

For immediate release

29 December 2016

Umalusi approves national examinations results

Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, has once again fulfilled its legislative mandate in relation to the quality assurance of the management and administration of exit point examinations in the following qualifications per assessment body:

- Independent Examinations Board (IEB) – NSC AND GETC:ABET
- South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) – NSC
- Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA) – GETC: ABET
- Department of Basic Education (DBE) – NSC
- Department of Higher Education And Training (DHET) – GETC:ABET;
NATED N2-N3 Programmes; NC(V)

Umalusi conducted the external moderation of question papers and a sample of site-based assessment (SBA) marks across all assessment bodies. The Council also monitored the conduct and marking of exams as well as selection of markers in all the nine Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) including all private assessment bodies.

This year the South African Comprehensive Institute (SACAI), which is an independent assessment body provisionally accredited by Umalusi to administer the National Senior Certificate examinations, administered its NSC exams for the third time. Another new independent assessment body, Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA), which is also in a process of obtaining accreditation from Umalusi, ran a pilot of its second GETC examinations in November. Benchmark's results were also subjected to Umalusi's standardisation process.

The class of 2016: The class of 2016 was the third Grade 12 cohort to write final examinations under the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). Similar to the 2015 cohort, the class of 2016 also saw a significant increase in the number of progressed learners.

While the learner performance in 2015 departed quite significantly from the average historical learner performance profile, the learner performance of the cohort of 2016 has moved closer to the average historical performance profile. It is pleasing to see that the marks of subjects such as Physical Science and History could be left as unadjusted and that there was a marked improvement in subjects such as Accounting.

However subjects such as Geography, showed a marked drop in learner performance while other subjects such as Life Sciences, Business Studies and Economics and several Home languages, have not shown the progress that was hoped for. While there are many subjects where the learner performance fluctuates from year to year, we have to single out MATHEMATICS as one of the key gateway subjects where the needle has not moved significantly over the years in this country. In fact what is alarming is that since 2014 Mathematical Literacy has also joined Mathematics as an learning area where the learner performance is critically low.

The Class of 2016 had many more **progressed learners** than in previous years. In 2014 there was an estimated 30 000 progressed learners writing the NSC examination (5.5% of the cohort). The class of 2015 had 66 088 progressed learners (10% of the total cohort) while the class of 2016 has 109 400 progressed learners (13.4% of the total enrolment).

The Policy on Progression was implemented in 2013 to prevent learners being retained in the same Phase for more than four years. However this policy was unevenly implemented across the provinces at that time. During 2016 the Progression Policy has been strengthened and implemented in a clearer, less arbitrary manner. THE DBE introduced preconditions that progressed learners had to satisfy before they were moved to the next grade. The tracking and identification of progressed learners have also become clearer. In 6 of the 58 NSC subjects there were no progressed learners.

Further, Umalusi has taken note of the evidence-based reports on interventions and improvement strategies implemented by both national and provincial education authorities for learners in general and for progressed learners in particular and the positive impact of these on the overall assessment system as well as on teaching and learning.

In order to reduce the possible negative impact on the 2016 NSC results brought by progressed learners, the DBE and the PEDs provided targeted support and interventions for the progressed learners at District and Provincial levels.

It is important to note that while the class of 2016 is the 9th cohort of learners to sit for the NSC it is only the 3rd cohort to write the CAPS aligned NSC Examination. So while the 2016 cohort has benefited from the maturity of the NSC system over the past 9 years, the CAPS aligned system introduced in 2014 is still finding its place after only three years.

In dealing with the results of the cohorts of 2014, 2015 and 2016, Umalusi faced a two-fold challenge: on the one hand there is the need to come to terms with the demand of a strengthened CAPS aligned curriculum and on the other hand there is the need to embrace a cohort with increasing numbers of progressed learners.

We are confident that the lessons that we have learnt in this process will put us in a better position to ensure that the class of 2016 will not be disadvantaged in any way.

Umalusi has put in place rigorous and robust procedures that provide assurance that all learners receive appropriate recognition for their performance in line with agreed national standards so that no learner should feel that s/he was born in the wrong year.

Improved Marking: The quality of marking is a very important aspect of the integrity and credibility of the examination. It is therefore pleasing to see the measures put into place to carefully select and train markers. Also the tolerance range of 2-3% for markers continues to limit the wild fluctuations in marking that we saw in previous years. Although there is still room for improvement the enhancement in the quality of marking must render a more accurate estimation of learner performance.

Irregularities: Umalusi conducts not only the process of standardisation, which is required for national examinations, but it also, through rigorous procedures, assures the quality and integrity of the entire examination process.

Gaining the approval of Umalusi Council for the release of the results is determined by the examinations' level of compliance with policies, directives and guidelines issued by both Umalusi and each of the assessment bodies. Before such an approval is granted, Umalusi Council has to satisfy itself that **no systemic irregularities** have occurred to undermine the integrity and the credibility of the examination process. Umalusi requires that each assessment body provides a report on irregularities.

Most will remember that in the 2014 NSC examination, the credibility of examinations was tarnished by wide-spread group copying. In 2015 the system had to deal with the unfortunate incidents of **paper leakages** in Limpopo, which ultimately spilled over to Gauteng and Mpumalanga. In the main, Life Sciences papers 1 and 2 were affected by the leakage. It is common knowledge by now that in 2016 the system once again had to deal with the unfortunate incident of a **paper leakage** in Limpopo, which again spilled over to Gauteng.

Investigations by a Task Team established by the Minister to identify the source of the security breach and the extent of the spread of the access to the question paper, confirmed the leakage of Mathematics Paper 2 in two schools in Limpopo. The leak does not go beyond 100 learners.

The investigation involved the Hawks, SAPS as well as private investigators. Interviews with learners and officials were also conducted. Furthermore, investigative marking was employed to determine the extent to which learners may have benefited. Umalusi thanks the DBE for the swift and decisive action taken to limit the spread of the leakage. As a result it has been decided that there is no need for a rewrite of Mathematic Paper 2.

However the Limpopo Education Department's non-adherence to some of the security measures outlined in the Norms and Standards must be addressed in the next examination cycle. Umalusi is very concerned about this trend and takes the view that strong action must be taken against those learners and officials who have made themselves guilty of these acts of dishonesty.

Umalusi will therefore not approve the release of the results of all the implicated learners. The investigation is still continuing. Furthermore, it is with bitter disappointment that we note that evidence from DBE indicates that the phenomenon of **group copying** has not been completely eliminated. This year has seen a limited number of incidents involving group copying in KZN, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

Further investigations are underway and the results from all the implicated centres will remain blocked. It is also worth noting that detection of these irregularities attests to a very functional and vigilant system.

We once again extend a serious warning to those who are involved in acts of dishonesty that drastic measures will be taken against them.

Irregularities occur in all examinations/ assessments and the examination system must have mechanisms to manage irregularities, to avoid lapses in examination credibility. However whether an irregularity becomes a threat to the system depends on the nature and extent of the irregularity.

Standardisation of results: In order to mitigate the sources of variability that impact on learner performance from one year to another. (eg. cognitive demand and difficulty levels of questions, marking, curriculum changes, interventions etc.) **Standardisation** is employed as an important 'quality assurance process used the world-over.'

Standardisation aims (in the main) to achieve equivalence of the standard of the examination across years, subjects and assessment bodies and to deliver a relatively **constant product to the market:** universities, colleges and employers.

We can expect that when standards of examinations are equivalent certain statistical mark distributions should correspond. It is this principle of correspondence that forms the basis for comparing distributions with norms/historical averages that are developed over 4-5 years. This comparison includes medians, means, pass/failure and distinction rates and pairs analyses which play a valuable role in the absence of historical data.

The adjustments (decided by the Assessment Standards Committee of Umalusi) consistently follow certain guiding principles. The ASC consists of academics with extensive experience and expertise in statistical moderation, statistics, assessment, curriculum and education.

While the final stages of the process (viz. standardisation) may seem highly statistical, this process of adjustment is the culmination of a long process of receiving and reflecting on qualitative and quantitative inputs. This starts with setting of papers, then moderation, writing of exams, marking of exams, verification and only then finally adjustment of mark distributions.

Given the complex nature of the stages and processes followed, it can lead to misinterpretations especially if one observes any one of the stages in isolation or just the final one. The whole process of standardization is the basis for Umalusi to declare exams fair, valid and credible; thereby building public trust and confidence.

STANDARDISATION DECISIONS AND APPROVAL STATEMENTS – NSC EXAMINATIONS

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATIONS BOARD (IEB)

Description	2016
Enrolment	± 11 775
Number of subjects presented	61
Raw marks	49
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	7
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	5
Subjects not standardised	none
Number of subjects standardised:	61

Having studied **all** the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), Umalusi is satisfied that, apart from a few instances of technical irregularities reported, nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the November 2016 NSC examinations as a whole. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible.

We commend the IEB for running a successful and credible examinations process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board.

SOUTH AFRICAN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE (SACAI)

Description	2016
Enrolment	±1713
Number of subjects presented	28
Raw marks	16
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	9
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	3
Number of subjects standardised	28

Having studied all the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examinations administered by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI), Umalusi is satisfied that, apart from a few instances of technical irregularities as reported, nothing has compromised the integrity

or credibility of the examinations process. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible.

We commend SACAI for running a successful and credible examinations process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute.

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION (DBE)

Description	2016
Enrolment	±668 612 (FT) ±146 997 (PT) ±815 609 (Total)
Number of subjects presented	58
Raw marks	26
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	28
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	4
Number of subjects standardised	58

Having studied all the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education, Umalusi is satisfied that apart from:

- the leakage of the Mathematics Paper 2 question paper in the two schools in Limpopo,
- a limited number of incidents of group copying in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo, Gauteng and Mpumalanga,

Nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examinations as a whole.

Umalusi is satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend DBE for running a successful and credible examinations process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education.

STANDARDISATION DECISIONS AND APPROVAL STATEMENTS – NATED and NC (V) EXAMINATIONS

NATED N2 – N3

Description	2016
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Enrolment	±90 444
Number of instructional offerings presented	59
Raw marks	20
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	14
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	14
Provisionally standardised	1
Subjects not standardised	10
Number of instructional offerings standardised:	49

BUSINESS LANGUAGES N3

Description	2016
Number of instructional offerings presented	4
Raw marks	4
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	0
Number of instructional offerings standardised:	4

Apart from the challenges experienced during the printing and distribution of the question papers, there were no systemic irregularities reported, that might have compromised the credibility and integrity of the November 2016 NATED: REPORT 190/191 Engineering Studies N2-N3 examinations administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Umalusi is satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend the DHET for running successful and credible examinations as a whole. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of November 2016 NATED: REPORT 190/191 Engineering Studies N2-N3 examinations administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

NB: The DHET is required to block the results of the two leaked question papers as well as the results of the candidates / subjects/centres implicated in irregularities. Results of Khomanani Business College and City View College to be blocked.

NC (V) LEVEL 2-4

Description	2016
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Enrolment	±184 086
Number of subjects presented	256
Raw marks	102
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	34
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	81
Subjects not standardised or provisionally standardised due to low capture rate	39
Number of subjects standardised:	217

Apart from the challenges experienced during the printing and distribution of the question papers, incidents of group copying at some centres and non-submission of ICASS evidence by some centres, there were no systemic irregularities reported, that might have compromised the credibility and integrity of the November 2016 NC (V) L2- 4 examinations administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

Umalusi is satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend the DHET for running successful and credible examinations as a whole. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of November 2016 NC (V) L2- 4 examinations administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

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