



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: **April 15, 2020**

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The Minister of State,

Tertiary Education

Accra.

Dear Sir,

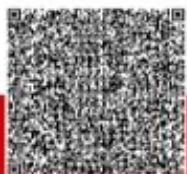
PETITION ON GOV'T TO INTERVENE URGENTLY, TO FREEZE E-FACILITY, RESOLVE ISSUES & GRANT SOME INCENTIVES FOR TERTIARY STUDENTS OVER E-LEARNING CHALLENGES

The National Union of Ghana Students writes to you this petition, as the mother union of all student unions and representative bodies in Ghana, to ask that government acts on certain concerns pertaining to the transition of tertiary institutions from traditional teaching and learning methods to full scale electronic learning, following the closure of all tertiary institutions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such concerns fall primarily into the following areas:

(A) IMPLEMENTATION AND SUPERVISION OF E-LEARNING PLATFORMS FOR UNIVERSITIES

Based on a national evaluation studies conducted by the Union among students in some universities as of April 14, 2020, we observe there are still a number of accessibility challenges associated with the implementation of the e-learning platforms for university education.

1. Many universities have not made available bundle incentives for their students and this is making accessing various virtual learning platforms for lectures simply impossible.
2. Apart from the University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Education Winneba and a few host of institutions, a number of universities still haven't announced or made any attempt to see how they can bridge the wide digital gap among their students.
3. Students are required to log onto e-platforms with high-consumption rate of bundles. In some universities, every lecturer is at liberty to choose which virtual platform to use, and this is due to the absence of a clearly laid down framework for the implementation of the directive by government. KAAF



University students are representative of the dozens of complaints by students across the country.

4. There is no deliberate and comprehensive plan to ensure that students are comfortable in these pandemic days with a greater part of the incentive decision left to university authorities albeit most are either slow at implementing the directive or remain unconcerned. **As we speak, there's a growing tension between the SRC of the University of Cape Coast and the University management who is reported to have disregarded the passionate calls of the student movement.**
5. Universities like the University of Development Studies (UDS); University of Education Winneba, the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) and a host of private universities are lagging behind in implementation measures.

(B.) THE PLIGHT OF NEEDY STUDENTS & LOAN BENEFICIARIES

1. Many students and households still have challenges affording food even in the face of tariff waivers by the state, charities by well-meaning citizens among others. The NUGS Food Bank has received 2,000 calls from students and households all with concerns of what to eat or how to survive. The over 600 households we served thus far under the NUGS Food Bank project, all had low standards of living upon our visits. **It was even more evident during the unfortunate mad rush for food items when NADMO went around to distribute food items to destitute citizens in Asokwa in the Ashanti Region on April, 13, 2020.**
2. Unfortunately, some universities are using these pandemic times and its resultant e-learning platforms directive to unfairly deny students who owe fees, access to e-learning platforms. A significant number of these affected students are beneficiaries of the Student Loan Trust Fund (SLTF). Failure of them to meet this financial obligations in some universities have led to denials to virtual tests, assignments and possibly exams.
 - Aside the unfortunate reduction of the loan to students from GHC 25m in 2017 to some GHC18m in 2019, the culture of delay in payment of loan facility by the Ministry of Finance to GETFund for onward payment to the SLTF, remain a national crisis of our education system since the Fourth Republic.
 - You will also recall, SLTF received payment of arrears of the first semester months ago amid protest by the Union. Already, the second semester is almost coming to an end and arrears are still not paid. Students under the Fund are missing critical credit hours

talk less of the final exams which could possibly be conducted online should the current situation prevail. What then becomes of their fate?

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FACE OF AN EXTENDED LOCKDOWN

AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, GOVERNMENT SHOULD DISSIPATE THE GROWING FEUD AND TENSION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND THEIR UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES BY CALLING FOR A TEMPORAL HALT ON ALL ONLINE ACADEMIC DUTIES UNTIL THE FOLLOWING INCENTIVES AND CHALLENGES ARE RESOLVED AMICABLY:

On E-Learning:

1. Government through the Ministries of Communication and Education should clearly streamline and supervise the e-learning platform directive issued to all universities as well as ensure students are given some financial and waiver cushions like Free online data, bursaries among others, to continue learning even in these trying times.
2. The Union strongly holds that no institution should conduct compulsory examinations or assessments on e-learning platforms, as conducting such exams and assessments will disadvantage the many students who by no fault of theirs, are unable to participate in the e-learning process. Rather, institutions can resort to the use of take home assignments for assessment.
3. All Universities should be directed to put a hold on stringent financial requirements demanded of students before accessing various e-platforms.
4. Universities should be directed to put on a temporal hold on all financial regimens demanded of students especially those on the SLTF loan scheme until they get their allocation for the second semester.

On Welfare of Students & Needy Students

1. We call on government to consider including incentives for students as it plans to outdoor roadmap to allocate resources made to the Covid-19 National Trust Fund which has received some support over the past week.

2. We appeal to government to grant some loan waivers for needy students who access the SLTF as indeed, these times are not ordinary times
3. More than ever, our joint petition with the Africa Education Watch dated 19th March, 2020, which was submitted to Parliament should be relooked. The petition suggested among others detailed ways to augment and streamline incentives for students in this country under the GETFund.
4. We also make an appeal for a special relief package for International Students studying in the country, since lockdown measures in various countries has affected their ability to receive funds from guardians.
5. The Union will also welcome any partnership with government on its Food Bank initiative to further extend food support to genuinely needy students in lockdown areas.

Conclusion

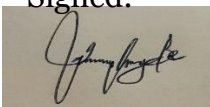
As we speak, many subsidiary student Unions and SRCs have petitioned the regulatory body, the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). But it is equally imperative that you also intervene in the situation to help arbitrate in your capacity as one of the important stakeholders in our education in this country as well as the originator of the e-learning platform directive and economic stimulus.

We end by saying, just as other sectors have received capital injections and economic stimulus from government, we believe students should be a priority in these critical periods of our nation especially when their interest seems to be left in the air.

Once again, we humbly call on your hard-working leadership to **AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, GOVERNMENT SHOULD DISSIPATE THE GROWING FEUD AND TENSION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND THEIR UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES BY CALLING FOR A TEMPORAL HALT ON ALL ONLINE ACADEMIC DUTIES UNTIL THE FOLLOWING INCENTIVES AND CHALLENGES ARE RESOLVED AMICABLY.**

God Bless Our Homeland, as we beat Covid-19 together!

Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background.

Isaac Jay Hyde

NUGS President

024 187 7062

Divine Edem Kwadzode

NUGS General secretary

0552594294

To:

The Minister of State in Charge of Tertiary Education,

Hon. Prof. Kwesi Yankah

Cc:

Office of the President

National Council for Tertiary Education

Vice Chancellors Ghana

Council of Independent Universities