



Media Statement

by

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28 December 2012

ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPROVAL FOR THE
RELEASE OF THE FOLLOWING EXAMINATION RESULTS:

1. INDEPENDENT EXAMINATIONS BOARD (IEB) – NSC AND GETC:ABET
2. DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION (DBE) – NSC
3. DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DHET) – GETC:ABET; NATED N1-N3 PROGRAMMES; NC(V)

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good morning, Absheni, dumelang, molweni, kgotsong, goeie more, sanibonani, ndaa, lotšhani, thobela.
2. Welcome to this Media briefing in which we will make significant pronouncements on the outcome of Umalusi's quality assurance processes with regard to the examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
3. There are many things that feel me with pride in being a South African citizen. One of these is the fact that we have free and independent media that is able to inform and educate our public on issues of national importance. Our constitutional democracy is much the richer and so much vibrant because we have competent and capable men and women who report and inform our nation.
4. Our pronouncement on the quality assurance processes this year is framed

around the theme “we can do better, we must do better”.

5. In 2011 Umalusi Council took a decision that all standardisation decisions relating to qualifications and part qualifications it quality assures will in future be made public.
6. This decision was not taken lightly because the international norm, standard and practice is to keep standardisation decisions confidential to protect the interests of candidates involved.
7. Before proceeding any further, allow me to explain Umalusi's mandate.
8. Umalusi is the Quality Council responsible for quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training. It is the accountable and certifying authority for assuring the quality of the following qualifications:
 - The National Senior Certificate (NSC),
 - The Senior Certificate; (to be phased out in 2014)
 - General Education and Training Certificate (NQF level 1);
 - the National Certificate Vocational NC(V); and
 - the NATED N (or Report 191) courses.
 - In addition to assuring the quality of the examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training, Umalusi is also responsible for the quality assurance of the examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB).
9. 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;*

(ii) *complied with the requirements prescribed by the Council for conducting assessments;*

(iii) *applied the standards prescribed by the Council which a learner is required to comply with in order to obtain a certificate; and complied with every other condition determined by the Council.*

(3) *The Council must issue certificates to learners who have achieved qualifications or part qualifications.*

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

11. In order to make this determination, there are various quality assurance measures that must be carried out. These are:

(1) Moderation and approval of question papers;

(2) Verification of the moderation of internal assessments;

(3) Monitoring of the conduct of examinations;

(4) Monitoring of the marking process;

(5) Verification of marking;

(6) Standardisation of the results.

12. As Umalusi, we would like to maintain the standard of the examination in all the subjects so that we can measure the real gains in the quality of teaching and learning rather than the false gains through examination papers of dubious quality.

13. Over the past few days, commencing on the 13th December 2012, Umalusi's Assessment Standards Committee has been hard at work standardising the examination results of the qualifications mentioned above.

14. Umalusi conducts not only the process of standardisation, which is required for national examinations, but it also, through rigorous procedures, assures the

quality of the entire examination process.

15. 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 the Department of Basic Education.
16. Before such an approval is granted, Umalusi Council has to satisfy itself that no significant irregularities have occurred to undermine the integrity and the credibility of the examination process.

The Standardisation process:

17. Let me briefly outline what the standardisation process entails:
18. Any large-scale examination process invariably has many and varied sources of variability.
19. 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.
20. It is universally accepted that judging the level of difficulty of a question paper is a near impossible exercise. It is only after the paper has been written and marked that one is able to determine whether it was pitched at the right level or not.
21. Standardisation of learner performance is an important quality assurance process used the world-over to mitigate the impact on learner performance caused by factors other than the learners' subject knowledge, abilities and aptitude.
22. There are two main objectives of standardisation:
 - a. First, to ensure that a cohort of learners is not advantaged or disadvantaged by 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.

23. In short, standardisation seeks to mitigate fluctuations in learner performance that are a result of factors within the examination processes themselves rather than the knowledge, aptitude or abilities of learners.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. Some of them are affiliated with our universities and others serve on national and international bodies that deal with education and assessments.
27. Most of them have been doing this work for many years and have seen this process mature over time.
28. With your indulgence, I wish to publicly acknowledge and extend our sincere gratitude to the members of the Assessment Standards Committee. They are
 - ✓ Prof Dan Kgwadi of North West University – Chairperson of the Committee
 - ✓ Prof Paul Fatti (Professor emeritus, Wits University)
 - ✓ Prof Moon Moodley (Professor emeritus, University of Durban-Westville)
 - ✓ Prof Sarah Howie, Professor at University of Pretoria;
 - ✓ Prof John Aitchson, University of KwaZulu-Natal
 - ✓ Prof John Volmink, (Professor Emeritus, University of Natal)
 - ✓ Prof Tim Dunne, University of Cape Town;
 - ✓ Mr Brian Shreuder, DBE, Western Cape;
 - ✓ Dr Jeanne Gamble, University of Cape Town.
29. I also wish to express deep appreciation to Ms Fatima Dada, a member of Umalusi Council ExCo, who participated in this year's standardisation processes.

30. The standardisation decisions are informed by qualitative reports which include marking and moderation reports and the post examination analysis reports which provide comparative analyses of question papers over a period of three years.
31. Subjects are standardised individually and in a non-iterative manner.

Principles of Standardisation

32. There are eight principles that guide the standardisation process. I will mention only two of these as they are particularly important.
 - a. In general no adjustment should exceed 10% of the total mark of the paper or the historical average.
 - b. In the case of the individual candidate, the adjustment effected should not exceed 50% of the raw mark obtained by the candidate. Put simply, moderation of raw marks of individual candidates should not lead to the doubling or halving of a candidate's marks.
33. It should be obvious from above two principles that one cannot have a fixed level of adjustment – an appropriate **scaling operation** must be employed in order to be consistent with these principles of standardisation.
34. In instances where raw examination marks are accepted, it is because
 - a. First, the examination has been adjudged to be of appropriate level;
 - b. Second, the learner performance is in line with the average historical learner performance profile in the subject;
 - c. Third, the conduct and management of the examination in the subject was not compromised.
35. For the standardisation of the National Senior Certificate raw marks, we use the ogive (or cumulative frequency) curves to represent the cumulative frequency of learner marks. In constructing the ogive curve, we use the 'less than or equal to' criterion.
36. We must accept that there is no system that is flawless. We are however satisfied that whatever examination challenges there were in this year's examination processes, they were not systemic and were effectively and

adequately dealt with by the respective assessment bodies.

37. Let us now turn to the results of the 2012 examinations:

37.1 Examinations administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)

37.1.1 NC(V) levels 2-4

- A total of 167 055 candidates were enrolled for NC(V) levels 2 - 4. Out of the total number of enrolments, only 91 111 wrote the exams.
- Umalusi is gravely concerned with the high drop-out rate of learners. It is Umalusi's considered view that a high attrition of learners amounts to, *inter alia*, inefficient use of resources and a fruitless and wasteful expenditure.
- A total of 221 subjects (79 Level 2, 74 Level 3 and 68 level 4 subjects) were subjected to the standardisation process.
- Raw marks were accepted for 148 subjects (67%) while moderation with minor changes to raw marks was effected for 73 subjects (33%).
- The percentage of raw marks accepted not only indicates a stabilising qualification but also attests to the accuracy of the Umalusi standardisation decisions over the past few years.

37.1.2 NATED N2-N3

- The original decision to phase out the NATED programmes was reversed when the new Ministry of Higher Education and Training was established. This change has resulted in a spike in enrolments with 25 569 candidates enrolling for 73 subjects.
- Of the 67 subjects standardised, raw marks were accepted for 43 subjects (64%), with only minor moderation adjustments being approved for the remaining 24 subjects.
- The standardisation of Industrial Electronics N3, is pending the outcome of an investigation into alleged serious irregularities.
- The results of this subject will be withheld until the investigation is

concluded to Umalusi's satisfaction.

37.1.3 The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) ABET level 4

- The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) ABET level 4 is examined by the DHET.
- Approximately 122 012 candidates enrolled with the DHET.
- However, only 85 477 of them wrote the exams. Again, this trend in learner drop-outs is a worrying factor for Umalusi.
- Of the 26 learning areas standardised, raw marks were accepted for 19 learning areas (73%). Umalusi, however remains concerned with the overall poor performance of candidates in the GETC examinations ABET level 4.

Final declaration and release of results:

On the basis of its monitoring and moderation processes, and the evidence before it, Umalusi is satisfied that there were no serious irregularities that could undermine the credibility of the examinations. The Council is therefore of the opinion that the examinations were conducted in a credible manner and therefore approves the release of the results for the NC(V), NATED N1-N3 and GETC ABET level 4. The results of individual candidates will be released on the dates determined by the DHET after Umalusi has verified the accuracy of the resulting data.

The results of Industrial Electronics N3 will be withheld pending the outcome of an investigation.

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37.2 Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board

37.2.1 National Senior Certificate

- In total, 8 959 full time and 534 part time candidates were enrolled for the NSC examinations set and administered by the Independent

Examination Board.

- A total of 58 subjects were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for 44 subjects. This figure represents 76% of the subjects for which raw marks were accepted after moderation.
- Of the remaining 14 subjects,
 - Moderation with some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 9 subjects,
 - Moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 4 subjects,
 - Moderation with some upward and some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 1 subject.

Final declaration and release of results:

*Having studied **all** the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board, Umalusi is satisfied that nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examinations process. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend IEB for running a successful and credible examinations process. We encourage IEB to continue to strive towards the provision of quality education for all young people in our country. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board on a date to be determined by IEB.*

37.2.2 General Education and Training Certificate – (ABET, Level 4)

- In total, 1 263 candidates sat for the GETC ABET examinations under the auspices of the Independent Examination Board.

- 10 learning areas were presented for standardisation.
- Following moderation, raw examination marks were accepted in all 10 learning areas.

Final declaration and release of results:

Having studied all the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the GETC (ABET, level 4) examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board, Umalusi is satisfied that nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examinations process. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend IEB for running a successful and credible examinations process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the GETC (ABET, level 4) Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board on a date to be determined by IEB.

37.3 Examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education

- In total, 527 335 full time and 120 352 part time candidates were enrolled for the NSC examinations set and administered by the Department of Basic Education.
- A total of 61 subjects were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for 44 subjects. This figure represents 72% of the subjects.
- Of the remaining 17 subjects,
 - Moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 4 of the subjects;
 - Moderation with some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 13 subjects,

Final Declaration and release of results:

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 nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examinations process. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend DBE for running a successful and credible examinations process. We encourage DBE to continue to strive towards the provision of quality education for all young people in our country. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education.

We are all aware of a localised examination irregularity that happened in KwaZulu-Natal. This has been investigated and appropriate action will be taken against the implicated parties.

Conclusion...

38. Umalusi Council is pleased that the system is stabilising well and has reached a significant level of maturity as evidenced by the high percentage of subjects whose raw marks were accepted after the moderation process.
39. It is also worth noting that in the few instances where moderation shifts towards the average historical learner performance in a subject were approved, such adjustments were generally below the maximum of 10% provided for in the standardisation principles.
40. Umalusi has taken note of the intervention and improvement strategies implemented by both national and provincial education authorities and the positive impact of these on the overall assessment system as well as on teaching and learning.
41. While a general and an across the board improvement in learner performance is welcome, we remain concerned with low levels of performance in some of the key subjects. In particular, we must improve our learner performance in Mathematics. This is particularly important as our country will be hosting the International Mathematics Olympiad in July 2014. It

is therefore vitally important that we galvanise the entire nation in ensuring that Mathematics improves in our country.

42. Let me make a few important points:

42.1 First, Mathematical Literacy is an important subject in advancing and deepening our constitutional democracy. You may have read an opinion piece in a newspaper in which the author mentions one 2-mark question in this year's DBE Mat Lit paper and uses that one question to rubbish, denigrate and cast aspersions on the subject Mathematical Literacy. It is not my place to comment on the appropriateness or otherwise of the item in question. We should however be always vigilant and guard against such intellectual dishonesty as it seeks to create a mass hysteria against a subject that has a significant contribution to make in our society. That said, we must continually improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment of Mathematical Literacy.

42.2 Second, some strong views have been expressed by some people in our society on what they refer to as low requirements for an NSC certificate. Their argument goes along the line: how can we allow a learner who has obtained 3 subjects at 30% level and 4 40% level to qualify for a national Senior Certificate? When you listen to the debate you would be forgiven for thinking that the majority of our learners are just scraping through with 30 percent and 40 percent marks. The reality is that less than 0.09% of our learners obtain the NSC on the basis of the minimum requirements. Again, that said, we must be concerned with the low level of performance of our learners. We must motivate them to excel in their studies.

42.3 Third, our external moderators have, again this year, commented on improved quality of marking, in general. We must continue to work on improving the quality of marking. We strongly recommend to DBE that those who wish to mark exams should take a competency test on the subject they wish to mark. Markers with limited subject knowledge tend to disadvantage top learners who produce innovative and original responses to questions. This is particularly the case in open-

ended questions where innovative responses are provided.

42.4 Fourth, what kind of a parent would bar his or her child from going to school in order to compel government to respond to service delivery needs of a community? What happened in some parts of the Northern Cape this year should not be allowed to happen again. The Public Protector tried without success to resolve the Northern Cape matter. To the extent that we did not provide strong and decisive leadership in asserting the constitutional rights of learners in Northern Cape, we were complicit in the act of condemning those young people to a life of hopelessness and despair. We, as a nation, failed those young people! We should never witness such atrocious and irresponsible actions ever again.

42.5 Fifth, we commend the Department of Basic Education for introducing the Annual National Assessments at Grades 3, 6 and 9. These assessments are like a mirror placed in front of our face. They show some deep scars and serious blemishes in our education system. Let us now use this invaluable information to redouble our efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. We call on all role-players in our education system – learners, parents, teachers, teacher professional bodies, teacher unions, governing bodies, education officials – to advance the cause for quality education for all.

43. Instead of obsessing about pass rates which hide more than they reveal, let us invest requisite resources to ensure that every young person in our country has access to quality education.

44. We can do better; we must do better!

45. Let us resist the temptation of joining to chorus of the cynics, the pessimists and the doomsayers who would have us believe that ours is a lost cause; they would have us believe that there was something good and positive for a Black child in Bantu Education.

46. Equally, we shouldn't be seduced or deluded into believing that we have a well-functioning, efficient and effective education system.

47. We must acknowledge that we have an education system that still fails dismally to free the full potential of the majority of our young people.
48. We are all aware of the large numbers of young people who drop out of our education system without reaching grade 12.
49. Our education system is work-in-progress and we must continue to work hard on it.

50. We can do better, we must do better!

51. We should uproot underperformance in every aspect of our activities and should never be content with mediocrity.
52. Let us raise expectations on ourselves and on each other.
53. Let us raise expectations on our learners. If we raise the bar, I am confident that they will rise to the challenge.
54. This year's performance of our learners amply demonstrates that we are on the right trajectory.

55. We can do better; we must do better!

56. Let us celebrate the many successes we have achieved in 2012 and build on them as we endeavour to free the potential of the young people of our country.
57. Let us move forward with renewed determination, with a sense of purpose and commitment and with great hope towards quality education for all.
58. Let us instil in our nation a sense of hope and optimism that tomorrow will be a better day than today.

59. We can do better, we must do better!

60. On behalf of Umalusi Council, I wish to extend our hearty congratulations to all the learners who have done well in their examinations. Warm congratulations also to their teachers, parents, guardians and all those who have supported these learners in their studies.

61. To those who have not succeeded, there is another chance for you next year! Work hard and do well next year.

62. Remember, we can do better; we must do better
63. Wishing you all the best for 2013.
64. Thank you.

Prof Sizwe Mabizela
Chairperson of Council
Umalusi