

# Makhanda students burn paper in protest against NSFAS

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Students protesting over payments by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) at East Cape Midlands College in Makhanda forced staff off the campus early on Friday morning.



East Cape Midlands College students burn paper and cardboard outside the college gates on Friday morning after forcing staff off the premises.  
Photo: Loyiso Dyongman

The students had been protesting since Wednesday over NSFAS paying 90% of their accommodation allowance to their landlords, rather than directly into their own accounts.

About 200 students gathered at the college from 8am. When they saw staff were at work they went door-to-door, forcing them to leave, before setting paper and cardboard alight in front of the gates. Police stood by.

The Student Representative Council (SRC) occupational skills support officer Lindokuhle Kenene said NSFAS's new system of paying 90% of the allowance to landlords was a problem.

“With this 10%, how are we going to survive for the entire month?” asked Kenene.

He said the college management were engaging NSFAS on the issue and the students were not fighting with the college.

“We understand that this is a decision from NSFAS. The reason we are protesting here at the college is that we want the institutional management to put pressure on NSFAS so that this can be rectified,” said Kenene.

A student who would only give her first name, Zintle, said they would not return to class until the issue was resolved.

“There was no communication about this. NSFAS should have consulted with all the relevant stakeholders and proposed this before coming to a conclusion. Instead of increasing the amount we were getting last year, they are cutting it down now,” said the student.

College principal Charl van Heerden released a statement condemning the protest action and called for classes to resume as normal.

Van Heerden said the college acknowledged the issues raised by the students, and college management was actively engaged with NSFAS to address the matter.

Students had marched across town to air their grievances at the police station on Wednesday.

Questions sent to NSFAS spokesperson Tsholofolo Zweni were acknowledged but no response was received before deadline.

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