



Addressing Student Concerns on Service Delivery

On 12 August 2025, the Students' Representative Council (SRC) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) handed over a petition to the Institution's Executive Committee. Subsequently, a lengthy meeting ensued, during which the engagement was cordial and conducted in the spirit of collegiality. Several key matters are currently under review, with solutions being explored collaboratively between the student leadership and the University's management.

The Acting Director of the Corporate Engagement and Internationalisation Department at NUST, Ms Nashilongo Gervasius (NG), answered questions during an interview for the NUST Brief (NB).

NB: The Student Representative Council (SRC) has raised several concerns. They note that the student intake is overwhelming the facilities, with some students reportedly having to sit on the floor. Is the University overenrolling, and if so, what is the reason?

NG: NUST is a public institution established by an Act of Parliament with a clear national mandate, to create and advance knowledge through teaching, research, and innovation; and to contribute to Namibia's economic and social development through technology-driven, career-focused higher education

As a national institution, we are obligated to provide access to education for qualified students. This commitment has resulted in significant growth in student numbers, reflecting the strong demand for our programmes. Student enrolments have increased from 11 000 in 2021 to just under 20 000 today. While this growth aligns with our strategic plan, the infrastructure investment needed to match it has not always kept pace. To date, we have implemented several interventions, including;

- Optimising lecture venues and timetables,
 - Expanding blended learning (currently 80% of courses), and
 - Extending our footprint beyond Windhoek, with additional campuses in Lüderitz and Eenhana, plus 10 regional centres.
- Despite these efforts, demand for the Windhoek Main Campus remains very high. To address this, we are advancing plans for the new Kleine Kuppe Campus, which will significantly ease pressure on current facilities.

NB: What are the long-term solutions to address the Wi-Fi connectivity solutions?

NG: The University currently provides Wi-Fi across all academic spaces - libraries, lecture halls, and auditoriums. The current demand by the student is focused on extending connectivity to student hostels.

Upgrades to hostel Wi-Fi are being implemented as part of broader hostel renovations. A budget of N\$5 million has already been allocated in this financial year to address this need. While procurement processes and infrastructure upgrades take time, interim solutions are being rolled out to ease pressure in the short term, with full hostel Wi-Fi connectivity planned within

the next six months.

NB: Why are the Hostel renovations incomplete?

NG: The ongoing hostel renovations are designed to add capacity for 260 more students at the Windhoek Campus. However, delays have occurred mainly due to procurement procedures and budget rollovers.

We fully recognise the pressing student accommodation challenge in the capital. To help bridge the gap, the University has been working closely with private accommodation providers to secure preferential access for our students near campus while we are completing renovations.

NB: The University gets a subsidy every year. What are these funds being spent on?

NG: We appreciate our main shareholder commitment to walk with us in ensuring we deliver service to our mandate. However, our subsidy allocations over the years have not always matched the rapid growth in student numbers and infrastructure needs.

Our expenditure priorities have been as follows;

- Operational continuity - salaries for academic and support staff, utilities, and essential services,
- Academic delivery - maintaining teaching, learning, and research quality,
- Infrastructure - campus expansion and upgrades, particularly to support regional access.

While our request for additional capital funding for infrastructure expansion has been ongoing, we have not received adequate amounts that allow us to sufficiently balance on our priorities.

As such careful prioritisation is always undertaken particularly as our second stream of income through course fees that are charged to the students, have also not always yielded a substantively adequate cash flow.

NB: Is the University able to reduce hostel fees in response to the students' demands?

NG: All decisions on fees, including those on hostel accommodation, rest solely with the University Council. This is clearly set out by the University Statutes. The university management through consultations, has committed to supporting student leadership in preparing submissions for Council's consideration should they require this assistance. Nevertheless, the nature of the business of our institution is not for profit. This factor is displayed in everything we do. From tuition to accommodation. The hostel fees, like the tuition, is not a full recover of the actual costs required to operate the accommodation facilities.

NB: The students say the University's fees are exorbitant. Give us a break down of what the average student fee is spent on?

NG: Tuition fees at NUST are charged per course, regardless of whether a student studies full-time, part-time, or via hybrid learning. Overall, the cost-of-service delivery for the traditional university tuition, doesn't come cheap. An overall



Ms Nashilongo Gervasius

cost fee at NUST therefore includes;

- Registration,
- Technology and digital learning support,
- Assessment,
- Student activity contributions.

This structure ensures that all students benefit holistically from all services that the university offers, both academic and non-academic support services. Income from tuition is meant to be supplemented by the government subsidy. However, student debt has been growing significantly resulting in the cash flow position that carries negative ripple effect on the operations. No single aspect must be taken in isolation.

As a science and technology university, NUST attain the best skilled and qualified staff to ensure that it produces the best graduates. At most, the skills in the STEM area, are scarce and highly sought. This fact alone pushes us the cost of recruitment and retaining them is another factor. The provision of the equipment and other necessary enablers are costly and are exposed to the ever-depreciating South African Rand.

NB: Moving forward, which platforms are available for students to voice their concerns?

NG: The University is committed to open dialogue and student engagement. Our formal structures for engagements are through:

- Student Representative Council (SRC),
 - Scheduled engagements between student leaders and Management,
 - Institutional communication channels across all campuses.
- Recent engagements between Executive Management and student leadership over the past two weeks reflect our commitment to constructive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Research and Innovation Matters Podcast on NUST FM



FEATURING:

Dr Andreas Elombo

Topic: Energy Transitions and Innovation for a Green Namibia

NUST Legacy Run

27 September 2025

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