



FEENIXTM

A SOCIETY IN WHICH ALL ARE
ABLE TO FULFIL THE POTENTIAL
REGARDLESS OF WEALTH

INSIGHT & LEARNING
REPORT

**20
21**

DEVELOPED
FOR ALL OUR
STAKEHOLDERS



"Feenix encourages me and gives me hope that being poor doesn't mean you're hindered to accomplish your dreams." - Feenix Student, 2021



Feenix is committed to student success through monitoring, learning, and responding to student needs.

At the time this report was developed, 1435 students had registered on Feenix's crowdfunding platform for the 2021 academic year to seek funding support toward their educational journeys.

Since last year's report, there has been a slight overall improvement in student success indicators, or thrive drivers, measured by this self-reported student survey from 295 respondents.

Two new notable contributing factors were delivered in direct response to students' emerging needs in 2020:

1. **The Feenix's student webinar** series was ranked by students as the second most helpful Feenix service in support of their success
2. **Access to the *Blackbullion South Africa* financial literacy platform** increased a sense of financial stability by 25% for users vs non-users.

This report once again highlights the resource challenges of students and how the efforts of Feenix's multiple stakeholders and services help to overcome these challenges.

We sincerely thank all stakeholders for their generous contribution in easing the stress and anxiety that accompanies financial and environmental pressures influencing the daily lives of students who have chosen to remain resilient and committed to the future of our nation.



FEENIX'S ALIGNMENT TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



The National Development Plan highlights an urgent need for more postgraduate studies to boost the knowledge economy and improve educational outcomes at all levels.

Postgraduate students however do not qualify to receive funds through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

33% of all students on Feenix are seeking funds for their postgraduate studies.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG)

Feenix plays an important part in allowing equal access to education as envisioned by SDG 4.3: to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

This report indicates low affordability

and low accessibility of students to funding for their degrees.

Besides crowdfunding, Feenix mobilises bursaries for previously disadvantaged individuals through the management of companies' BBBEE Skills Development Investments.



STUDENTS REPRESENTED IN THIS REPORT

This report helps us understand the experience of the *typical student* fundraising through Feenix in 2021. Students shared their funding options, challenges they had to overcome, and what have helped them to survive or thrive.



295

STUDENTS ACROSS 26 SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES IN THIS REPORT



POSTGRAD
26%



UNDERGRAD
58%



20%

RETURNING STUDENTS
(WE MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!)



FEMALE
61%



MALE
39%



16%

(DOUBLE 2020 FIGURE) **GRADUATED**
STUDENTS FUNDRAISING FOR HISTORICAL DEBT



31.2% Commerce

4.8% Education

13.4% Engineering

19.9% Humanities

5.1% Law

7.2% Medicine

18.5% Science

FACULTY
BREAKDOWN



"The Feenix team is supportive. It's an honour to be part of a platform which actually care about me." - Feenix Student, 2021



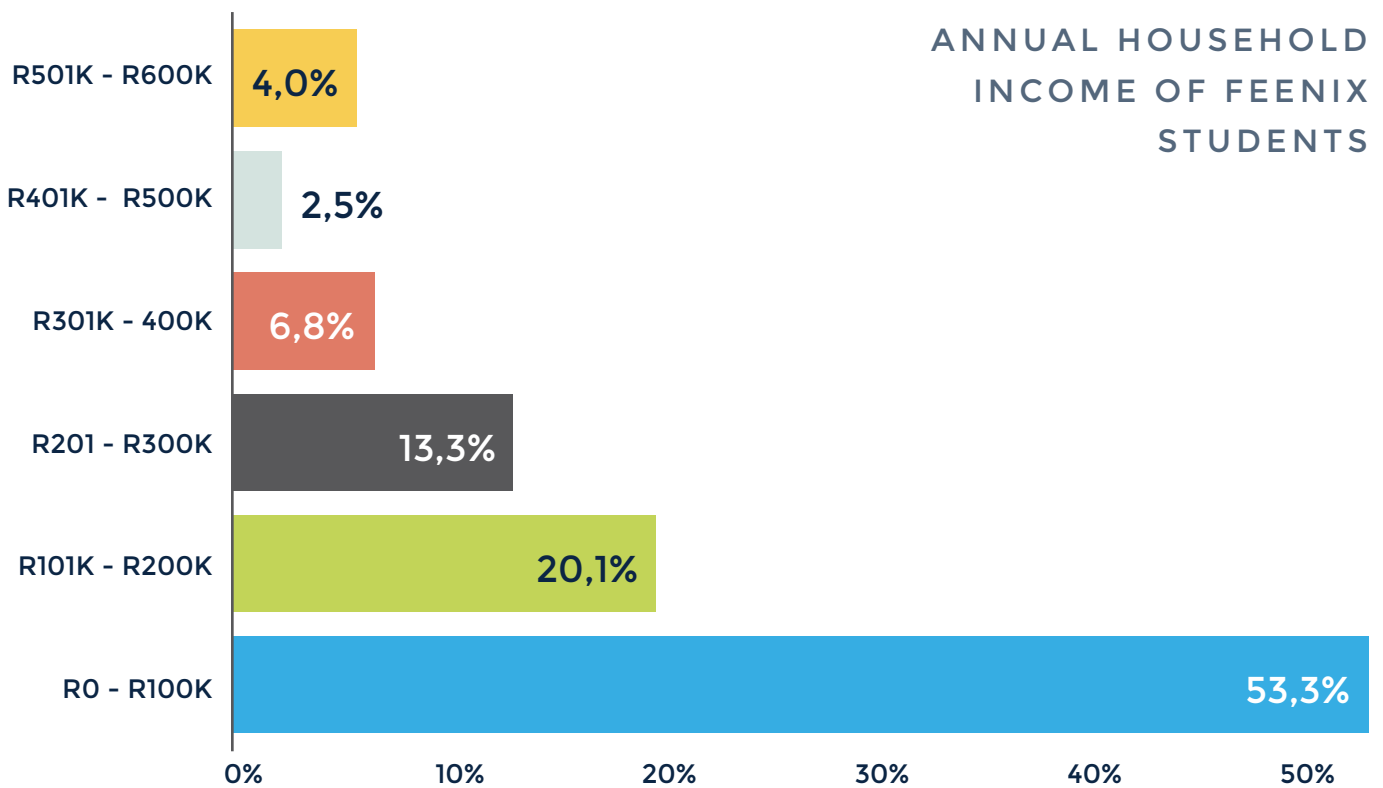
What is
it about?

ARRIVE

It is important to understand why students arrive at Feenix. Creating a public fundraising profile can feel quite vulnerable, yet for the majority of students on Feenix, it provides them with hope! Crowdfunding for one's education indicates the inability to afford higher education and being financially excluded from existing funding mechanisms such as student loans, scholarships or bursaries, and public education funding. Let's see why so many students arrive at Feenix to tell their stories with a need to take ownership of their education resourcing.



STUDENTS, FUNDING & FINANCING OPTIONS



94% of students' household income fall below R400k per year.



"This has been a good initiative to sustain students from disadvantaged families and it must continue doing the most to produce future leaders."
- Feenix Student, 2021



WHAT WERE STUDENTS' FUNDING OPTIONS?



1. NSFAS



83% of students don't qualify for NSFAS.

Why?



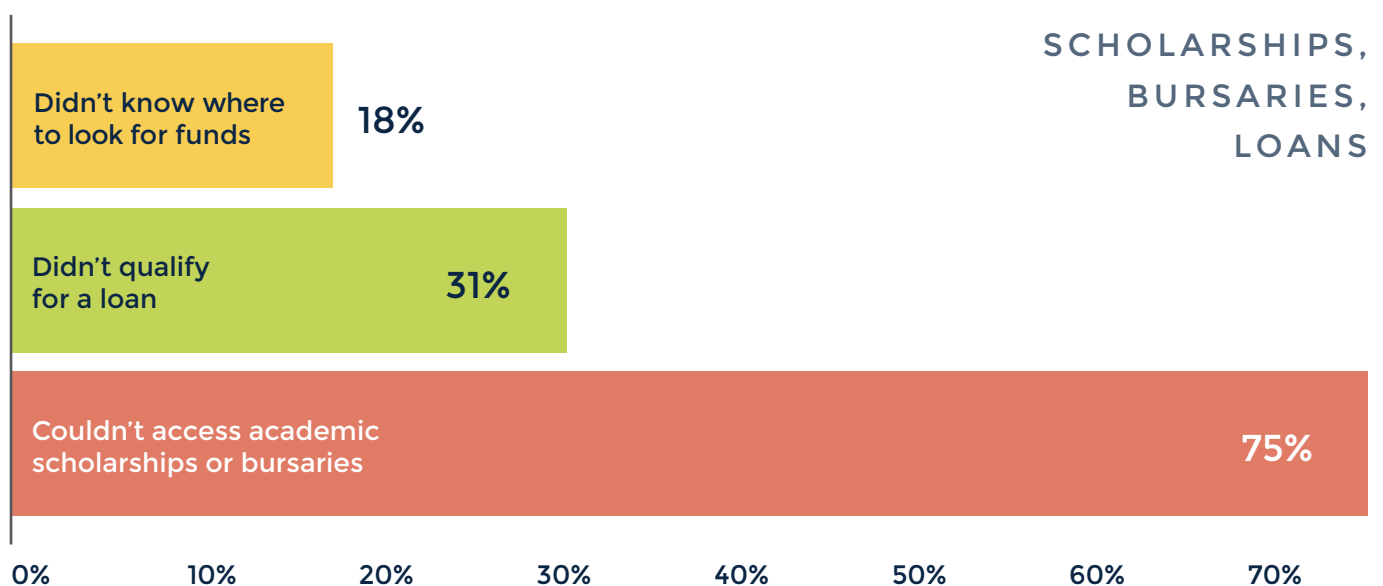
- Postgraduate studies (majority)
- Exceeded the years of funding allowed
- Fundraising for historical debt
- Degree type does not qualify
- Second degrees aren't funded

17% of students qualify for NSFAS, but still choose Feenix. **Why?**



- NSFAS doesn't cover all the fees (majority)
- Students hadn't heard back yet and created a Feenix profile as a back up
- Other (not receiving funds for various reasons, some unknown)

2. WHAT ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS, BURSARIES, LOANS?





What is
it about?

GO LIVE

Feenix offers equal, unbiased access to its platform to students who:

- are South African or hold refugee status,
- are registered at one of its 26 public universities,
- have a combined household income of below R600,000 per annum.

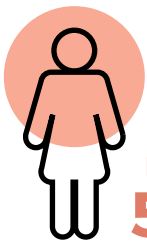
This process requires moderation in order to ensure that the platform serves deserving young people and that companies can confidently invest in local talent. This section provides a statistical snapshot of who these students are.



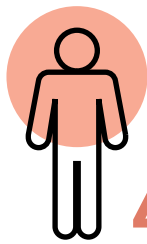
LIVE ON FEENIX AS AT OCT 2021



Since 2017, Feenix has raised **R85.62m**, impacting the lives of **2156 students** across **26 universities**. **1435 students** were live on Feenix as at Oct 2021.



FEMALE
57%



MALE
43%



POSTGRAD
33%



UNDERGRAD
67%

95%
BLACK



3%
COLOURED



1%
INDIAN



0,5%
WHITE



12%

of students are fundraising for historical debt.



63%

of students indicated that, if they receive funding, they'd "pay it forward" once they are earning.



"It is really working out for students like me whom we come from disadvantaged family backgrounds. In future when I get employed I'd also assist other students with funds through this initiative." - Feenix Student, 2021



FEENIX SUPPORTS STUDENT SUCCESS

Once students have a live profile, they have access to multiple Feenix features and services. These have been rated by students for their contribution to student success as follows:



#1 Creating a profile on Feenix which helped to reduce stress and anxiety, and provide hope

"My public profile on Feenix makes people aware of who I am and my story. This draws them into my personal life".

"Creating my profile helped me to remember why I was doing the subject that I am doing. When trying to describe my passion to others, I reignited my own".



#2 Attending Webinars

"The webinars provided motivation and a real life experience of students who went through more or less similar challenges I was facing. Providing me with a positive attitude toward my fundraising journey and supporting every little step I took".



#3 Receiving donations

"Receiving donations has really got me closer and closer to settling my financial obligations and gave me the power and hope to continue raising money".



#4 Access to Feenix fundraising guides and tools

"The guides and tools take away the stress of having to put yourself out there, by putting forward clear and useful information that can benefit all students wishing to use Feenix."



#5 Taking part in Blackbullion Financial Literacy platform

"Taking part in the Blackbullion financial literacy platform has proven to be the biggest take of this whole Feenix journey. I have learnt a lot, I am money smart, I think twice and even three times about anything that has to do with money, and I have started imparting some of the skills even at home. I've been helping my mother with drafting the monthly budget, looking at ways we can have some extra cash by cutting on a few things. It's so much fun".



What is
it about?

SURVIVE

For students who are financially excluded, there are numerous other socio-economic and environmental factors that challenge students' ability to get to their goal post. We explore what the typical student on Feenix has to overcome to survive their educational journeys. By understanding these additional challenges, we can shape an understanding of why academic *excellence* is not a prerequisite for students to receive funding through Feenix. It is why Feenix recognises academic progression as a sign of resilience and determination and offers additional, holistic support in response to identified challenges where possible.



STUDENTS & CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES STUDENTS HAD TO OVERCOME

Besides students' #1 challenge of funding, these two challenges were felt the most:



Online / remote learning



Time management

Noteworthy: Compared to 2020, students are increasingly expressing feelings of anxiety, stress or worries affecting their mental health.

STUDENTS' TOP THREE RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS DURING THIS PERIOD WAS THE SAME AS THE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

..... The most important and least accessible resources



66%

Internet data



56%

Textbooks and learning materials



45%

A laptop or digital device

Note: These resource constraints adds to the challenge of learning remotely.

..... Most concerning



43%

Needed but couldn't access mental health services
(up from 33% in 2020)



45%

Struggled to access food.



13%

of students had access to all resources
(up from 6% in 2020)



OVERALL COVID-19 IMPACT

..... Top three negative influencers on academics



1.

Lack of resources by being away from campus



2.

Struggling to study in home environment



3.

Missing out on the campus experience

..... Other significant challenges as a result of the pandemic

COVID 19 equally affected students' mental health and ability to earn money while studying.

26%



26% of students said that COVID-19 affected their mental health and ability to earn money while studying.

40



40 students in the surveyed sample lost someone to COVID-19.

>20%



More than 20% lost household income as a result of COVID-19.

..... Positive effects of remote learning

- Students enjoyed the **flexibility to study in their own time** and be more independent although, in practice, students report time management as a major challenge.
- Students expressed **gaining technical and digital skills** they didn't have before.
- Students were able to **save on some expense items** by being at home and were able to **support their families** more closely.



"I was stressed due to outstanding fees, I thought of giving up studying as there was no way I could pay of the debt. I found Feenix and had hope and courage to keep going." - Feenix Student, 2021



STUDENTS & RESILIENCE

ARE STUDENTS ON TRACK TO COMPLETE THEIR DEGREES?



2%

Only 2 students **dropped out** while 7 students (**2%**) were **financially excluded** and/or couldn't access their results.



9%

9% Need **more time** or need to **repeat a subject(s)**.



88%

88% Are on track to **complete their degrees** within the allocated time, or have completed.

EMPLOYMENT & EARNING WHILE STUDYING

38%

Earning **some form** of income

11%

Have volunteered time at a **nonprofit organisation**

18%

Earning through **side hustles**



29%

Having gained **unpaid** work experience

14%

Having gained **unpaid** work experience in field of **study**

7%

Earning in field of **study**

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF WORK LOOK LIKE?

20% of current students have **employment opportunities** lined up for when they graduate, while 52% are actively trying to find opportunities.



2020 GRADUATES

52 GRADUATED STUDENTS GAVE US SOME INSIGHT INTO THEIR SURVIVAL AFTER GRADUATION:



96% students who graduated last year are **staying in South Africa.**



69% of these graduates still have **outstanding debt**, which influences their chances of employability.



50% of the students who graduated from their 2020 degrees are **earning an income**, and **50%** of those earning are doing so **in their field of study.**



The highest number of earners are from **Commerce/Management Science (38%)**, followed by **Humanities (17%)** and **Science & Engineering (13%).**



I've gained experience through an internship I was doing last year in my fieldwork of study and I also did paid practical training during the July break this year, also in my fieldwork of study. - Graduate, 2020 Feenix Student



What is
it about?

THRIVE

We're a nation investing in students to complete their degrees and become positively contributing citizens of this country. With every donation, student stress is chipped away and their hope grows. With direct support from the Feenix student team and student ambassadors, students feel more emotionally supported. Access to financial literacy provides a renewed sense of financial stability. Attending Feenix webinars shows students that they are not alone in their journeys. This is how Feenix hopes to support students to not just survive but to thrive.



STUDENT THRIVE DRIVERS - THE JOURNEY TO STUDENT SUCCESS!

2020 VS 2021

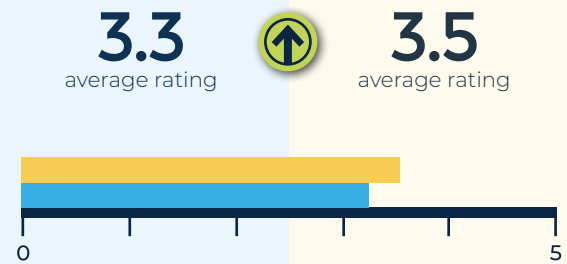


GRIT



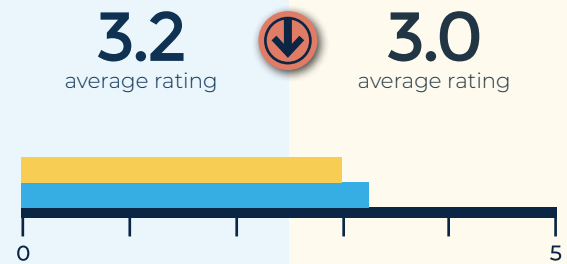
Definition: ability to overcome challenges and achieve goals.

Most positively influenced by direct support from the Feenix team and Feenix student ambassadors.



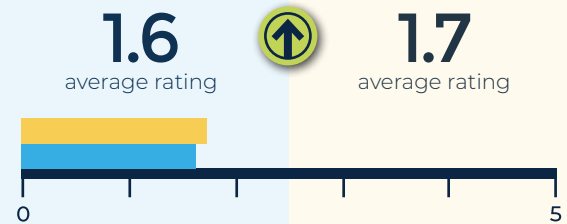
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Most positively influenced by direct support from the Feenix team and Feenix student ambassadors. A decrease in 2021 correlates with a higher reported need for mental health services.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

Feenix signed up to the Blackbullion Financial Education platform. Its active users **rated 25% higher on financial stability** than non-users.

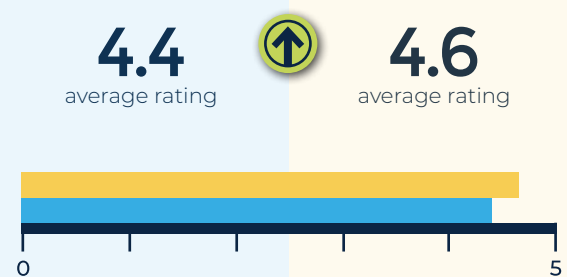


ACADEMIC PROGRESS



Definition: not academic excellence but one's ability to progress in their studies.

Students felt webinars were most useful by motivating them to persevere.





A TYPICAL THRIVER!

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL THRIVING STUDENT LOOK LIKE?

Across our four thrive drivers, students who scored highest (at least 4 out of 5), were different from non-thrivers (scoring below 4), in the following ways:

01

Typically a male student.

02

Have progressed in years of study.

03

Actively engages with Feenix tools and services, especially receiving direct support from the Feenix team, which sets them apart from non-thrivers.

04

Are actively engaged in work, volunteering or seeking employment.

05

Are actively engaged in the fundraising process.

06

Have more access to study resources.




"Feenix is a great platform that does not only assist students to access education, but link them to opportunities that increase their likelihood of success." - Feenix Student, 2021



CONCLUSION

Crowdfunding amplifies South Africans' sense of ubuntu. This is the principle that The Feenix Trust applies throughout the way it encourages collaboration with expert partners and stakeholders to stay true to its vision - that access to education should not be dependent on wealth.

Education leads to economic participation and upward mobility for a growing youth population. It is this that drives the Feenix team's passion.

Thank you to the 295 students who responded to this survey. Your voice is being heard. 

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