Battle for spots at Cape varsities

Three-quarters of applicants have no chance of getting in

Staff Writer and ANA

THREE-quarters of applicants to Cape universities have no chance of getting in. The Cape's universities have received 107 495 applications, but there are only 25 091 spots available.

At Stellenbosch University, the deputy registrar of student administration, Neels Fourie, reported that the university had received 25 000 applications by closing time in June last year but only had room for 5 000 students.

Lauren Kansley, the spokeswoman for the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), said 30 587 prospective students had applied, almost as many as the total number of students of the university across all campuses. They could only accommodate 11 541 this year.

At the University of the Western Cape, 32 008 people had applied, just over seven times higher than its 4 350 enrolment target, said spokesman Aiden van den Hoven.

And at the University of Cape Town, Carl Herman, Director of the Admissions Office, said 19 800 new undergraduate applicants had applied, while the university could only take 4 200.

This means, on average, just one in four prospective students who had applied would find a placement at a university.

Herman said all undergraduate programmes proved popular among applicants but some, such as the MBChB programme, had a much lower capacity and competition for openings was fierce.

UCT said applicants had to meet the advertised criteria set by the university, and were ranked by performance. The best among them are offered places of admission.

He said it was difficult to determine how many applicants who had to be turned away would have graduated if there had been space for them.

"We use a threshold to guarantee admission to applicants, and further thresholds to..."
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From page 1

reach our offer targets using weighted points scores,” he said.

“We experienced significant change in the numbers of applicants transferring between programmes, or wishing to transfer from programmes in other institutions.

“We do not compare average performance as much as we do the ability to reach our offer targets based on the holistic assessment of applications. We have experienced no significant change in our ability to reach such targets this year.”

Pourie said medicine and accounting were the most popular programmes at Stellenbosch University. The principles applied in selecting students were high school academic achievement, performance in the National Benchmark Tests for some programmes, and extra-curricular activities for programmes in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, he said.

The numbers of students provisionally admitted were determined according to targets, per faculty or study programme, based on experience of previous years, he said. “We can satisfy these targets out of applications received,” he said.

Kansley said courses in business, like marketing and accounting, were popular while journalism applications were oversubscribed.

CPUT looked at matric results, did portfolio evaluations for courses such as graphic design, or face-to-face interviews for journalism.

Wits University registrar Carol Croxley said the applications were being processed and 6300 of those who met the entry requirements would be enrolled.

Croxley said of the 70 000 applications Wits had received, 59 000 were first-time applicants for enrolment in the first year.

On Tuesday, the department of basic education revealed that more than 100 000 of the pupils who passed matric last year qualify for university.

However, Croxley said students “should consider other options” if they failed to secure a place at a university.

She said universities have been working as “a collective” and it was possible that some prospective students who failed to secure a place at Wits could find a place at another institution.

This week the University of Johannesburg said it was ready to enrol 10 500 first year students.