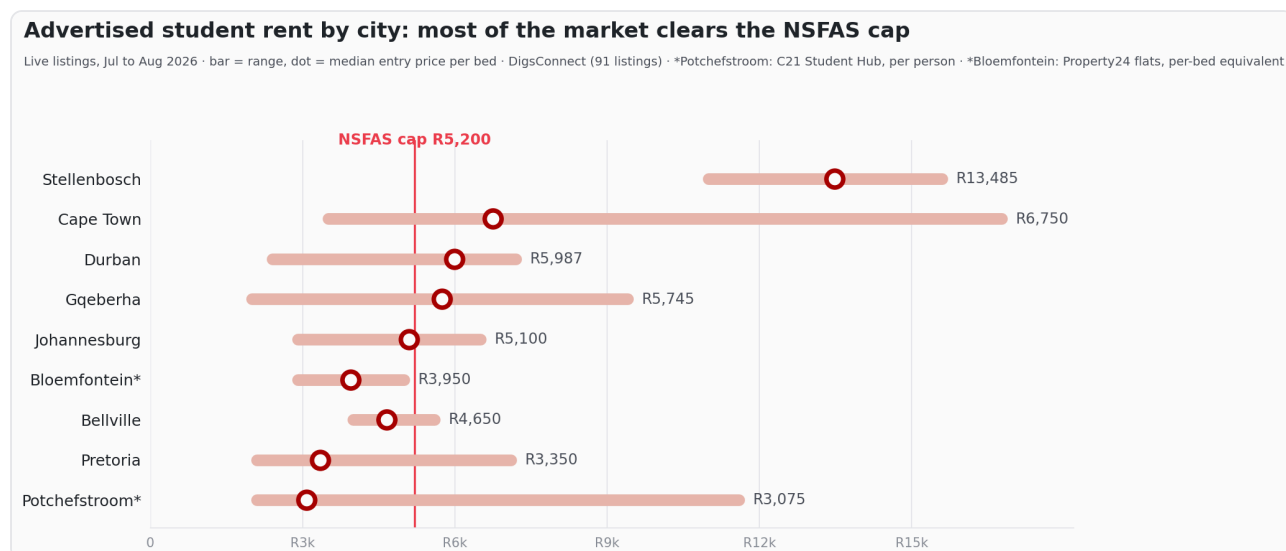
Headline economics quote the Grade A metro single at R4,940. The average Cape-register property is licensed to bill about **R4,298**, and with 2026 rates unannounced that frozen blend is the realistic revenue line.

## 06

# Rentals & Returns

There is no such thing as an average student rent. A live read of the market shows it swinging two- to three-fold between cities and up to four-fold between sub-markets inside a single city. This chapter leads with that variation rather than a misleading single average.

From a live sample of advertised listings across nine student markets, median entry prices run from roughly R3,075 in Potchefstroom to R13,485 in Stellenbosch.<sup>10</sup> These are entry prices, the cheapest bed in each listing, so typical rents sit higher, and mid-year samples carry second-semester discounting. Most metros still clear the R5,200 NSFAS cap at entry level; the private market is priced above what the state pays.



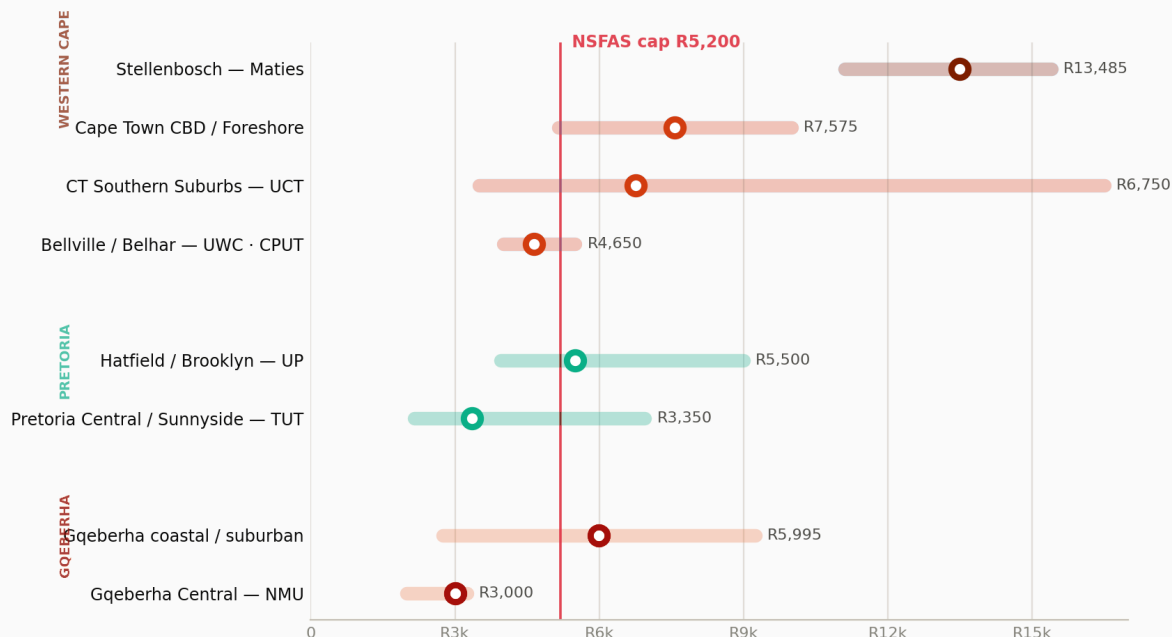
Advertised student rent per bed by city, live listings, July to August 2026. Cape-region cities from DigsConnect; Potchefstroom from C21 Student Hub (per person); Bloemfontein from Property24 flats (per-bed equivalent). Source: MSH analysis.

The by-city view understates the real story, which is intra-city. Within one province the swing is extreme, and it maps directly onto which university a sub-market serves.

## Location is everything

### Location is everything: student rent swings 4× within a single city

Live DigsConnect advertised rent per bed by student sub-market · bar = range, dot = median · July 2026 (91 listings)



Advertised rent by student sub-market, live listings. The swing within a single city reaches 4×. Source: DigsConnect, MSH analysis.

In the Western Cape, entry prices run from R4,650 in the Bellville/Belhar belt that serves UWC and CPUT, through R6,750 in UCT's Southern Suburbs (entry-price median; premium rooms there list above R16,000), to R13,485 in Stellenbosch, a four-fold spread in one province.<sup>10</sup> Pretoria splits between the budget Central/Sunnyside market (R3,350) and premium Hatfield near UP (R5,500, with branded operators to R9,000). Gqeberha divides between the affordable Central area (R3,000) and the coastal belt (R5,995).

Against this, MSH's own rents sit at the affordable end of every market. MSH bills NSFAS single rooms at roughly R4,900 on average, and even its private-paying students, who pay a clear premium, average R6,290 in Cape Town.<sup>11</sup> Both sit below the premium operators and below the Stellenbosch, Hatfield and CBD tiers entirely.

Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom, thin on the Cape Town-centred student platform, are deep markets on their local channels. Century 21 Student Hub, the dominant Potchefstroom agency, lists twelve residences near NWU at R2,100 to R11,595 per student, entry prices clustering near R3,100; Property24 carries over 1,000 Bloemfontein rentals, with bachelors and one-beds at R4,100 to R5,000 and shared two-beds at R2,900 to R4,250 a room.<sup>10</sup> Both markets clear at or below the cap at entry, in line with MSH's rates and NWU's flat rate.<sup>11</sup>

A premium tier serves upper-end private-paying students: CampusKey publishes rates of roughly R8,600 to R16,773 across its campuses, Rise Student Living's Cape Town building lists 2026 rates of R6,615 to R10,000 all-inclusive, and the Feenstra Group runs about 10,000 purpose-built beds.<sup>10</sup> Standard annual rates read this tier better than mid-year listings, which discount to fill second-semester vacancies.

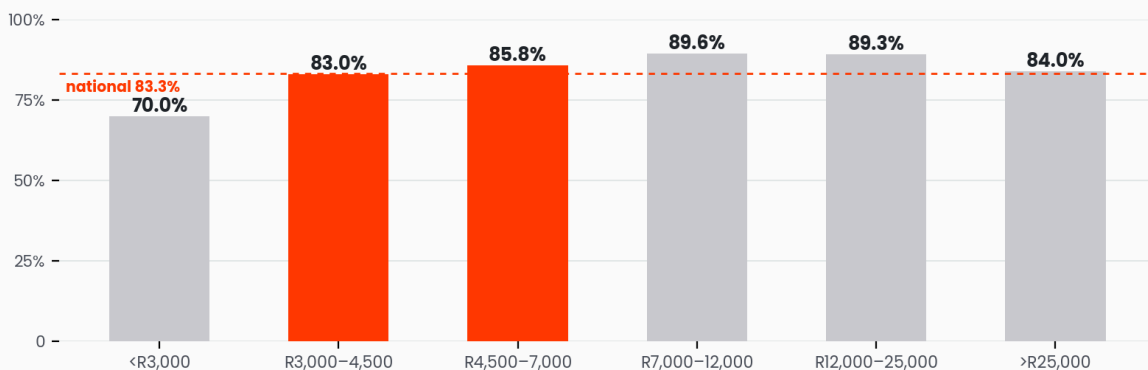
On returns, the ACUHO-I SAC/IFC building-cost study forecasts purpose-built student accommodation yields of **6.49% to 8.26%**.<sup>17</sup> The buy-to-let comparison confirms that band is competitive: Rode puts grade-A apartment-block capitalisation rates at 7.3–8.2% across the Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria suburbs in Q2 2026, on national flat vacancies of 3.9%.<sup>20</sup> Operators targeting the NSFAS-affordable tier trade some yield ceiling for payer stability.

## Against the national benchmark

The student sector can be read against the broader residential rental market. TPN's Residential Rental Monitor put national tenants in good standing at 83.95% in Q3 2025, on rental escalation of 4.76%.<sup>12</sup> Payment performance rises with rental value, and the bands most student rooms fall into, R3,000–7,000, sit at 83–86% good standing.<sup>12</sup>

### Tenants in good standing by rental band: the MSH benchmark

TPN Residential Rental Monitor Q1 2025 · orange bars are the bands student rooms fall into · MSH collections are compared against these



Tenants in good standing by rental band. Student rooms concentrate in the R3,000–7,000 bands. Source: TPN Residential Rental Monitor, Q1 2025.

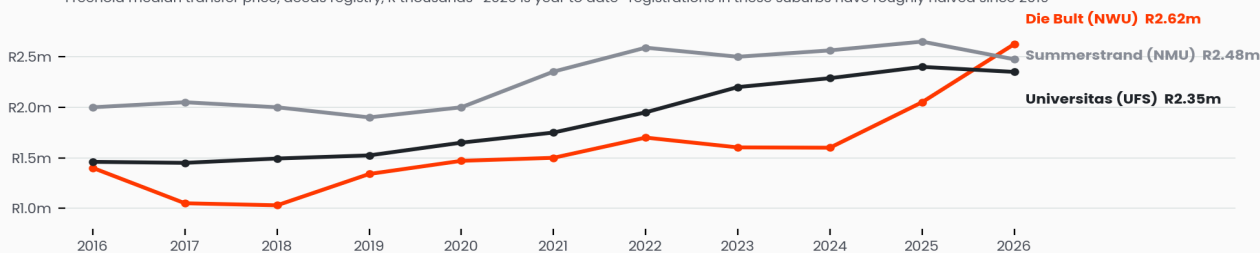
MSH's own collections, at 98.4% of billed rent over the trailing period,<sup>11</sup> compare favourably against these residential benchmarks, a function of the NSFAS payer standing behind the majority of beds. The portfolio chapter examines that collections performance directly.

## What the deeds registry shows

Asking prices are one witness; registered transfers are the other. Deeds data for the main student suburbs shows the same squeeze from the ownership side: freehold medians have re-rated sharply while the number of properties changing hands has roughly halved since 2019.<sup>29</sup> Die Bult's median jumped 28% in 2026 alone; Universitas is up 64% over the decade on volumes that fell from 124 registrations a year to fewer than 60. Owners of student-belt houses are holding, not selling, and the stock that does trade commands a rising premium. A market where prices climb as volume drains is a market being repriced by income, which is what an administered rent per bed does to a suburb.

### Student-suburb house prices are re-rating on falling volumes

Freehold median transfer price, deeds registry, R thousands · 2026 is year to date · registrations in these suburbs have roughly halved since 2019



Freehold median transfer prices in three campus suburbs, deeds registry, 2016 to 2026 (year to date). Source: Lightstone suburb data, August 2026.<sup>29</sup>

## What a student bed sells for

Rents are only half the price signal. This edition also reads the sale market: what properties marketed as student communes and blocks actually ask, against ordinary houses in the same suburbs.<sup>25</sup>

| SUBURB (CAMPUS)                 | ORDINARY 2–5 BED HOUSE, MEDIAN ASKING | COMMUNE SHARE OF HOUSE LISTINGS | MEDIAN ASKING PER ROOM |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Universitas, Bloemfontein (UFS) | R2,295,000                            | 69%                             | R252,000               |
| Brandwag, Bloemfontein (UFS)    | R2,515,000                            | 83%                             | R279,000               |
| Die Bult, Potchefstroom (NWU)   | R2,257,500                            | 51%                             | R372,000               |
| Potchefstroom Central (NWU)     | R1,800,000                            | 14%                             | R304,000               |

In the suburbs ringing UFS the house market effectively *is* the commune market: 69% of Universitas house listings and 83% of Brandwag's advertise six or more bedrooms, at R200,000 to R300,000 per room. Where listings state student numbers, per-bed pricing drops further: a 17-room Universitas house 300 m from campus, occupied by 20 students, asks R148,000 a student, and a 30-bed accredited property in Potchefstroom asks R200,000 a bed; a Potchefstroom block of fifteen two-sleeper flats asks R273,000 a bed.

Two things follow. First, the uplift over the ordinary house next door is the business, not the bricks: 12 to 17-room communes ask roughly 1.2 to 2.4 times the ordinary-house median in their own suburb. Second, acquisition and construction are different routes to the same bed, and the asking evidence lets a reader place them side by side: per-bed asking prices of R148,000 to R273,000 sit inside the R110,000 to R310,000 per-bed construction range,<sup>17</sup> before the R125,000 to R150,000 a bed that conversion to accredited standard typically adds. Which route wins turns on land, scale and time to income in a specific town, and this edition does not attempt that comparison.

Bellville tells the same story on a thinner sample: 14 to 16-room conversions near UWC, CPUT and Northlink ask about R3.5m, R219,000 to R250,000 per room. Bloemfontein, notably, prices commune stock 25 to 35% below Potchefstroom per room, consistent with it being the one metro where Rode shows flat vacancy rising and with its by-law squeeze on communes.<sup>20</sup>

The caveats matter: these are asking prices, not transfers; room counts are as advertised; and mid-year listings skew toward stock that has struggled to fill. The signal survives the caveats: registered transfers on the previous page confirm the direction, and it is the gap between the two columns, not the absolute level, that carries the information.

### THE YIELD BEHIND THE PRICE

At the Universitas median of R252,000 a room, a funded single earning  $10 \times R4,940 = R49,400$  a year grosses a **19.6% yield on asking price** before costs. That is why commune stock trades on income multiples rather than on residential comparables.

## 07

# Inside the Portfolio

What only an operator at scale can show: real occupancy, real collections, and a funding mix that makes the NSFAS story the revenue story.

MSH

## 95.6%

Occupancy at semester-one peak (May 2026)

EazyLet, rooms basis

MSH

## 98.4%

Collections: cash vs billed, trailing 16m

Xero

MSH

## 1,879

Beds across 55 properties in five cities

EazyLet, Aug 2026

The portfolio stands at 1,879 beds across 55 properties in five cities, having grown from 1,754 rooms in April.<sup>11</sup> Occupancy reads 95.6% at the semester-one peak, and must be read at peak: TVET students check out after semester one and beds re-fill for semester two. By early August the snapshot read 87.6%, with this year's dip deepened by TVET course cancellations, the programme-churn risk the TVET spotlight flags playing out in MSH's own book.<sup>11</sup>

The funding mix is decisive: 94.8% of active tenants are NSFAS-funded, 2.9% private-paying and 2.3% on other bursaries; 23% of the book is TVET students.<sup>11</sup> Demand pressure remains the counterweight to churn: MSH received 7,101 applications for 2026, or 3.8 applicants for every bed.<sup>11</sup> For MSH, the NSFAS cycle, cap and payment mechanics examined earlier are the business itself.

Collections run at 98.4% of billed rent over the trailing period on Xero cash reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

Payment behaviour shows the cycle's shape: at an 11 August read, 73% of 2026 tenant-months were fully settled, 5% partially and 20% pending, with the pending balance concentrated in the June–July cycle window (July billing just 39% received at that date) and in newly accredited properties awaiting their first NSFAS disbursement.<sup>11</sup>

The arrears book tells the same story of timing rather than delinquency: settled months (January–May) sit at 89–92% allocated, and most tenant balances outstanding are one to two cycle-months deep.<sup>11</sup> Average NSFAS single-room rents by region range from about R4,713 in Port Elizabeth to R5,050 in Potchefstroom, clustering near the cap; private-paying students pay a premium, particularly in Cape Town.<sup>11</sup>

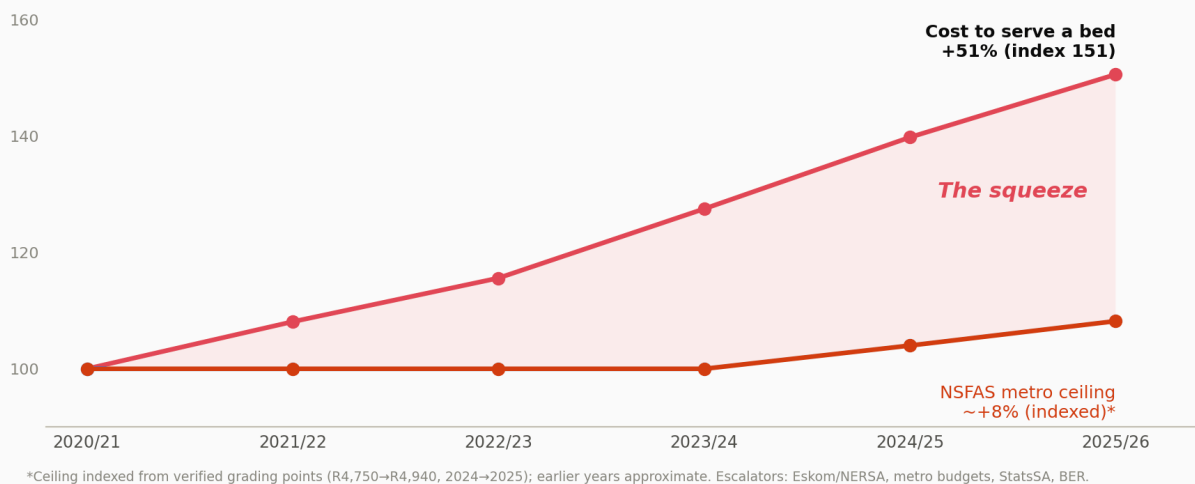
## 08

# The Cost to Serve a Bed

The single clearest explanation of why affordable supply isn't growing: the cost of running a bed has risen by roughly half in five years, while the price the state pays for it has barely moved.

## The Cost Squeeze: servicing costs up 51%, the NSFAS ceiling barely moved

Bed Cost-to-Serve Index (weighted: electricity, water, rates, maintenance, insurance) vs NSFAS metro accommodation ceiling. FY2020/21 = 100



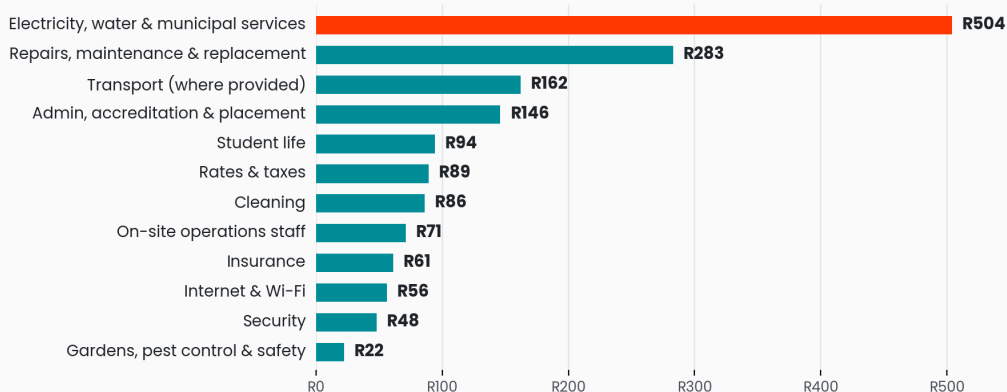
The Bed Cost-to-Serve Index vs the NSFAS ceiling, FY2020/21 = 100. Servicing costs up ~51%; the ceiling roughly flat. Sources: Eskom/NERSA, metro budgets, StatsSA, BER; MSH index.

The Bed Cost-to-Serve Index weights the real inputs of running a student bed (electricity, water and sanitation, municipal rates, maintenance, insurance) by their share of the cost stack, and escalates each by its verified published increase.<sup>13</sup> Over five years it rose roughly 51%. Electricity alone, the largest single input, compounded around 90% over the period on Eskom's own approved tariffs.<sup>13</sup>

The NSFAS ceiling, over the same five years, barely moved. The result is a margin squeeze that falls hardest on exactly the affordable, accredited beds the country most needs, and it explains better than any policy statement why private capital has drifted to the market-rate tier the cap does not constrain.

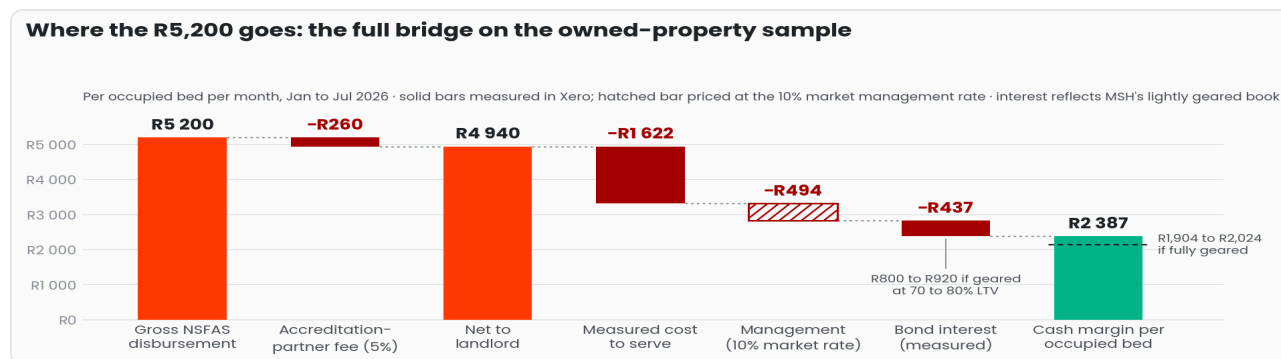
## The cost stack, measured: R1,622 per occupied bed per month

Owned-property sample, 8 properties, Jan to Jul 2026 · books plus allocated wages and measured replacement · excludes finance, management and overhead



The measured cost stack per occupied bed per month, Jan–Jul 2026: owned-property sample, property costs plus operator service layer. Source: MSH-group Xero records.

## Where the R5,200 goes



From gross disbursement to the cash margin per occupied bed per month. The 5% fee, the cost to serve and bond interest are measured in the MSH group's Xero records (eight owned properties, Jan–Jul 2026); management is priced at the 10% market rate, hatched, because MSH's own bundled fee is not a comparable scope.

The economics of a single NSFAS bed, measured end to end: R5,200 gross less the 5% accreditation-partner fee leaves R4,940. On the group's eight owned properties, the one sample where the property's own bills and the operator's service layer sit in the same books, running an occupied bed costs **R1,622 a month**, measured January to July 2026: municipal services R504, repairs, maintenance and replacement R283, transport where provided R162, admin, accreditation and placement R146, with student life, rates, cleaning, on-site staff, insurance and security the balance. Two numbers matter here and this report gives both. Measured from the books alone, the way an operator would report it, the figure is **R1,441**; adding what the books do not allocate, wages absorbed in salaries and replacement spend capitalised as minor assets, takes it to **R1,622**. The R181 gap is 4% of the funded rate, and it is the difference between a stack an investor can rely on and one that flatters the seller.<sup>11</sup> Transport is binary: beyond 5 km the norms oblige providers to transport students, at R380 to R800 a student a month, most of the metro rate premium and a large part of why accredited stock crowds into a walking ring around each campus.<sup>39</sup> Bond interest adds a measured R437, flattered by low gearing: a buyer at 70 to 80% loan-to-value would carry roughly R800 to R920 a bed.<sup>23</sup> Management is priced at roughly R494, the SA residential 8–12% midpoint; no PBSA-specific fee is published.<sup>22</sup>

The IFC's benchmarking presented to NSFAS priced the average compliant private-sector PBSA bed at **R2,038 a month including VAT and property management, measured in 2022**; carried to mid-2026 money at headline CPI (6.0%, 4.4%, 3.2%, then 5.0% annualised) that is roughly **R2,390**.<sup>13,17</sup> The structure held better than the level: the IFC put municipal charges at 30% of the stack; MSH's measured stack lands at 31%. MSH's equivalent of R1,622 plus R494 management, about R2,116, sits some 12% under it: the affordable model's room for viability, and why purpose-built stock at R325,000–R383,000 per bed struggles to pencil at the cap.<sup>17</sup>

What the maintenance line buys is also measured. Across 1,879 beds, students logged 4,117 maintenance requests in the first seven months of 2026: **3.7 requests per bed per year**, with plumbing and electrical each about 16% of the work. The median job closes in four days, and at the measured R283 a bed a month for maintenance and replacement the implied cost is roughly R920 per request. Check-in inspections run 3.7 issues per room, 94% resolved.<sup>11</sup> No sector benchmark exists; these are published as one.

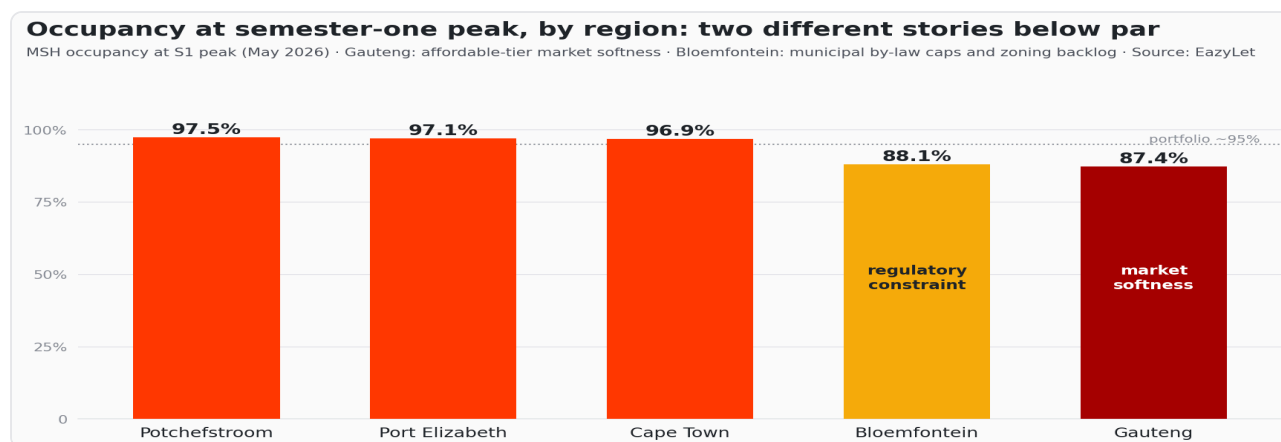
### A FUNDED BED EARNS 10 MONTHS BUT COSTS 12

NSFAS pays ten months; the cost base runs twelve. Per bed: **R49,400** of revenue against roughly R30,600 of operating cost, interest and management, leaving about **R18,800 a year, or 38%**, before tax.

## 09

# Regional Spotlights

No South African publisher, TPN included, reports city-level student-accommodation vacancy. An operator's own occupancy is therefore the best oversupply signal available in the market, and this chapter is that signal.



MSH occupancy at semester-one peak by region, May 2026. Gauteng and Bloemfontein sit below the portfolio. Source: EazyLet.

At semester-one peak, most MSH regions run close to full: Potchefstroom 97.5%, Port Elizabeth 97.1%, Cape Town 96.9%.<sup>11</sup> Gauteng, at 87.4%, is the market story. At the affordable, NSFAS-accredited tier, where institutional capital has concentrated its largest pipelines and NSFAS payment delays have emptied beds, the softness is real, and MSH's occupancy measures it directly.

Bloemfontein, at 88.1%, is a regulatory story. Mangaung's by-law caps students per property (twenty operative; ten in the 2025 draft), with R100,000 fines and closure powers, and offers no relief while land-use applications are in process.<sup>18</sup> The municipality, under national intervention since 2022 and holding the worst metro audit of 2024/25, leaves planning applications unresolved for months and sometimes years. Beds stand empty for want of administrative throughput rather than students.<sup>18</sup> UFS's register shows the scale and the fragility: 18,318 accredited private beds from 621 providers, only 3,895 fully accredited; the rest are provisional, mostly awaiting municipal zoning or consent approvals, reviewed annually.<sup>33</sup> The demand is measurable: Free State applications ran 9.1 per available bed in 2026, the highest pressure in the portfolio.<sup>11</sup>

## KwaZulu-Natal: the highest grades, and a priced-in risk premium

KZN pairs the country's highest-graded register (Chapter 5) and arguably its deepest bed shortage with a documented operating risk premium: eThekweni's Speaker has warned that construction-mafia disruption threatens the city's flagship R800m student accommodation development, UKZN's Vice-Chancellor described campus arson to Parliament as organised criminality, and insurance costs remain elevated since the 2021 unrest. The counterweight: official 2026 figures show provincial site disruptions down from sixty a month to under ten, and institutional capital is still committing. For operators, KZN rewards scale; security, insurance and community engagement are first-order costs there, not contingencies.<sup>34</sup>

## The chapter's close

The defensible reading: a national shortage of affordable accredited beds, with affordable-tier softness in Gauteng and a regulatory chokehold in Bloemfontein, where Rode records the only rising flat vacancy in Q2 2026 (4.5% to 5.8%; national 3.9%).<sup>20</sup>

### THE SIGNAL NO ONE ELSE HAS

City-level PBSA vacancy is published nowhere else; MSH's regional occupancy is the most current oversupply indicator in the sector, and Gauteng is the region to watch.

## 10

# Risk & Policy Watch

The demand behind this sector is state-funded, so the state is both policy-maker and paying counterparty. This chapter separates that exposure into four risks an investor prices differently: policy, administrative, funding and counterparty. Through 2025 and into 2026 all four were tested.

**Governance.** NSFAS entered administration for a third time in May 2026, after a disclaimer audit opinion, unresolved ICT failures and board instability; in August 2026 the Pretoria High Court suspended the administrator's appointment and reinstated the board, with a full review expected before the end of November 2026.<sup>14</sup> A deputy minister publicly questioned the scheme's future, proposing that funding route through institutions instead.<sup>14</sup> The audit record runs qualified, then adverse three years running, then the disclaimer; deficits compounded from R2.3bn (2023) to R15bn (2026) against a medium-term budget flat in nominal terms; and loan recoveries run near R200m a year against a R42bn book.<sup>31</sup> For a sector where most beds are NSFAS-funded, that arithmetic, not any one payment cycle, is the defining risk.

**Payment reliability.** The cycle analysis in Chapter 5 quantifies the timing risk; through 2024–2026 that manifested as real distress for NSFAS-dependent providers, with payment backlogs pushing smaller operators to the brink.<sup>14</sup> Reversals rising to 6.8% compound the counterparty risk.<sup>3</sup>

**The placement queue.** Private providers are the residual claimant on student demand, and that is now codified. NSFAS's 2025 guidelines instruct that universities "must only allow students to consider private accommodation if university residences are already full."<sup>9</sup> Institutions fill their own beds first, then leased stock, then release students to private accommodation. Because SHIP capital builds institution-owned beds, every publicly funded bed is senior in that queue to a private landlord's: a structural vacancy risk no headline shortage number captures.

**The municipal squeeze.** Across the portfolio's cities, municipalities are tightening student-accommodation by-laws and, in a newer development, actively enforcing them: occupancy caps per dwelling (twenty operative in Mangaung, ten in its 2025 draft), complaint-driven zoning inspections in Cape Town's northern suburbs, documented in correspondence from the City's Land Use Enforcement inspectors in January and July 2026, and active councillor-driven investigation of student properties in Potchefstroom.<sup>18</sup> Behind the enforcement sits neighbourhood fatigue with noise and density: the social licence to operate now has by-law teeth, and it favours professional operators with conduct policies and resident management over absentee landlords.

**Accreditation integrity.** An investigation reported in early 2026 flagged roughly 10,000 of some 250,000 portal-registered beds as suspicious "ghost" beds,<sup>15</sup> a caution against reading accredited-bed counts as real bricks and mortar.

**The 2026 money.** Budget 2026 set the NSFAS allocation at R54.3bn, rising across the MTEF.<sup>16</sup> Mid-year, the scheme told Parliament what that buys: registrations project a university funding requirement of R54.33bn against a R41.01bn approved allocation, and R11.22bn of TVET need against R9.52bn, a combined shortfall of R15.01bn, with R10.49bn of tuition owed to universities even as allowance payments run current.<sup>28</sup> The accommodation cap, meanwhile, has not kept pace with the cost base (Chapter 8).

## NET ASSESSMENT

The demand is real and funded; the risk is the funder. Accreditation discipline, collections infrastructure and geographic spread absorb it.

## The student in the bed: food, safety and the standard the state set

A bed is where a funded student eats, sleeps, studies and is or is not safe. The welfare evidence is the part of this sector least often read alongside its economics, and it changes what a bed has to do.<sup>39</sup>

**Hunger.** Every South African campus study of the last decade finds food insecurity in a majority of students: 60% at UFS (2015), 73% at Wits (2019), 66% at UWC (2023), 45% severe in a pooled KwaZulu-Natal sample. Students without hunger were nearly twice as likely to progress. Against that, the NSFAS living allowance is R17,160 a year, about R1,716 a month over ten months, frozen for 2026 after rising 14% since 2022 against 20%-plus inflation.<sup>39</sup> The bed is the one cost the state pays in full; the food beside it is not.

**Mind.** The largest survey of South African students (17 universities, 28,000 respondents) found 37% with an anxiety disorder in the past month, 71% with some mental-health problem in the past year, and 21% receiving treatment; a national student-health programme records 31% with suicidal ideation. Counselling ratios are unpublished; the best estimate at one large university is one counsellor to roughly 2,700 students.<sup>39</sup>

**Safety.** The record of the past three years includes a femicide in a university residence in Pretoria (February 2023), a student shot by a residence manager during a maintenance protest in Mthatha (April 2025), a stabbing in an accredited residence in Gqeberha where the cameras were not working (October 2025) and two rapes in off-campus flats in the same city in August 2026; one university counted more than 300 criminal incidents involving its students in a year.<sup>39</sup> Accreditation scorecards weight safety and security heavily for exactly this reason: on the NWU matrix, safety carries 20 of 100 points and security eight.<sup>27</sup>

**When the money stops.** Payment failure is usually reported as a landlord problem; it is a student one first. The 2023 payment-system collapse left more than 100,000 students unpaid and soup kitchens running on campuses; Parliament recorded evictions, campus lockouts that stopped examinations and mental-health decline in May 2025; in 2026 the record includes electricity disconnections at residences, 400 students facing eviction in Johannesburg, and 12,000 frozen allowances during examinations.<sup>39</sup>

**The standard.** The state defined a decent bed in 2015: at most two to a room, 8 m<sup>2</sup> single and 14 m<sup>2</sup> double, one shower per seven and one toilet per five, 1.5 m<sup>2</sup> of communal space a student, wardens at one per 150, transport beyond 5 km, biometric access, cameras and alarms.<sup>39</sup> The registers show how far practice sits from it: 18% of Limpopo's accredited properties exceed five beds per bathroom, and the studentification literature documents 9 m<sup>2</sup> rooms shared and thirty students to four toilets.<sup>27,37</sup> When Parliament asked in 2025 for the department's inspection data, the reply returned empty brackets.<sup>39</sup>

### WHAT A BED HAS TO DO

The evidence says a funded student's outcome turns on food, safety and mind as much as on the room. The state pays for the room in full and the rest in part; the operator holds the building where all of it happens. Welfare is not adjacent to this sector's economics. It is the product.

## Unrest and the bed shortage

No official count of campus unrest exists, so the Monitor built one: 33 protest incidents at public universities from January 2024 to August 2026, compiled from press, court and parliamentary records.<sup>30</sup> Roughly three in four were triggered by accommodation or NSFAS payment failures.

| INSTITUTION                                                                      | INCIDENTS | ACCOMM./NSFAS-LINKED | WORST SEVERITY IN WINDOW             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| CPUT                                                                             | 4         | 4                    | Full shutdown, ongoing Aug 2026      |
| Nelson Mandela University                                                        | 3         | 3                    | Violence; court interdict Feb 2026   |
| Walter Sisulu University                                                         | 3         | 2                    | Student fatality Apr 2025; interdict |
| DUT                                                                              | 3         | 3                    | Property damage 2024 and 2026        |
| UWC                                                                              | 2         | 2                    | Rubber bullets Feb 2025              |
| UFS                                                                              | 2         | 1                    | Arson, arrests, curfews Oct 2025     |
| Fort Hare                                                                        | 2         | 1                    | R250m to R500m arson Oct 2025        |
| UKZN · Wits · UCT · TUT · NWU · Stellenbosch                                     | 2 each    | mostly               | Shutdowns; interdict at UCT          |
| UJ · UP · VUT · Univen · Unizulu · Sol Plaatje · <b>NWU Potchefstroom campus</b> | 0         | –                    | No recorded campus unrest            |

The pattern has a hard seasonal signature. Every February in the window produced a multi-campus wave, five or more institutions each year, driven by the same stack: NSFAS allowance delays, registration and historic-debt blocks, and students arriving to beds that are unplaced or unpaid for. Off-season spikes track policy shocks rather than the calendar: the Free State registration-policy protests of October 2025, residence-conditions protests at UWC in May 2026, and the CPUT shutdown of August 2026, called over upfront fees and residence costs above the NSFAS cap.

Severity is escalating at the volatile tail. Within eighteen months the record includes a student shot dead during residence-conditions unrest at Walter Sisulu, arson estimated at R250m to R500m at Fort Hare, and High Court interdicts at three institutions. The grievance has also institutionalised: ten SRCs jointly demanded the scrapping of the accommodation cap in July 2026, and Parliament convenes an accommodation colloquium on 28 August 2026.<sup>30</sup>

The quiet half of the table carries as much information as the loud half: campuses where students are placed and providers are paid stay calm through the same national funding turbulence, so unrest exposure is readable in advance in payment backlogs, placement queues and cap arithmetic.

### THE SIGNAL

Accommodation and NSFAS payment failure was the stated trigger in roughly 75% of recorded incidents. Unrest is not random: it concentrates where funded students cannot get placed, paid-for beds, and spares campuses where the pipeline works.

## 11

# Outlook

Six things the evidence in this report suggests for the year ahead.

## 1. The affordable gap widens before it closes.

With the cost-to-serve rising and the cap flat, the economics of building affordable accredited beds get harder, not easier. Expect private capital to keep favouring the market-rate tier, leaving the funded-student segment under-served, and leaving room for operators who can defend a margin at the cap.

## 2. Consolidation toward professional management.

The squeeze that erodes an individual landlord's margin is survivable at scale, where procurement, accreditation discipline and collections systems change the arithmetic. The direction of travel favours managed platforms over informal landlords.

**3. Gauteng bears watching.** Concentrated build-out and NSFAS liquidity stress have produced localised affordable-segment softness. Whether that resolves or deepens through 2026 is the sector's key regional question, and one MSH's own occupancy will read first.

**4. NSFAS reform is the swing factor.** Whatever emerges from the third administration (direct-to-institution funding, a revised cap, tighter accreditation) will reshape the economics for every provider. The operators positioned to adapt are those already built around accreditation and collections rigour.

**5. A fourth-quarter payment squeeze.** NSFAS's own August figures imply it: R25.2bn paid against a R41.0bn approved university allocation, with registrations projecting a R54.33bn need. Meeting that projection requires the monthly run rate to more than double through September to November, against R15.8bn of approved headroom. Unless the adjustments budget intervenes, expect cycle slippage and partial payments concentrated in October and November, and provision for reversals accordingly.<sup>28</sup> The deeds registry offers an early tell: sales in execution in student suburbs re-appeared in 2024 and 2025 after four clean years.<sup>29</sup>

**6. The freeze has a countdown.** If the cap stays frozen while costs escalate at the measured pace, the bottom of the rate ladder goes cash-negative first: against this report's all-in cost near R3,060 per funded month, a Grade D non-metro bed (R3,473) crosses within roughly eighteen months and a Grade C non-metro bed (R3,656) within about two years. A prolonged freeze does not merely squeeze margins; it removes the lowest-graded accredited stock in the towns where funded demand is growing fastest.<sup>27</sup>

The through-line of this report holds into the outlook: structural, state-backed demand; a supply response that is too slow and mispriced; and an operating economics squeezed from both ends. The opportunity belongs to those who can serve the funded student affordably, at scale, and prove it with data.

## 12

# Methodology & Sources

## Data conventions

MSH portfolio figures are MSH-only (excluding related entities) on a cash basis, with occupancy read at semester peak, the only representative point given TVET checkout dynamics. NSFAS payment analysis is drawn from outbound disbursement records covering 22 institutions (EC/WC/NC); 2025 runs to November. Records show NSFAS's outbound payments; platform-administered university legs (Fundi, Intellimali) are read from MSH's own billing. The national unaccredited count is NSFAS's own August 2026 figure to Parliament, valued at the R25,000-a-year unaccredited ceiling over a ten-month year; the 16-institution figure is an independent floor. Where no official quantity exists this report derives a residual (funded bed requirement 397,000, less 184,973 institutional beds, ~100,000 portal-accredited and an assumed 40,000–80,000 university-accredited private placements); tested against the count NSFAS later published, it held. The cost to serve is measured on eight properties owned by entities related to MSH and managed by MSH, with both the owner's and the manager's books visible, Jan–Jul 2026; operational wages are allocated by regional payroll and replacement spend is taken from the minor-asset register; Advertised-rent figures are live listing entry prices sampled July to August 2026 across DigsConnect, Century 21 Student Hub and Property24; whole-unit rents are converted to per-room equivalents where bedroom counts are stated. Sale-price comparisons use Property24 asking prices (harvested 11 August 2026); asking prices are not transfer prices. The grade mix draws on censuses of the partner registers across seven provinces, roughly 9,600 properties (EC/WC 2,076; FS/NC/GP on one operator 4,412; Limpopo 2,054; VUT/UJ 1,012; KZN 81), all August 2026; word-scale grades map to A–E, confirmed with the operator; shares are property-weighted and deduplicated by name and address. Deeds-registry figures are from Lightstone reports (13 August 2026); medians are suburb freehold transfers, 2026 year to date. This is a market monitor and not a valuation product: sale and rent figures describe market direction and per-bed levels, and no figure here should be read as a valuation of an individual property. Public figures are verified to primary sources where possible; exceptions are flagged in the underlying research.

## Selected sources

| #  | SOURCE                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | AHI/AFD, Comparative Study on PBSA (AUHF, 2023); IFC Market Assessment (2021)                                                                                                                               |
| 2  | IFC, Market Assessment: The Student Housing Landscape in South Africa (2021)                                                                                                                                |
| 3  | MSH analysis of NSFAS accommodation payment records (2024–2025)                                                                                                                                             |
| 4  | DHET, Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in SA, 2023                                                                                                                                          |
| 5  | DHET (2023); NSFAS Annual Report 2023/24                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 6  | DHET Ministerial Committee Report (2011); DHET/DBSA SHIP (2019); IFC (2021)                                                                                                                                 |
| 7  | DBSA SHIP; PMG committee records                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 8  | IFC, Proparco, RMB, Growthpoint, Absa, Eris: company/DFI disclosures                                                                                                                                        |
| 9  | NSFAS accommodation grading & accreditation circulars (2024–2025)                                                                                                                                           |
| 10 | Live listings: DigsConnect (Jul 2026); C21 Student Hub Patch and Property24 (Aug 2026); MSH analysis                                                                                                        |
| 11 | MSH EazyLet & Xero (2026)                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 12 | TPN / MRI Residential Rental Monitor (2025)                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 13 | Eskom/NERSA tariff booklets; metro adopted budgets; StatsSA P0141; AECOM/BER                                                                                                                                |
| 14 | National Treasury; DHET; press reporting (2025–2026)                                                                                                                                                        |
| 15 | Press investigation into NSFAS accreditation portal (2026)                                                                                                                                                  |
| 16 | National Treasury, Budget 2026                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 17 | ACUHO-I SAC / IFC, Student Accommodation Building Costs study (2023), cited with written permission; IFC cost-benchmarking presented to NSFAS                                                               |
| 18 | Mangaung student accommodation by-law (2021; 2025 draft); National Treasury Mangaung assessment; AGSA outcomes via press; planning-delay reporting (advocacy-sourced, so labelled); MSH operator experience |
| 19 | Parliamentary reply NW874, 4 May 2026 (PMG): NSFAS budgets, per-institution funded students, loan book                                                                                                      |
| 20 | Rode's Report on the SA Property Market, 2026:2: apartment vacancies, rentals, SAMRRA cap rates; cited under MSH's subscription                                                                             |

| #  | SOURCE                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 | PMG: NSFAS briefing (25 Mar 2026) & KZN oversight report (Nov 2025); DHET qualification phase-out notices; press on 2026 provider payments; MSH TVET operator experience                            |
| 22 | SA residential management-fee benchmarks: The Property Bureau (2026); Landlords Association SA (2025/26); Private Property; UK PBSA cross-check (PBSAX, 2025). No SA PBSA-specific fee is published |
| 23 | SARB/BASA prime rate (Jul 2026); Rawson/3Cube lending commentary; TUHF (IOL 2025); Business Partners; NHFC; Absa/Growthpoint                                                                        |
| 24 | DHET PSET statistics (2023); STADIO SENS (2026); Eduvos annual report (2025); operator published rates                                                                                              |
| 25 | Property24 for-sale asking prices, student-marketed stock and suburb comparators (11 Aug 2026); MSH analysis                                                                                        |
| 26 | SONA 2020; ministerial statements (2026); STADIO, Emeris, Akademia, Sol-Tech, Eduvos announcements                                                                                                  |
| 27 | NSFAS platform registers, ~9,600 properties censused across seven provinces (Aug 2026); Annexure B; PMG                                                                                             |
| 28 | Minister of Higher Education, NCOP oral reply, 13 Aug 2026 (62,958 figure from institutional registration data); press record                                                                       |
| 29 | Lightstone deeds-registry data: 14 suburb and 7 valuation reports (13 Aug 2026); MSH analysis                                                                                                       |
| 30 | MSH count of campus unrest incidents, Jan 2024 to Aug 2026, from press, court and parliamentary records                                                                                             |
| 31 | NSFAS annual reports and AGSA opinions 2017/18 to 2024/25; Treasury MTEF; PMG                                                                                                                       |
| 32 | Non-NSFAS bursary sweep: Funza Lushaka, SETA, provincial and departmental reports; MSH estimate                                                                                                     |
| 33 | University of the Free State Annual Report 2024, private accommodation disclosures                                                                                                                  |
| 34 | eThekweni/DPWI statements, parliamentary testimony, press: KZN extortion and campus security, 2022 to 2026                                                                                          |
| 35 | University AFS 2023/24: CPUT, WSU and UL disclosures                                                                                                                                                |
| 36 | DHET cohort and TVET throughput studies; StatsSA QLFS Q2 2026; persistence literature                                                                                                               |
| 37 | PMG Oct 2025; SAJEMS 2019; AJHECE 2024; Ackermann and Visser 2016; Dilika 2018; CAHF 2020                                                                                                           |
| 38 | UFH Alice project reports; operator disclosures; MSH payroll; Treasury s12J review 2021                                                                                                             |
| 39 | Campus food-security and WMH-ICS studies; DHET Minimum Norms 2015; PMG; press record 2023 to 2026                                                                                                   |

## 13

# About MSH

My Student House is a student accommodation operator focused on the affordable, accredited segment, with 1,879 beds across 55 properties serving NSFAS-funded and private-paying students in Cape Town, Gauteng, Potchefstroom, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein.

MSH operates where the private market underserves: at the NSFAS-affordable price point, in the university and TVET catchments the premium developers have not reached, with the accreditation discipline and collections infrastructure that funded-student housing demands.

This report reflects that vantage point. Where others model the sector from the outside, MSH reads it from the inside: real occupancy, real collections, and the payment records that drive both. That is what this Monitor is built to share, edition on edition.

The intent of this publication is to give landlords, investors, funders, institutions and policymakers a properly sourced, honestly caveated reference point. Some of the numbers here reflect well on MSH; some describe a hard operating environment plainly. Both belong in a document that aims to be trusted rather than merely persuasive.

**Leadership:** Retha van Rooyen, Founder and Managing Director.

**Acknowledgement:** This Monitor began as Neale Petersen's idea, put to the author two years before this first edition. The author thanks him for that push, and for reviewing a draft of this edition. All data, methods and any remaining errors are MSH's own.

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## What does this mean for you?

Read through your own lens. **If you fund or develop purpose-built stock:** the grade mix, cost stack and sale-price chapters argue that the affordable tier is entered by acquisition and conversion, not construction, and that payer stability compensates for the capped yield. **If you own a commune or a small portfolio:** the blended billing rate, the measured cost to serve and the by-law chapters are your operating benchmark; the grade your property carries now sets your revenue for years.

**If you lend:** the collections, payment-cycle and reversal chapters are underwriting evidence for a segment where the counterparty is ultimately the state. **If you run an institution or make policy:** the unaccredited-bed spend, the placement queue and the accreditation-integrity findings show where the system leaks and where the leverage sits. Whichever lens is yours, tell us what the next edition should measure via the contact details above.

## Contribute to the 2027 Monitor and the quarterly Pulse

Three contributions carry the most value: anonymised operating-cost lines for the cost-to-serve benchmark; register and payment-record extracts, which sharpen the grade census and the payment-reliability indices; and corrections, with evidence, to any figure published here, acknowledged in the next edition. Contributors receive early access to the quarterly Pulse and their own segment benchmarked, anonymised. Write to [getinfo@mystudenthouse.co.za](mailto:getinfo@mystudenthouse.co.za) with "Monitor 2027" in the subject line.

### NEXT EDITION

The MSH Student Accommodation Monitor is intended as an annual publication, with the indices in Chapter 1 tracked edition on edition so the sector can read its own direction of travel over time.