

For immediate release

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Why Umalusi standardises results

In 2011 Umalusi Council took an unprecedented decision that all standardisation decisions relating to qualifications and part-qualifications it quality assures will in future be made public. Umalusi is a Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training. Section 17 of the GENFETQA Act of 2001 (as amended in 2008) stipulates, *inter alia*, that:

- (1) *The Council must assure the quality of assessment at exit points;*
- (2) *The Council must, with the concurrence of the Director-General and after consultation with the relevant assessment body or education institution, approve the publication of the results of learners if the Council is satisfied that the assessment body or education institution has—*
 - (i) *conducted the assessment free from any irregularity that may jeopardise the integrity of the assessment or its outcomes.*

From the above, it is clear that Umalusi is legally required to approve the release of results once it is satisfied that the examinations have been conducted in a fair, valid and credible manner.

Any large-scale examination process invariably has many and varied sources of variability. Most of these are unplanned, unintended, and undesirable. They vary from mistakes in a question paper to subtle issues of level of difficulty of a question paper and of possible multiple and valid interpretations of questions.

Standardisation of learner performance is an important quality assurance process used the world-over to mitigate the impact on learner performance

caused by exam related factors other than the learners' subject knowledge, abilities and aptitude.

There are two main objectives of standardisation:

- a. First, to ensure that a cohort of learners is not advantaged or disadvantaged by ***intrinsic examination factors*** other than their knowledge of the subject, abilities and their aptitude;
- b. Second, to achieve comparability and consistency of learner performance across the years.

In short, standardisation seeks to mitigate fluctuations in learner performance that are a result of factors ***within the examination process itself***. Thus factors outside the examination process do not have a bearing on standardisation decisions. Umalusi's standardisation is carried out by the Assessment Standards Committee.

This is a committee of Council which comprises men and women of impeccable credentials, personal integrity and credibility. They are independent professionals who are not in the employ of Umalusi. They are appointed by Umalusi Council based on their extensive knowledge of, experience and expertise in statistical moderation, statistics, assessment, curriculum, and educational matters.

Some of them are affiliated with our universities and others serve on national and international bodies that deal with education and assessments. Most of them have been doing this work for many years and have seen this process mature over time.

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