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Umalusi is satisfied with preparations for the 2017 matric examinations

Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, has declared the South African examination system ready for the 2017 final examinations. Umalusi quality assures all exit point examinations in general and further education (NQF levels 1-4).

Preparations for the oncoming examinations have started in earnest and all assessment bodies have presented their plans to Umalusi. For the National Senior Certificate (NSC) alone, the 2017 examinations will be written by approximately **634 814** full time and **161 475** part-time candidates with a total of approximately **796 289** candidates. These examinations will take place at more than **6 844** centres across the provinces. The Independent Examinations Board has registered **11 473** full-time candidates across the country and **687** part-time candidates at **231** examination centres.

At every stage during the conduct and administration of exit point examinations, Umalusi applies rigorous quality assurance methods to gauge the readiness of assessment bodies to administer fair and credible examinations without systemic irregularities. All examination papers are moderated and approved by Umalusi before they can be written by the learners. The internal assessments that take place in schools also fall within Umalusi's mandate, and these assessments are monitored, learners' tasks are moderated, and the final marks that contribute to the overall results are also statistically moderated to ensure consistency and reliability. Finally, the administration of national examinations is monitored, marking is verified and the final results are also statistically moderated.

As the quality assurer for this important sector of the South African education system, Umalusi's role is to monitor the public assessment bodies - Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training - the accredited private assessment bodies Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

Umalusi notes with regret that last year's final NSC examinations were marred by an incident of a paper leakage in Limpopo. The safety and security of examination materials has obviously become one of our focal points in the preparations for the 2017 examinations. As we did in the past three years, drastic measures will be taken against all learners, educators and departmental officials who are implicated in acts of dishonesty.

Overall, Umalusi is satisfied with the preparations for the end-of-year exams, and is confident that the general education system is adequately prepared to run these assessments successfully. Umalusi is also pleased to report that most provinces have improved their systems based on the concerns raised by Umalusi previously. However, this does not mean that Umalusi does not have some outstanding concerns regarding the upcoming national examinations. Subsequently, Umalusi has recommended to the Provincial Departments of Education that these concerns must be addressed before the commencement of exams to avoid a negative impact on the administration, management and monitoring of the forth-coming examinations. For its part, Umalusi will also intensify its monitoring where it deems it necessary to do so.

Unfortunately every year Umalusi becomes aware of new efforts by unscrupulous people to cheat the system, and every year we strive to improve our systems so that we can continue to close down any gaps or spaces where such incidents could occur.

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