

3 ways to deal with university rejection

Application deadlines are looming for universities, with scores of Grade 12s expected to be finalising their submissions in the coming month. While it's an exciting process, it can also be very distressing given that despite meeting the entry requirements, thousands of students get rejected by the country's 26 public universities each year purely because there is not enough space for them.



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"Public universities in South Africa work tirelessly to try and service all our school leavers, but it simply is not possible to offer a place to everyone who applies. This supply and demand issue is even more challenging when it comes to courses like engineering where there is a huge skills shortage," explains Atelisha Harilal, National Student Recruitment Manager at Stadio.

Harilal says knowing how to successfully deal with the rejection at such a young age is crucial, and outlines three ways to cope with this:

1. It is not you, it's them

A good majority of those on the discard pile met each of the requirements for their preferred course and the only reason they were rejected is because of a capacity issue that is completely out of their control. "Although receiving a rejection is understandably upsetting, it is important to put things into context. This is by no means a reflection on you and your ability, so try not to let this blip define you. Private higher education institutions are able to provide qualifying students with a place to study a registered, recognised, and accredited qualification regardless of their situation when they left school. If you didn't quite make your desired Admission Point Score (APS) points, then higher certificates are another way to start your journey of accessing degree studies," says Harilal.

2. Know there are other options

In most cases, students do not have enough information to seek alternatives. Instead, they are mistakenly led to believe that large public universities are their only option. It is key to understand that there are options available that are both accessible and affordable. Several registered, accredited private higher education institutions offer accessible and affordable qualifications via distance learning and contact (venue-based) learning. “Being able to enjoy an excellent, quality tertiary study experience, without the need to attend venue-based classes can be a game changer, especially during the current cost of living crisis,” continues Harilal.

3. See this as redirection, not rejection

It is essential that students are not discouraged by rejection and instead remain upbeat and persevere on the road to achieving their goals. “Sometimes rejection can be a blessing in disguise – the perfect opportunity to adopt what is commonly known as the parachute approach. You begin, not with the university prospectus but with yourself,” says Harilal. Sit down and have an honest conversation with yourself, working out who you are and listing what you enjoy doing and what skills you think you are good at. Then go looking for a higher education provider or course that matches your skill set.

Whatever you choose, exercise caution

Whatever you decide to study next, Harilal concludes with a warning on vigilance. It is imperative for students to check that both the institution and qualifications they choose to study are registered and accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). “Registered institutions receive a DHET certificate which can usually be found on their website, or you can request a copy from them directly. Students and parents can also use the unique South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) ID per qualification as another way to verify the institution's validity,” she concludes.

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