

**For immediate release:****Umalusi declares South African examination system ready for the 2014 end-of-year exams**

Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, has declared the South African examination system ready for the 2014 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 NSC alone, the 2014 examinations will be written by **551 656** full time and **135 259** part-time candidates. These examinations will take place across more than **8110** examination centres as compared to **6 699** examination centres in 2013, and will be marked by over **41 509** markers as compared to **35 000** in 2013. The IEB has registered **9 981** full time candidates across the country and **519** part time candidates in **207** examination centres.

At every stage of the assessment process, Umalusi subjects the systems and processes involved to scrutiny. 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 body Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and the provisionally accredited South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

Umalusi is delighted to announce that SACAI will pilot their full National Senior Certificate exams for the first time this year.

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. That is not to say, however, that Umalusi does not have some outstanding concerns regarding the upcoming national examinations. Key among these concerns is the status of Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, as provinces in which the education departments are currently experiencing challenges around staff capacity and lack of adequate resources.

Umalusi has recommended to the Department of Basic Education that intensive monitoring of these provinces needs to be instituted to mitigate possible unintended consequences of this situation. For its part, Umalusi will also intensify its monitoring where it deems it necessary to do so.

Further, almost every year Umalusi becomes aware of one irregularity or another, and every year we strive to improve our systems so that we can continue to close down any gaps or spaces where such events can occur. Finally, there are critical budgetary constraints within certain provincial education departments that hamper the filling of crucial staff vacancies and it is Umalusi's considered view that this remains a continuous risk for the system.

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