

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

SCREENING OF STUDENTS FOR THE STUDENT LOAN SCHEME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

BY THE

HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

MR DOUGLAS M. SYAKALIMA, MP

TO BE

PRESENTED ON WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH, 2025

ON THE

FLOOR OF THE HOUSE

OF

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA

MARCH, 2025

Madam Speaker,

1. I am grateful for this opportunity to update this August House and the nation on the screening process for students at the University of Zambia under the Government Student Loan Scheme, administered by the Higher Education Loans and Scholarships Board (HELSB). This response follows an Urgent Matter Without Notice raised by the Honourable Member of Parliament for Lunte Constituency, Mr. Mutotwe Kafwaya, regarding the screening process of students at the university.

2. **Madam Speaker,** allow me to take this opportunity to express our sympathy to students who may have experienced disruptions in their learning during the screening exercise. However, I must clarify that the Ministry of Education is not undertaking any validation of matriculation for student loans at the University of Zambia. The term 'matriculation' refers to the formal process of becoming a student at a university or college by fulfilling specific academic requirements. In the case of the University of Zambia, students are already admitted and registered by the institution itself, and there is no stage at which the Ministry validates this admission process.

3. Furthermore, I wish to clarify that Government does not provide bursaries at the University of Zambia; rather, it

administers a student loan scheme through HELSB. For this reason, what is taking place at the University of Zambia is not a validation of matriculation, but rather a screening process for students receiving government loans.

4. Madam Speaker, the screening exercise is a critical process designed to verify and authenticate students benefiting from government-sponsored student loans. This process ensures that financial support is disbursed accurately and transparently to deserving students. The verification process is conducted in two phases, targeting both first-year and returning students.

5. For first-year students, the Higher Education Loans and Scholarships Board (HELSB) initially releases a provisional list of loan awardees. Once students have registered with the university, they are required to present themselves to HELSB for authentication before being formally captured in the HELSB Student Management System. At this stage, key personal details, including banking information necessary for student allowance disbursement, are collected. This step is crucial in mitigating fraud risks and ensuring that funds are allocated correctly to registered students.

6. For returning students, the student loan is valid for only one academic year and must be renewed annually, subject

to satisfactory academic performance. Some students may secure alternative sponsorships during the academic year, while others may not progress to the next level. The screening process ensures that only eligible students continue receiving financial support. Additionally, this exercise provides an opportunity for students to update critical information, such as changes in bank details, study program status, or address.

7. The screening of students is conducted in close collaboration with University Management and the University of Zambia Students' Union (UNZASU). The university advises HELSB on appropriate dates to carry out the process, ensuring minimal disruption to academic activities. Students are notified accordingly, and screening is conducted only after they have completed their course registration and obtained their confirmation slips as proof of registration.

8. **Madam Speaker**, the Government acknowledges concerns regarding the potential disruption of academic activities due to the screening process. In response, HELSB and the university have implemented the following measures to streamline the process and minimize disruptions:

- (i) Students have been advised to present themselves for screening only when they do not have classes.

- (ii) Screening is organized by school and year of study to manage student flow.
- (iii) HELSB officers are working even on weekends to ensure all students are attended to efficiently.
- (iv) The screening exercise, originally scheduled for 24 days from 17th March 2024, will be reviewed at the end of the session, and extensions will be made if necessary.
- (v) The university has provided HELSB with a dedicated office where students who may not have been screened within the allocated timeframe can still be attended to.

9. To further enhance efficiency, HELSB is leveraging digital systems to streamline student verification. The Government is committed to modernizing student administration processes by integrating HELSB's screening procedures with existing student management systems at universities. Additionally, HELSB has been developing its own student management system, which is expected to be operational before the end of the year. Once fully implemented, this system will eliminate the need for in-person screening, reducing delays and improving efficiency.

10. Madam Speaker, the Government remains committed to improving higher education administration to enhance service delivery and minimize disruptions to students'

academic progress. Through continuous engagement with key stakeholders, we will ensure that loan disbursement and screening procedures are efficient, student-friendly, and aligned with best practices.

11. With these remarks, I wish to assure the House that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with HELSB and university management, will continue working towards a more seamless and automated system that enhances access to student loans while upholding transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency.

12. Madam Speaker, I thank you.