

For immediate release:

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Umalusi conducts standardisation workshop for Parliamentary committee

Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, conducted a four-hour workshop for the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education in Parliament on Friday, 17 February 2017. The purpose of the workshop was to explain the concept of standardisation of results to members of the Portfolio Committee. The presentation included, *inter alia*; principles of standardisation, reasons for standardisation decisions taken in the 2016 examinations as well as the entire gamut of the standardisation process.

After Umalusi's presentation, members of the Portfolio Committee were given the opportunity to freely ask the Umalusi delegation as many questions as possible for clarity. The delegation comprised some members of the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Council, the chairperson of Umalusi Council, Prof John Volmink, the CEO of Umalusi, Dr Mafu Rakometsi, as well as some members of the senior management. In short, the following key messages on standardisation were communicated to the Portfolio Committee:

1. The ASC, the committee of Council that standardises the results, is an independent body made up of experts from different universities and research institutes in the country.
2. The ASC standardizes the results of the National Senior Certificate, National Certificate (Vocational), Nated Courses (N1-N3) and the General Education and Training Certificate - offered by the Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education and Training, Independent Examinations Board, South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute and Benchmark Assessment Agency. Equal attention must also be given to other qualifications - not just the NSC.
3. The standardisation process is cumulative - it starts with the appointment of examiners, setting of question papers, moderation of question papers, verification of marking and the so-called standardisation meetings whose processes mark the end of the actual standardisation process.

4. The full framework of standardisation is an 18 month process encompassing the exam cycle from the setting of the paper to the final standardisation meeting.
5. The final pre-standardisation meeting starts on 15 December and the climax is the open meeting like the one attended by members of the Portfolio Committee on 23 December 2016. During pre-standardisation meetings all evidence - both quantitative and qualitative - is considered.
6. It is usually not surprising to adjust many subjects upwards or downwards – especially after the introduction of a new curriculum as witnessed when the NSC was introduced in 2008 and the CAPS in 2014. Adjustments are intended to mitigate against advantaging or disadvantaging the learners because of the year in which they were born e.g. born in the wrong year which makes them write the NSC when there is a new curriculum. Standardisation tries to maintain consistency of standards.
7. Once the new curriculum settles - you could observe more raw marks being accepted. This marks the maturity of the system with the new curriculum. Thus teachers understand the approach and guide learners better, style of examiners is understood, old question papers are available to learners for revision etc.
8. Why is the standardisation data confidential? The standardisation marks are not final because they only include 75% written component and not the 25% of the School-Based Assessment (SBA). Standardisation marks also do not include rules of combination, condonation and language compensation marks.
9. That is why it is dangerous to speculate the outcome of the results based on standardisation outcomes. Any predictions are misleading as the final outcome may be different after taking everything into account.

According to the CEO of Umalusi, Dr Mafu Rakometsi, “the standardisation workshop assisted members of the Portfolio Committee to fully appreciate the complexity and technical nature of the process. It is for this reason that we needed four hours to unpack the concept. We all agree after the workshop that we could not have sufficiently explained the process via email.”

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