

**Media Statement****Approval Decisions****by****Prof John Volmink (Chair of Umalusi Council)****30 December 2015**

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. Over the past few days, commencing on the 17th December 2015, Umalusi's Assessment Standards Committee, a body of education professionals, had been hard at work reviewing and moderating learner performance in the following qualifications per assessment body:
 - Independent Examinations Board (IEB) – NSC AND GETC:ABET
 - South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) – NSC
 - Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA) – GETC: ABET

- Department of Basic Education (DBE) – NSC
- Department of Higher Education And Training (DHET) – GETC:ABET; NATED N2-N3 Programmes; NC(V)

3. I shall deal with the approval decisions per qualification starting with the NSC. The NSC is offered by three assessment bodies: DBE, IEB and SACAI.

4. NSC Examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education

- In total, **674 232** full time and **127 456** part time candidates were enrolled for the NSC examinations set and administered by the Department of Basic Education.
- Umalusi has taken note of the evidence based reports on interventions 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.
- A total of **59** subjects were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for **29** of these subjects. This figure represents **49** % of the subjects.

- Moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on the remaining 30 of the subjects;
- **Subjects with upward shifts:** Physical Science; Mathematical Literacy; Life Sciences; Mathematics; Geography; History; Hospitality Studies; Agricultural Management Practices; Agricultural Technology; Agricultural Science; Information Technology; Civil Technology; Dramatic Arts; Accounting; Business Studies; Economics; English Home Language (HL); English First Additional Language (FAL); Afrikaans Home Language; Afrikaans FAL; IsiZulu HL; SiSwati HL; IsiNdebele HL; Sepedi HL; Sepedi FAL; Sesotho HL; Setswana HL; Tshivenda HL and Xitsonga HL.
- By comparison in 2014:
 - A total of **58** subjects were presented for standardisation.
 - After moderation, raw marks were accepted for **35** subjects. This figure represents **60.3%** of the subjects.
 - Of the remaining **23** subjects,
 - Moderation with some **upward shifts** towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on **13** of the subjects;
 - Moderation with some **downward shifts** towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on **10** subjects,
- It is therefore clear that to warrant this year's unprecedented set of adjustments, the learner performance in 2015 must have departed quite significantly from the average historical learner

performance profile.

- Together with the DBE, we are in the process of identifying the possible causal factors that led to this performance and I am confident that the lessons that will be learnt in this process would put us in a better position to ensure that the class of 2016 would not be disadvantaged in any way.
- It is perhaps important to highlight some possible factors that may have affected the learner performance this year:

A. Cohort change: as pointed out by Dr Rakometsi there was a drastic increase of 124 105 in the enrolment of candidates the class of 2015 of which over 66 088 were progressed learners (10% of the total cohort).

- The Policy on Progression was implemented in 2013 to prevent learners being retained in the same Phase for more than four years. However this policy was unevenly implemented across the provinces.
- In 2014 there was an estimated 30 000 progressed learners writing the NSC examination (5.5% of the cohort)
- In an attempt to offset the possible negative impact on the 2015 NSC results that these learners may have, the DBE and the PEDs provided targeted support and interventions for the progressed learners at District and Provincial levels.
- Umalusi has taken note of the evidence-based reports on interventions and improvement strategies implemented by both national and provincial education authorities for learners in general and for progressed learners in particular and the positive impact of these on the overall assessment system as

well as on teaching and learning.

- However our analysis based on the raw scores of the 2015 results demonstrates that the performance of progressed learners account for an increase in the failure rate of at most 3.5%.
- In most of the high-enrolment subjects the increased failure rate compared to 2014 exceeds 3.5%. In other words, if we exclude the progressed learners the class of 2015 still performed worse than the class of 2014. The drop in performance is particularly pronounced in the following subjects: Accounting, Geography, History and Mathematical Literacy.
- The conclusion that can be drawn here is that while the performance of the progressed learners has led to an increase in the failure rate in 2015, it does not fully explain the drop in performance.
- Incidentally it was pleasing to see that a number of the progressed learners obtained a distinction pass in the gateway subjects.

Raw Failure Rates 2014/2015 – Selected Subjects

SUBJECT	No of Candidates	2014 Raw	2015 Raw	2015 Raw excl. progressed	Percentage Failed	Number of Distinctions
Accounting	12 482	39.85	55.51	52.64	84.9%	50
Business Studies	24 120	45.02	45.51	42.16	76.7%	5
Economics	17 809	41.48	48.17	44.59	77.8%	2
English FAL	58 275	3.82	6.56	5.36	16.5%	10
Geography	30 431	18.84	34.24	31	63.3%	21
History	16 739	13.16	27.77	24.57	54.1%	58
Mathematics	17 408	52.88	63.45	61.69	88.3%	77
Maths Literacy	44 073	48.58	61.77	58.72	85.6%	5
Physical Sciences	13 686	47.68	54.83	52.52	85.2%	43
Life Sciences	30 966	31.23	39.5	36.36	71.6%	83



Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

Having concluded that the performance of progressed learners was not the only contributing factor leading to the poorer performance of the class of 2015, it is maybe helpful to identify some other contributing factors.

B. Cognitive Demand of the Papers: Generally, by design, the standard of the papers have improved and catered for more challenging questions as compared to 2014. It can be argued however that the standard of the question papers were too high this year. This may very well be the case. However, the reports from the DBE internal moderators as well as those from the Umalusi external moderators do not support this view. These reports all indicate that with single exceptions the papers were fair and set at the correct standard in accordance with the Subject Assessment Guidelines set by the DBE. Nevertheless, Umalusi will remain open to the possibility that the cognitive demand of the papers were a contributing factor to this year's

performance. It is for that reason that Umalusi must ensure that the standards of the papers are not dropped in order to improve the failure rate. The performance in the NSC across all the levels, is one of the most critical indicators of system improvement and we will not do ourselves any favours by lowering the bar. Umalusi cannot improve the quality of education on graph paper; this can only happen in the classroom by improving teaching and learning.

C. Improved Marking: The quality of marking is a very important aspect of the integrity and credibility of the examination. It is therefore pleasing to see the measures put into place to carefully select and train markers. Also the tolerance range of 2-3% for markers limited the wild fluctuations in marking that we saw in previous years. Although there is still room for improvement the enhancement in the quality of marking must render a more accurate estimation of learner performance.

D. More borderline candidates: from the data provided by the DBE, it would appear that in 2014 fewer learners were retained in Grade 11. This could mean that more borderline learners entered Grade 12 this year who together with the progressed learners, led to a weaker cohort.

E. Increased vigilance: The DBE and the PDEs have enhanced their measures of vigilance to prevent the incidences of mass copying we saw this year. Although acts of dishonesty still exist it was far less pervasive this year than in 2014. This could also have been a contributing factor.

F. Language Proficiency: In 2014 the language compensation for certain learners was decreased from 5% to 4% and that was reduced by a further

percentage point this year and in each year for the next three years until it has been phased out. It remains true that candidates writing the examination in a language other than their home language continue to experience great difficulty in interpreting questions and phrasing their responses. Umalusi therefore applauds the development of the Framework for Strengthening the Teaching and Learning of Languages which acts as an overarching guide to improve language proficiency in all languages including English. *The Strategy on Teaching English Across the Curriculum* has been implemented in all provinces.

Yet it remains a challenge that many of the subjects are heavily language laden and candidates experience great difficulty in coping with the language demands and still finishing on time.

Irregularities

- Umalusi conducts not only the process of standardisation, which is required for national examinations, but it also, through rigorous procedures, assures the quality and integrity of the entire examination process.
- 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 each of the assessment bodies.
- Before such an approval is granted, Umalusi Council

has to satisfy itself that **no systemic irregularities** have occurred to undermine the integrity and the credibility of the examination process.

- Umalusi requires that each assessment body provides a report on irregularities.
- In the 2014 NSC examination, the examination credibility was tarnished by group copying.
- It is common knowledge by now that in 2015 the system has had to deal with the unfortunate incidents of **paper leakages** in Limpopo, which ultimately spilled over to Gauteng and Mpumalanga. In the main, Life Sciences papers 1 and 2 were affected by the leakage.
- Information regarding an alleged leakage of the Life Sciences Paper 2 was received by the DBE on Monday, 16 November 2015 at approximately just prior to the writing of the examination.
- Investigations by a Task Team established to identify the source of the security breach and the extent of the spread of the access to the question papers, confirmed the leakages in Life Sciences Paper 1 and Paper 2 and very limited access by 2 or 3 learners in Geography P2 and Physical Sciences P2.
- Umalusi thanks the DBE for the swift and decisive action taken to limit the spread of the leakage.
- As a result all learners in Vhembe District were required to rewrite Life Sciences P1 and P2.
- Umalusi is very concerned about this trend and takes the view that strong action must be taken against those learners and officials who have made themselves guilty of these acts of dishonesty.

- Umalusi will therefore not approve the release of the results of all the identified culprits in the Vhembe District, Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The investigation is still continuing.
- 19 candidates in the Vhembe District, 3 candidates in Mpumalanga and 4 candidates in Gauteng were identified as implicated individuals. Furthermore, one suspect in Limpopo was arrested and charged with fraud and another suspect in Gauteng was also arrested.
- Furthermore, it is with bitter disappointment that we note that evidence from DBE indicates that the phenomenon of **group copying** has not been completely eliminated. This year has seen a number of new schools being implicated in group copying. However, we also acknowledge the significant reduction in the number of alleged cases of group copying compared to 2014.
- It is also worth noting that detection of these irregularities attests to a very functional and vigilant system.
- To date a total of 26 alleged cases of group copying have been reported in the following provinces: Gauteng (6), KZN (12), Limpopo (1), Mpumalanga (7). Further investigations are underway and the results from all the implicated centres will remain blocked.
- **We want to extend a serious warning to those who are implicated that drastic measures will be taken against them.**
- Irregularities occur in all examinations/ assessments and the examination system has mechanisms to manage irregularities, to avoid lapses in examination

credibility.

- However whether an irregularity becomes a threat to the system depends on the nature and extent of the irregularity.

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. Notwithstanding the areas of concern requiring improvement we are satisfied that the examinations on the whole were fair, valid and credible.*

We commend DBE for running a successful and credible examinations process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education.

5. National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB)

- In total, 10 212 full time and 563 part time candidates were enrolled for the NSC examinations set and administered by the Independent Examination Board.

- A total of 64 subjects were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for 52 subjects. This figure represents 81, 25% of the subjects for which raw marks were accepted after moderation.
- Moderation with some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on **the remaining 12** subjects,

Description	Total
Number of learning areas presented	64
Raw marks	52
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	12
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	none
Subjects not standardised	none
Number of learning areas standardised:	64

Final declaration and release of results:

Umalusi approved the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations as administered by the Independent Examinations Board on a date to be determined by IEB on 28th December 2015.

7. National Senior Certificate Examinations administered by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI)

- In total, 1 075 full time candidates and 527 part time candidates were enrolled for the NSC examinations set and administered by SACAI.
- A total of 27 subjects were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for 24 subjects. This figure represents 88,8% of the subjects for which raw marks were accepted after moderation.
- Of the remaining 3 subjects, moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected in 2 subjects, and 1 adjusted mainly downward.

Description	Total
Number of learning areas presented	27
Raw marks	24
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	2
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	1
Number of learning areas standardised:	27

Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI), Umalusi is satisfied that nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examinations process and consequently on 28th December 2015 have approved the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations as administered by **the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI)** on a date to be determined by SACAI.

8. The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC)

ABET level 4 administered by the DHET

- In total, 225 144 candidates were enrolled for the GETC ABET Level 4.
- 26 Learning Areas were presented for standardisation.
- Of the 26 learning areas standardised, raw marks were accepted for 11 learning areas. Moderation with some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 06 learning areas and moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile was effected on 10 subjects. 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 GETC ABET level 4 administered by the DHET.

9. General Education and Training Certificate – (ABET, Level 4) administered by the IEB

- In total, 1 464 candidates sat for the GETC ABET examinations under the auspices of the Independent Examination Board.
- 8 learning areas were presented for standardisation.
- Following moderation, raw examination marks were accepted in all 8 learning areas.
- **Final declaration and release of results:**
- *Having studied **all** the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the **General Education and Training Certificate – (ABET, Level 4)** examination 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 Examinations administered by the Independent Examinations Board on a date to be determined by IEB.*

10 GETC (ABET Level 4) Examinations administered by Benchmark

- In total, 461 candidates were enrolled for the GETC

examinations set and administered by Benchmark.

- A total of 2 learning areas were presented for standardisation.
- After moderation, raw marks were accepted for 2 learning areas. This figure represents 100% of the learning areas for which raw marks were accepted after moderation.

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

NC(V) levels 2-4

- In total, 183 125 candidates were enrolled for the 2015 NCV Levels 2-4
- A total of 252 subjects with 84 on Level 2, 84 on Level 3 and 84 on level 4 were subjected to the standardisation process.
- Raw marks were accepted for 122 subjects (48,4%) while moderation with some downward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile were effected on 2 subjects and moderation with some upward shifts towards the average historical learner performance profile were effected on 127 subjects, and in 1 subject no decision was taken due to low capture rate.
- 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.

Description	Total
Number of instructional offerings presented	252
Raw marks accepted	122
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	127
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	2
No decision	1
Number of instructional offerings standardised:	251

12. NATED N2-N3

- A total of 111 995 candidates sat for the N2-N3 examinations in 2015.
- 63 subjects were presented for standardisation.
- Of the 62 subjects standardised, raw marks were accepted for 31 subjects, 30 were adjusted mainly upwards and 1 subject was adjusted mainly downwards. 1 subject was not standardised pending the outcome of an investigation.

Final Declaration and Release of the results

The Umalusi Council studied the results of the November 2015 NC(V) Levels 2-4 and the NATED N2-N3 examinations submitted by the DHET and has approved the release of the results for the NC(V) Levels 2-4 and the NATED N2-N3 examinations. Based on the evidence before it, Umalusi is of the opinion that the examinations were conducted in a credible manner.

This brings us to the end of the presentation on the release of the November 2015 examination results.

Conclusion

- Umalusi Council continues to strive for a system that maintains high quality standards in the interest of South African learners some of whom are continually forced to study under trying socio-economic circumstances. Council is fully aware that some of our learners have to overcome some overwhelming difficulties in order to achieve a Grade 12 pass.
- To this end, we must spare no effort in ensuring that we strengthen our education from the bottom up and continue to strive for excellence in teaching and learning because we cannot depend on the standardisation process to bring about improvement in the classroom.
- **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.
- I would like to thank all members of the Assessment Standards Committee for a job well done. We have a wonderful new ASC under the leadership of Dr Ruth Mampane, 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 have mentored us and guided us to make the best possible decisions.

- 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.
- To those who have not succeeded, there is another chance for you next year! Work hard and do well next year.
- Wishing you all the best for 2016.
- Thank you.

Prof John Volmink
Chairperson of Council
Umalusi