

MEDIA RELEASE PSA welcomes decision by KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to unfreeze Pharmacy Internship posts

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the decision by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to unfreeze Pharmacy Internship posts after weeks of uncertainty, widespread public concern, and advocacy by the PSA and professional bodies.

The Department has officially re-opened applications for Pharmacy and Psychology Interns. The Provincial MEC has confirmed that national funding has been reprioritised, allowing the Department to re-open applications. This is an important development for KwaZulu-Natal's young jobseekers as unemployment is hovering above 30% in South Africa.

This turn-around follows a previous announcement by the Provincial Health MEC, stating that owing to severe financial constraints, the Department only had finances to allocate medical and community service interns, leaving other categories in limbo. This initial decision generated public outcry with fears that KwaZulu-Natal would face additional strain on its already pressured pharmaceutical workforce and affect Pharmacy graduates, as without an internship of one year with experienced professionals, they cannot register with the South African Pharmacy Council. This prevents them from being eligible for employment in their chosen profession.

The PSA welcomes the decision, but whilst celebrating this development, it is important to address the broader challenges facing the Department. Recent reports have highlighted that the healthcare system in KwaZulu-Natal has struggled with severe budget constraints. The successful sourcing and reallocating of funds demonstrates the willingness of the Department to prioritise clinical training programs and invest in young talent, which is a necessary step to move forward. It restores confidence amongst young healthcare professionals and strengthens the Province's capacity to deliver service to communities. It is hoped that this event marks the start of more sustainable solutions to health workforce planning, ensuring that all health professionals receive support.

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