

Media Statement

by

Prof John Volmink (Chair of Umalusi Council)

30 December 2014

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. SOUTH AFRICAN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE (SACAI) – NSC
3. BENCHMARK – GETC
4. DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION (DBE) – NSC
5. DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DHET) – GETC:ABET; NATED N1-N3 PROGRAMMES; NC(V)

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. The CEO Dr Rakometsi pointed out that Umalusi has a specific mandate as outlined in the GENFETQA Act. Central to this mandate is the responsibility to assure the quality of assessments at exit points and to issue certificates to successful candidates.
2. Umalusi Council is expected to discharge this national responsibility with a great sense of assiduousness. We owe this to the people of South Africa and to the learners whose future is directly affected by the decisions we make.
3. High stakes assessments at exit points have far-reaching consequences for learners in the education system. It is therefore necessary that all checks and balances required to guarantee fairness to all the candidates and to provide confidence are in place.

4. I can say without fear of contradiction that Umalusi has well-established, rigorous and robust procedures in order to provide assurance to parents, employers and higher education that all learners receive appropriate recognition for their performance in line with agreed national standards.
5. In the execution of its responsibilities Umalusi understands that at times it has to make unpopular decisions. At the same Umalusi remains self-critical and open to constructive criticism and feedback from the various education stakeholders. We will therefore deepen our commitment as a learning organisation to constantly strive to improve our own practices and procedures through research agenda so as to enhance our quality assurance approaches.
6. In the final analysis we exist alongside all the other education stakeholders to make a unique contribution to the quality of education in our country. So when we quality assure the work of the various assessment bodies we are sharing and applying standards and expectations in the hope that in the process these standards and expectations will themselves be raised.
7. It is for this reason that as a quality council Umalusi remains committed to improving education standards throughout the General and Further Education system. This includes all levels and grades at school and not only the NSC.
8. An important focus for Umalusi is to improving the standards of internal assessment across the General and further Education system
9. As mentioned by the CEO, 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.
10. We have received irregularities reports from the various assessment bodies and we are pleased that there have been no reports or evidence of leakages of examination papers in any of the examinations.

- 11.** Having said this, it is worth noting that through our monitoring and moderation processes and from reports from the DBE, we have observed that in some instances new forms of dishonesty have emerged. The public assessment system in particular faces new challenges requiring urgent attention and I shall comment on these later when dealing with the NSC examination.
- 12.** We are going to provide each assessment body with a detailed technical report which will highlight the areas of concern and directives for compliance and improvement.
- 13.** We expect that these reports will be cascaded to the relevant levels, and that the concerns highlighted are given the priority they deserve. Umalusi will monitor progress made in addressing the concerns raised.
- 14.** Allow me now to provide a brief explanation why the 2014 NSC examination is a special one.
- 15.** The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is the newly phased in curriculum that is very similar in content in many subjects as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).
- 16.** Largely it is accepted that the CAPS curriculum has strengthened the NCS.
- 17.** The content is generally specified to a greater extent, with practical and assessment tasks specified, and direction is given to the pace at which the curriculum topics should be taught. This is aimed at ensuring that the whole curriculum is covered adequately.
- 18.** The CAPS curriculum was phased in as follows:
 - 2012: Foundation Phase and Gr 10
 - 2013: Intermediate Phase and Gr 11
 - 2014: Senior Phase and Gr 12
- 19.** So the 2014 NSC examination represents the first year that the new CAPS curriculum is being assessed at the Gr 12 level.
- 20.** While many subjects have not experienced dramatic content changes from the previous curriculum, a number of subjects have undergone significant changes in content, or in shifts in format.
- 21.** The following subjects have undergone major changes:

Subject	Impact
Agricultural Management Practices	Major changes in cognitive demand
Agricultural Technology	Major changes in cognitive demand
Economics	Major changes in format and structure of question papers
Dance Studies	Major changes in format and structure of question papers as well as curriculum
Geography	Major changes in cognitive demand, format and structure of question papers
History	Major changes in format and structure of question papers
Electrical Technology	Major changes in curriculum
Mechanical Technology	Major changes in curriculum
Mathematics	Major changes in format and structure of question papers as well as curriculum
Physical Sciences	Major changes in depth of content
Life Sciences	Major changes in cognitive demand and curriculum

22. Umalusi was very vigilant in the standardisation process to ensure that 2014 candidates are not unfairly disadvantaged because of the introduction of an amended curriculum.

23. Other factors that were taken into account, is the fact that the language compensation for certain learners was decreased from 5% to 4% this year and that this will be reduced by a further percentage point each year for the next four years until it has been phased out.

24. Umalusi is tasked with quality assuring the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and making recommendations to the Minister of Basic Education where necessary.

25. It is important that we pay attention not only to the so-called gateway subjects but to all the subjects in order to see learners emerging out of our schooling system *“who are literate, numerate and multi-skilled, but who are also creative and confident, resilient and independent, compassionate, environmentally respectful and able to participate in society as critical and active citizens”*.

- 26.** It is the case that we now have a beautiful curriculum statement; one that is internationally benchmarked and is modern and relevant, reflecting the progressive values of the constitution, with a strong focus on Africa and South Africa. We can hold up this curriculum statement with pride anywhere in the world.
- 27.** My simple hope is that we would soon reach a point when we can hold up our assessment tools and practices with the same degree of confidence and pride.
- 28. In conclusion:** I thank the CEO, Dr Rakometsi for his excellent leadership and all the Umalusi Senior managers and staff who work tirelessly and against stringent timelines to deliver the best for the country.
- 29.** I would like to thank all members of the Assessment Standards Committee for a job well done. We have a wonderful new ASC with a healthy mixture of youth and experience. I would be remiss not to acknowledge the role played in the Standardisation process by Prof Moon Moodley and Prof Paul Fatti who over the many years gave mentored us and guided us to make the best possible decisions.
- 30.** I would like to thank Prof Coert Loock for his leadership as Chairperson of the ASC and before I discuss the approval decisions and the release of the results, I now have pleasure in asking him to give us the Standardisation Principles.

Prof John Volmink
Chairperson of Council
Umalusi