

**Quality Assurance of the
Benchmark November 2015
examination of the
GETC: ABET L4**

UMALUSI



Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE
BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT AGENCY
NOVEMBER 2015 EXAMINATION
OF THE GETC: ABET L4

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Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
ASC	Assessment Standards Committee
BAA	Benchmark Assessment Agency
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CLC	Community Learning Centres
EAG	Examination and Assessment Guideline
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
LA	Learning Area
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centre
QAA	Quality Assurance of Assessment
QP	Question Paper
SAGs	Subject and Assessment Guidelines
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SBA	Site-Based Assessment
UMALUSI	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

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Chapter 1

Question Paper Moderation

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA) applied to be accredited as an assessment body to conduct examinations for the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training Level 4 (GETC: ABET L4).

Umalusi granted the applicant permission to conduct the November 2014 and November 2015 GETC: ABET L4 examinations on a trial basis for two learning areas, Communication in English (L4LCEN) and Mathematical Literacy (L4MLMS). The applicant was required to submit question papers for the two learning areas for external moderation and approval, as per the agreed management plan.

Umalusi moderates question papers based on a set of criteria to confirm that each paper meets quality assurance requirements; and that the standard of the paper adheres to policy requirements. To maintain public confidence in the national examination system the question papers must be seen to be relatively:

- Fair
- Reliable
- Representative of an adequate sample of the curriculum
- Representative of relevant conceptual domains
- Representative of relevant levels of cognitive challenge.

The purpose of external moderation of the question papers was to evaluate whether BAA has the capacity to develop and internally quality assure question papers that meet national standards and requirements.

1.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

The assessment body prepared and submitted the question papers, the marking memoranda and the Subject and Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) for the two learning areas for external moderation and approval. The question papers were scheduled to be written during November 2015.

All question papers were externally moderated according to the *Umalusi Criteria for the Moderation of Question Papers*. The criteria require that moderators assess the question papers according to the following eight areas:

- Technical
- Internal Moderation
- Content coverage
- Cognitive Skills
- Marking Memorandum
- Language and Bias
- Adherence to Subject Assessment Guidelines
- Predictability.

Each criterion has a set of quality indicators against which the question papers are evaluated and assessed. The external moderator assesses each criterion, considering four possible levels of compliance:

- No compliance (Met < 50% of criteria)
- Limited compliance (Met > 50% but <80%)
- Compliance in most respects (Met > 80% <100%)
- Compliance in all respects (Met 100%) of the criteria.

The moderator evaluates the question paper based on overall impression and how the requirements of all eight criteria have been met. A decision is then taken on the quality and standard of the question paper as a whole, considering one of four possible outcomes:

- Approved (A)
- Conditionally approved – no resubmission (CANR)
- Conditionally approved – resubmit (CAR)
- Rejected – if the standard and quality of the question paper is entirely unacceptable (R).

External moderation of the question papers was conducted off-site, i.e. at the homes of the external moderators. All question papers were submitted to Umalusi and rerouted back to the assessment body after the moderation process. Umalusi

is not aware of any question paper that was compromised during the external moderation process.

1.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The external moderators completed evaluation reports based on the moderation criteria. The moderation reports included both statistical and qualitative feedback. This report highlights the consolidated statistical and qualitative information extracted from the various external moderator reports.

1.3.1 *Communication in English*

The question paper for **L4LCEN** was **approved at first moderation**, but the external moderator noted the following recommendations with respect to the *Technical* criterion:

Table 1.1: *List of recommendations for Criterion 1*

Cover page	Change NOF Level 4 to NOF Level 1	
Page 2	paragraph 1, line 4	Remove the comma after the word <u>amphibian</u>
Page 2	paragraph 1, line 10	Insert the word <u>to</u> after the word <u>go</u> so that the line reads <u>first go to sleep</u> .
Page 3	paragraph 6	Place the full stop after the bracket thus: <u>(like electric lamps)</u> .
Page 4	Question 4	Insert the words <u>the sleep patterns of</u> after the words <u>differ from</u> so that the question reads: Explain how the sleep patterns of cultures with artificial light differ from the sleep patterns of cultures without artificial light.
Page 5	Question 6	Change the heading in the second column to <u>Words</u> . Delete the words <u>from text</u> so that the heading is not ambiguous. Re-set this question as none of the given answers can be found in the paragraphs mentioned in the table.
Page 5	Question 9	Change <u>why do we dream?</u> to <u>what is the advantage of dreams?</u>
Page 6	Question 10	Change <u>sleep is time</u> to <u>sleep is a time</u> Change <u>paragraph 6</u> to <u>paragraph 5</u> Write the words <u>paragraph 5</u> within brackets.

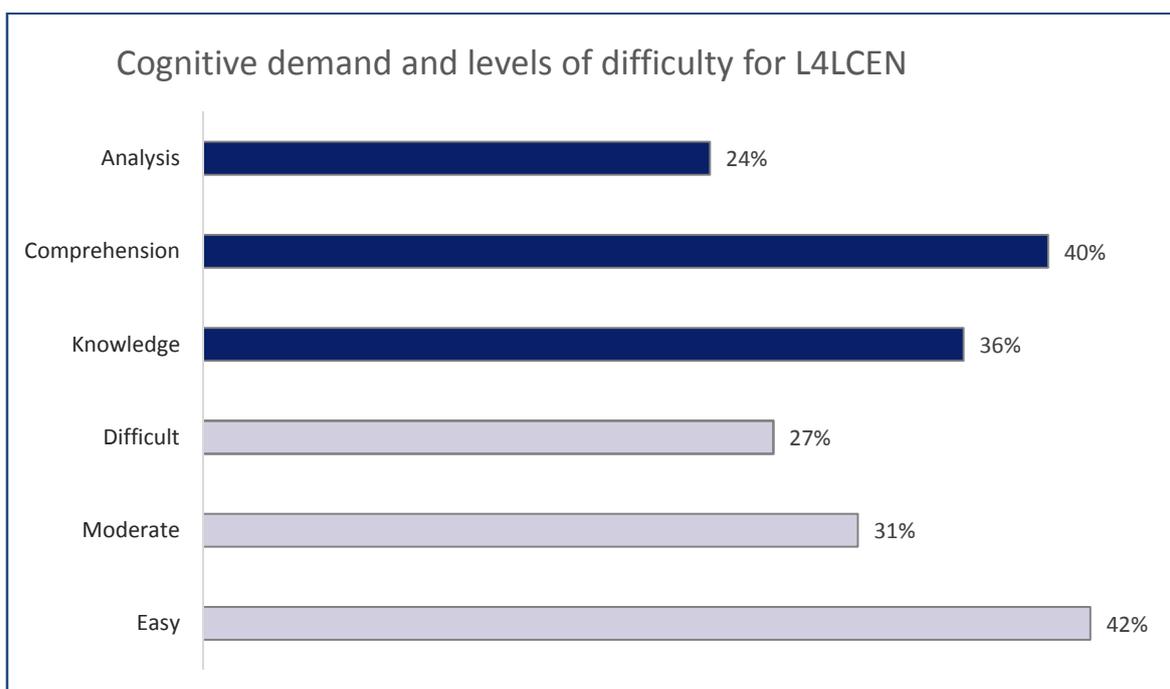
Cover page	Change NQF Level 4 to NQF Level 1	
Page 6	Question 16	Rephrase the question to read: <u>Why do you think scientists do not understand everything about sleep? (Paragraph 1)</u>
Page 11	Question 13	Remove the question mark after the words <u>paragraph 4.</u> Either re-set the question as there is no dash in paragraph 4 or insert a sentence with a dash in it in paragraph 4.

The L4LCEN question paper met 'most' of the compliance sub-criteria for 6/8 moderation criteria. Only the *Content Coverage* and *Predictability* criteria met 'all' the requirements.

This means that, overall, the question paper met the requirements of the eight criteria, notwithstanding the minor concerns as detailed in the external moderator report. An example would be the *Marking Memorandum* criterion that met all the requirements, but the external moderator noted a number of technical errors.

An analysis of the Assessment Framework in Figure 1.1 shows that the question paper was easy, with weightings of 42% and 31% for 'easy' and 'moderate' respectively.

Figure 1.1: Cognitive Demand – L4LCEN



The approved question paper varied slightly from the SAG requirements for a cognitive demand spread of 40:30:30 as the approved Assessment Framework ratios were 36% for level 1; 40% for level 2 and 24% for level 3.

Figure 1.1 shows that there is a correlation between mark distribution for 'analysis' and 'difficult'; 'comprehension' and 'moderate' and 'knowledge' and 'easy'. It must be noted that the moderation instrument does not specifically evaluate the levels of difficulty.

The learners could easily pass the question paper (40% required) without attempting the higher order (difficult) questions as the 'easy' questions accounted for 42% of the paper and the 'moderate' for 31%.

The Communication in English question paper was approved at first moderation as it met the minimum quality requirements. The external moderators noted recommendations for improvement. These concerns were mostly of a technical nature and did not negatively affect the quality of the question paper.

1.3.2 MATHEMATICAL LITERACY

The external moderator required that the L4MLMS question paper be resubmitted for second moderation as it did not meet the quality requirements. The question paper did not meet the requirements for the *Internal Moderation, Cognitive Skills, Marking Memorandum* and the *Adherence to SAGs* criteria after first moderation. The external moderator noted detailed recommendations for improvement.

The **L4MLMS question paper was resubmitted for second moderation** and was approved, with no need for third moderation. There was sufficient evidence that the internal moderator corrected the areas of concern as highlighted by the external moderator. The approved question paper met the moderation requirements although the external moderator noted one or two concerns regarding the memorandum.

The approved question paper varied slightly from the SAG requirements for a cognitive demand spread of 40:30:30 as the approved Assessment Framework ratios were 32% for level 1; 38% for level 2 and 30% for level 3, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Cognitive Demand – L4MLMS

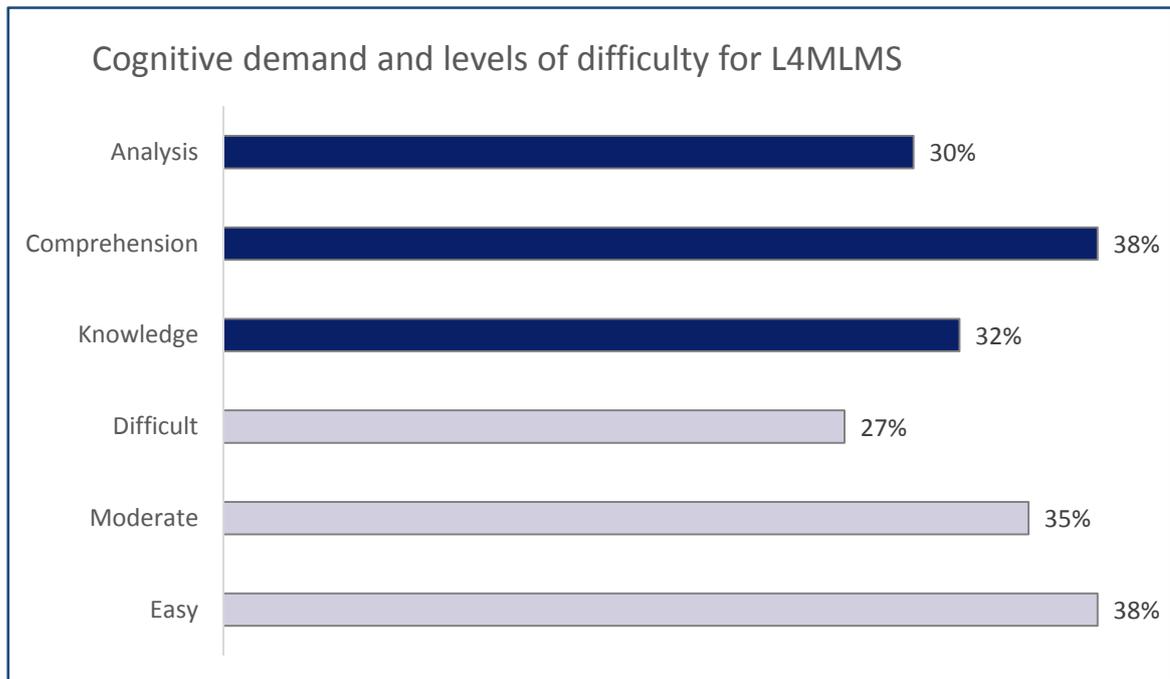


Figure 1.2 shows that the learners could easily pass the question paper (40% required) without attempting the higher order (difficult) questions as the 'easy' and 'moderate' order questions accounted for 73% of the paper.

1.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The concerns regarding examiners' and internal moderators' limited understanding of the assessment outcomes for the individual unit standards, as detailed in the November 2014 report, had been addressed.

1.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

- None noted as the approved question papers met the moderation requirements.

1.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- None.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The approved question papers met the minimum quality requirements. It must be emphasised that the approved question papers can, however, be improved, in respect to the sub-criteria as detailed in the external moderator reports. The question paper for L4MLMS, as approved this year, is possibly of a lower standard than the paper approved for the November 2014 examination.

Chapter 2

Moderation of Site-Based Assessment

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Quality assurance of assessment includes evaluating and judging the quality and standard of the internal assessment of programmes offered in the Adult Education and Training (AET) sector. Internal assessment, called Site-Based Assessment (SBA) in the AET sector, is an important component of examinations and contributes 50% towards the final mark required for certification.

Considering the myriad issues related to adult education and training, it should be understood that SBA is formative in design and intended to be developmental in nature. It is therefore imperative for educators to understand the purpose and design of site-based assessment. The objective is to guide and support the learning process in a structured approach that will assist learners to master theories, concepts and application without compromising the credibility of internal assessment.

The assessment body sets Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) nationally to ensure the internal assessment tasks are standardised across all AET providers. Umalusi quality assures and approves the CATs before they are implemented. The CATs are implemented, marked and graded by the Adult Education and Training (AET) providers.

The challenge with implementation is that AET providers often lack a system to ensure the quality and credibility of internal assessment. These challenges are amplified because most AET providers do not have the resources to provide quality learning and teaching. The net result of this situation is that many AET providers often use the CATs as if it were the curriculum.

Umalusi conducted external moderation of SBA to assess its quality and standard, as quality assured by Benchmark Assessment Agency. The external moderation of SBA is an important aspect of the quality assurance process, because such moderation:

- Ensures that the SBA complies with national policy guidelines and Umalusi directives
- Establishes the scope, extent and reliability of SBA across all assessment bodies offering the qualification
- Verifies *Internal Moderation* of both the set tasks and the completed tasks

- Identifies challenges to this aspect of assessment and recommends solutions
- Reports on the quality of SBA within assessment bodies.

2.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

Benchmark Assessment Agency offered November 2015 examinations for Communication in English (L4LCEN) and Mathematical Literacy (L4MLMS). Umalusi agreed that Benchmark could use the CATs for the two learning areas approved during 2014 for the November 2015 examination. External moderation was thus focused on the quality and standard of the implementation of the CATs by AET providers, as well as the *Internal Moderation* carried out by Benchmark.

Umalusi moderated the SBA portfolios on-site at Benchmark offices on 7 and 8 November 2015. The external moderators sampled 10 learner portfolios for each learning area from five centres, as shown in Table 2.1.

It must be noted that DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre was sampled for both learning areas. The external moderators selected samples for moderation at random.

Table 2.1: SBA Portfolio Sample Moderated

CENTRE NAME	Number Moderated	
	L4LCEN	L4MLMS
Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre	4	-
DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre	3	3
DCS Barberton Medium B	3	-
Modikwa AET Centre	-	4
Kopanong ABET Centre	-	3
	10	10

The external moderators evaluated the SBA portfolios using an instrument designed for this purpose. The evaluation also considered the reports from internal moderators. The evaluation instrument provided for qualitative feedback as well as quantitative analysis of the responses. SBA moderation takes into account the following seven criteria:

- Adherence to Assessment Guidelines (SAGs)
- Internal Moderation
- Content Coverage

- Quality of Portfolios of Evidence (Structure/Content)
- Quality of Assessment Tasks
- Learner Performance
- Quality of Marking

The moderator evaluates the SBA based on how the requirements of the seven criteria have been met and overall impression of the completed tasks.

2.3 SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Benchmark Assessment Agency required the AET centre managers to complete a self-evaluation instrument and to submit this report to the assessment body. The instrument assessed the implementation of the SBA CATs. In addition to the self-evaluation, the assessment body also conducted site visits for a sample of sites.

Umalusi received copies of self-evaluation forms for Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre and Modikwa AET Centre for both L4LCEN and L4MLMS. The assessment body also provided evidence that officials visited DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre, DCS Barberton Medium B and DCS Barberton Youth correctional facilities. The reports confirm that the assessment body monitored and evaluated the implementation of the SBA CATs in the AET centres.

The external moderators completed evaluation reports based on the moderation criteria. The moderation reports included both statistical and qualitative feedback. This report highlights the consolidated statistical as well as the qualitative information extracted from the various external moderator reports.

Table 2.2 shows the compliancy ratings based on the seven criteria used in the moderation of SBA portfolios.

Table 2.2: Quantitative Analysis of AET Centres Moderated

	COMPLIANCY FREQUENCY (42)			
	None	Limited	Most	All
1. Adherence to Assessment Guidelines	0	2	4	0
2. Internal Moderation	0	0	0	6
3. Content Coverage	1	4	0	1
4. Quality of Portfolio of Evidence	0	1	4	1

	COMPLIANCY FREQUENCY (42)			
	None	Limited	Most	All
5. Quality of Assessment Tasks	0	4	2	0
6. Learner Performance	0	5	1	0
7. Quality of Marking	1	3	1	1
	2	19	12	9
	50%		50%	

The table shows that the sample moderated had 21 instances (50%) of non-compliance ('none' and 'limited') with the seven criteria: 19 instances (45%) of 'limited' compliance and two instances of 'none' compliance. The main concerns included poor *Content Coverage* and poor *Quality of Marking*. The section below summarises the key findings.

C1: ADHERENCE TO ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

- The centres sampled met some of the sub-criteria as two centres were given 'limited' compliance ratings and four centres met 'most' of the sub-criteria.
- DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre and Kopanang AET Centre were given 'limited' ratings for L4MLMS as there were no assessment plans and mark sheets to verify the implementation of the tasks and the correct allocation of marks.

C2: INTERNAL MODERATION

- All centres in the sample complied very well with this criterion, achieving six 'all' compliance ratings.
- The portfolios contained evidence that *Internal Moderation* was conducted and the external moderators were satisfied with the depth and quality of the internal moderation.
- SBAs submitted to Umalusi had SBA feedback forms – one for the educator/assessor giving feedback to the learner/candidate (vice versa) and the other for the moderator giving feedback to educator/assessor (vice versa). These forms required a two-way communication channel where feedback could be shared between the respective parties.

C3: *CONTENT COVERAGE*

- The Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre met 'all' the requirements for this criterion for the L4LCEN portfolios.
- Kopanang AET Centre met 'none' of the *Content Coverage* requirements for the L4MLMS portfolios.
- The remaining four centres scored 'limited' compliance ratings as there were no assessment plans and no mark sheets in the portfolios outlining how the SBA tasks were implemented and assessed.
- Of the seven moderation criteria, *Content Coverage* – possibly the most important criterion – was the worst area of performance. All learner portfolios submitted to Umalusi had evidence that the SBA tasks were completed, assessed and some of them moderated at centre level, but some centres did not submit their assessment plans, working mark sheets and centre moderation reports.

C4: *QUALITY OF PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE*

- The presentation of the portfolios was good, with only one instance of 'limited' compliance, for L4LCEN at the DCS Barberton Medium B Centre.
- The portfolios for L4LCEN at the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre met 'all' criterion requirements.
- Four centres met 'most' of the requirements: not all supporting SBA documentation was in the portfolios; signed authenticity forms were missing and poor filing systems were in evidence.
- It must be noted that some centres did not submit their assessment plans, working mark sheets and centre moderation reports.

C5: *QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT TASKS*

- Overall, the completed tasks were of a poor quality, with four instances (67%) of 'limited' compliance.
- The quality of the tasks for L4LCEN was poor at the DCS Barberton Medium B Centre.
- The quality of the tasks for L4MLMS was poor at the Modikwa AET Centre and the Kopanang AET Centre.
- The completed tasks for L4LCEN did not have sufficient evidence that the learners had the required competencies.

C6: LEARNER PERFORMANCE

- The learners did not perform well in the completed tasks, with 5/6 centres meeting only 'limited' requirements.
- Only DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre met 'most' of the requirements for L4LCEN.
- The learners were unable to respond to all aspects (at different levels of difficulty) as set in the tasks.
- The learners also failed to meet the expectations and demands of the assessment tasks.

C7: QUALITY OF MARKING

- The quality of marking for L4LCEN was very good at the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre as the marking met 'all' requirements.
- The markers at the DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre did not meet any ('none') of the criterion requirements for L4MLMS.
- Markers for L4MLMS at Modikwa AET Centre and Kopanang AET Centre met 'limited' requirements. Marking was inconsistent, the quality and standard of marking was unacceptable and the totalling of marks and transfer of marks to the mark sheet were inaccurate.
- All centres in the moderation sample met the *Internal Moderation* criterion.

2.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- Benchmark Assessment Agency implemented a self-evaluation instrument for AET centres to complete and report on the quality of the implementation of the SBA CATs.
- The assessment body provided evidence that officials visited three AET sites to monitor the implementation of the SBA CATs, and had provided feedback to assist with quality improvement.

2.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

- The external moderators noted that, generally, the educators did not have copies of the assessment guidelines; they used the CATs as the curriculum and assessment guidelines. Without copies of the assessment guidelines the educators cannot possibly know whether they comply with the guidelines or not.

- The limited coverage of the contents of the SBA tasks was a concern as this ultimately determines learner performance. Evidence suggests that the educators and the learners concentrated on the presentation of the portfolios at the cost of good teaching and learning.
- The poor quality of marking at four of the centres remains a concern, especially since this issue was also raised in the December 2014 QA report. Evidence suggests that educators struggled to understand and implement assessment rubrics.

2.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- Benchmark Assessment Agency must explore strategies to ensure that AET providers teach the curriculum and do not concentrate on completing the SBA tasks only. Teaching the curriculum will help to improve the performance of the learners.
- Benchmark Assessment Agency must explore strategies to improve the quality of marking the SBA tasks and the effective use of marking rubrics.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The external moderation of the SBA portfolios confirmed that the SBA CATs were poorly implemented by AET providers and the assessment body must explore strategies to ensure that AET providers improve the quality of their learning and teaching practices.

The challenge for assessment bodies is that they are not directly involved in the learning and teaching practices of AET providers and do not have mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate institutional assessment. Umalusi is not convinced that the 50% weighting of Site-Based Assessment is accurately accounted for.

Benchmark Assessment Agency applied statistical moderation as a quality assurance process after the approval of the SBA tasks, in addition to the monitoring and evaluation exercise and the site visits to the centres. The assessment body must be commended for these initiatives.

Chapter 3

Monitoring the State-of-Readiness

3.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Benchmark Assessment Agency is a private assessment body that has applied to Umalusi for accreditation to conduct, administer and manage the examination of the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Education and Training Level 4 (GETC: ABET L4). As part of its quality assurance mandate, Umalusi has an obligation to ascertain an assessment body's level of readiness to conduct, administer and manage examinations of qualifications on its sub-framework of qualifications.

It is against this background that Umalusi visited the head office of Benchmark and a sample of its registered examination centres to verify the systems and policy implementation, in preparation for the 2015 October/November (GETC: ABET L4) examinations. This chapter therefore reports on the findings of these visits, listing aspects that were in place while at the same time flagging those requiring attention.

3.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

To verify the maintenance of standards and adherence to applicable policies and regulations, Benchmark and a sample of four of its examination centres were monitored by Umalusi to establish their level of readiness to administer the 2015 October/November GETC: ABET L4 examinations.

Three of the examination centres monitored were in correctional services facilities (prisons) while the other was on mine premises. Those centres were:

- Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre in Gauteng,
- DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre in Mpumalanga
- Westville Medium B in KwaZulu-Natal
- Tau Tona ABET Centre in North West.

The focal points for the state-of-readiness monitoring visits were:

- Appropriate policy development and implementation
- Availability and utilisation of suitable systems, processes and procedures
- Management plans for assessment, moderation and monitoring
- Appointment and training of relevant personnel
- Adequacy of resources
- Safety and security of examination material.

3.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.3.1 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Benchmark Assessment Agency had six permanent staff members. Contract workers were employed for question paper development, marking and moderation of candidates' answer scripts, and to monitor the assessment process. The budget for the 2015 November Examinations was sufficient to carry the process through. About 70% of Benchmark's financial resources were sponsored by a well-established and financially stable company. There was adequate infrastructure and equipment for the management of the examinations, also given the low number of candidates enrolled. Other processes like printing, packaging and distribution of examination material were outsourced.

3.3.2 MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXAMINATIONS

Benchmark Assessment Agency had a detailed plan for the conduct, management and administration of the 2015 GETC: ABET L4 examinations. The management plan has been categorised into 15 major tasks. According to this management plan, the appointment of contractors and service providers was still in progress. Other tasks that were still in progress at the time of the visit included: electronic examination management system readiness, Site-Based Assessment, registration of examination centres and candidates.

The management plan indicated that the development of question papers was completed. The printing, packaging and distribution of examination material, monitoring of examinations and marking and moderation of candidates' answer scripts were also planned, however these processes had not yet commenced.

3.3.3 REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES AND VERIFICATION OF THE CORRECTNESS OF DATA

Candidate registration data was captured by the coordinator at the centre on an Excel spreadsheet, which was uploaded to Benchmarks' examination system. A schedule of entries was then sent to the centre for verification, with a due date for the submission of requests for correction. This document was signed by the coordinator. If no response was received it was accepted that the data was correct and the examination process continued. The assessment body had no recourse should a candidate dispute the information supplied at the point of registration because the candidates were not required to authenticate the information they supplied. This has serious implications for certification and requests for re-issues due to incorrect candidate personal details and/or incorrect subjects.

Benchmark Assessment Agency had registered 10 examination centres in five of the nine provinces, as depicted in Table 3.1 below. These examination centres had registered candidates in Communication in English (L4LEN) and Mathematical Literacy (L4MLMS) Level 4 of the GETC qualification, except at three centres which had registered candidates in Mathematical Literacy only. The total number of candidates registered by Benchmark was 461. This reflects an improvement in both number of centres and candidates compared to 2014 enrolment statistics.

Table 3.1: Registration of Candidates and Examination Centres

PROVINCE	EXAM CENTRE	L4LCEN	L4MLMS	TOTAL
Limpopo	Modikwa AET Centre	17	21	38
	Samancor Eastern	15	18	33
Mpuma- langa	Vuselela Learning Centre	60	60	120
	Town Youth Centre	11	11	22
	Medium B Centre	44	44	88
Gauteng	Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre	21	21	42
	Johannesburg Centre B	26	26	52
North West	Kopanong ABET Centre	0	25	25
	Tau Tona ABET Centre	0	16	16
Eastern Cape	Camdeboo – Karoo Women's Trust	0	25	25
TOTAL:		194	267	461

Among the examination centres monitored by Umalusi, it transpired that DCS Westville Prison had not finalised its registration process with Benchmark.

In all three centres visited, the process of registering candidates for the examinations was already concluded; all that was left was for candidates to receive their examination permits. Preliminary schedules for the registration of candidates were also received, completed and returned to Benchmark.

3.3.4 SAFETY AND SECURITY OF EXAMINATION MATERIALS

Examination material was to be received by courier the day before the examination was written. In all centres monitored, examination material was to be stored in safes in the offices of the chief invigilators. Security was more than adequate, with all centres having alarm systems, surveillance cameras, 24-hour security guards and burglar bars on all doors and windows.

3.3.5 PRINTING, PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION OF EXAMINATION MATERIALS

Benchmark outsourced the printing of examination material to Colour Tech Company. Umalusi visited this printing company to monitor how it conducted and managed the printing process of examination material for Benchmark. The Colour Tech premises had two main buildings; one is used for the printing of study guides, books and other study material, while the other building was used exclusively for the printing of examination material. Security officials manned the gate and the premises were surrounded by an electric fence.

In the building where question papers were printed, there were two additional security officials at the door. No cell phones were allowed in the printing facilities. There were five surveillance cameras inside the building. There were sufficient printing machines linked to a computer loaded with M-File software, a system that grants temporary access to authorised people only. The only concern was that these machines could not package the printed material, thus requiring human intervention for this task.

All the people involving in the printing of examination material were subject to police clearances and lie detector tests. They were also required to sign confidentiality forms. Initially one question paper was printed for quality assurance and approval by Benchmark. Once approved, the question papers were printed on a large scale. Any spoilt papers were put aside to be shredded by the Exams Printing Manager after printing was completed. Once printed, workers packed, labelled and sealed the question papers in bins designed for this purpose.

If question papers were not to be transported on the day of printing, these were stored in a strong room controlled by the Exams Printing Manager. A surveillance camera was installed in the strong room and anyone entering was required to

sign in. In the event of a printing machine breakdown during printing, printers employed to print study guides and books (in the other building) were utilised.

The company also employs two permanent technicians to deal with any breakdown of printing machines. In cases where additional manpower was needed to fast track the printing of question papers, they would use staff usually employed in printing study guides and books to plug the gap. There was a large generator on standby, in case of load shedding.

On the day of transportation, Colour Tech was to contact the assessment body to coordinate the delivery. The assessment body would be informed immediately the delivery truck left Colour Tech's premises; they would inform them about the route the truck would use and the estimated time the truck should take to reach the assessment body. Colour Tech would be in constant communication with the truck driver to ensure everything was in order. In the event of Colour Tech losing contact with the driver of the delivery truck, or the truck not arriving at its destination at the estimated time, the police were to be informed.

3.3.6 APPOINTMENT AND TRAINING OF INVIGILATORS AND MONITORS

To manage the competency of invigilators in the exam room, Benchmark launched an online invigilator training programme. This programme covered all aspects of an invigilator's duties prior to, during and after the writing of examinations and including the management of irregularities. The programme used a summative assessment, which resulted in certification. Furthermore, invigilators were provided with an Invigilator Examination File, which was downloadable for future reference.

It was verified in the centres monitored that chief invigilators had been appointed and trained. The chief invigilator for Tau Tona ABET Centre was last trained in 2013; however, he had received the 2015 training manual for invigilation. The chief invigilator for Vuselela Learning Centre attended training organised by the local district office of the Department of Basic Education.

Invigilators at all centres monitored had been appointed and trained, although these appointments were, at the time of the monitoring visit, not yet confirmed in writing at Tau Tona. None of these centres would be using the services of external invigilators. Invigilation timetable drafting was still under way.

The appointment of monitors had not been completed at the time of the visit. However, Benchmark intended to have monitors at regional and head office level to monitor the exam centres during the writing of the examinations. These monitors would be required to undergo the Benchmark invigilator training programme.

3.3.7 THE EXAMINATION ROOMS

Benchmark audited all the examination centres during the centre registration process. This required a physical site visit to check that the examination rooms were conducive to the writing of the examinations. All the centres had sufficient facilities in terms of classrooms, enough and appropriate furniture, lighting and ventilation. Examination files were available in all four centres visited. In three of the centres these contained most of the documents necessary for the conduct and management of examinations.

3.3.8 THE MANAGEMENT OF IRREGULARITIES AND CONCESSIONS

Examination centres monitored claimed to have never experienced irregularities. Only at one centre were personnel able to explain clearly the correct steps to be taken once an irregularity was identified. In the other centres, the information provided contradicted what was contained in the examinations guidelines. Benchmark will in future provide examination centres with templates to record and report irregularities. Benchmark is to then report these to Umalusi.

The Benchmark learner exam registration form included a probing question that required centres to confirm whether there were any learners who would require special concessions for the examination. Upon such confirmation, Benchmark would require details of the type of challenge(s) the learner faced and adjudicate and approve or decline the application for concession. No concessions were requested for the 2015 examinations.

3.3.9 SELECTION OF MARKERS AND MARKING CENTRES

Benchmark's marker training manual outlined the criteria for the selection and appointment of markers, moderation procedures, marking administration and report writing. Benchmark had appointed markers for the GETC: ABET L4 examination, the marking of which would take place at Benchmark's head office in Rivonia.

The centre manager was to manage the marking session with an agenda that detailed the management of the marking venue, marking procedures, memorandum discussion, live marking, Benchmark and Umalusi moderation and capturing of marks. There were monitoring and marking documents in place to coordinate this process.

3.3.10 MODERATION OF SITE-BASED ASSESSMENTS

The management and administration of Site-Based Assessments was consolidated with training at centre manager, facilitator and moderator levels. Benchmark intended to conduct moderation on two levels (centre level and assessment body level); meaning Umalusi would conduct the third and final level of SBA

moderation. Upgrades were done on instructions to educators on how to compile and submit learner portfolios to Benchmark.

3.3.11 CAPTURING OF MARKS AND CERTIFICATION

Benchmark had in place an electronic examination management system to manage learner records, from registration to resulting and certification processes. A double-capturing method was implemented in all cases. The certification aspect of the examination system was found to be inadequate for the requirements of an assessment body.

Candidate data for previous examinations cycles was not accessible as the database required updating. The potential for risk was noted in over-reliance on a service provider for the processing of data for submission to Umalusi in the resulting / standardisation / statistical moderation / certification processes.

3.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- Benchmark had a detailed management plan in place for the conduct, management and administration of the 2015 November examinations.
- The process of registering candidates had been completed.
- The introduction of an online invigilator training programme, which also assesses the user and issues certificate to those achieving 80% and more, was commendable.
- Examination centres monitored had good facilities for writing the examinations.

3.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

The following issues noted during the monitoring visits must be addressed:

- Candidates were not required to verify the accuracy of their registration data during registration.
- There is over-reliance on a service provider for the processing of data to be submitted to Umalusi for the resulting / standardisation / statistical moderation / certification / resulting processes.

3.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- The registration process needs to be improved to ensure that candidate details are correct in respect of identifying documentation supplied, e.g. passport and/or ID.
- Candidates must sign off the registration particulars, with the possibility of including a clause or two to indicate the requirements for SBA and any provisos relating to personal particulars.
- The certification module of the computer system needs to be enhanced to permit the processing of certification/resulting requests by the assessment body, without the intervention of the service provider.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the issues for improvement observed by Umalusi, and those still to be completed, Benchmark was found to be ready to administer the 2015 GETC ABET L4 November examinations.

Chapter 4

Monitoring of Writing

4.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This is the consolidated report on the monitoring of the conduct of the writing of the 2015 General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) examination, as administered by Benchmark Assessment Agency. The purpose of Umalusi monitoring this examination was to ascertain whether the policy guidelines governing the conduct and administration of the examination were satisfactorily implemented and managed; and to establish whether the credibility and integrity of the process of the conduct, administration and management of the examination were compromised.

4.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

Umalusi visited a sample of six examination centres registered with the Benchmark Assessment Agency during the period of the writing of the 2015 October/November examinations, as indicated in Table 4.1 below. Interviews, observations, perusal of appropriate documentation and a predesigned instrument were used to collect the required information during the monitoring visits. These reports were used to determine the level of compliance with the regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the writing of the examinations.

Table 4.1: Examination Centres Monitored for the Writing of Examinations

PROVINCE	CENTRE	DATE	SUBJECT	TOTAL
Mpumalanga	DCS Barberton Vuselela Learning Centre	24/11/2015	Mathematical Literacy	44
Limpopo	Modikwa AET Centre	24/11/2015	Mathematical Literacy	19
North West	Kopanong ABET Centre	24/11/2015	Mathematical Literacy	12
	Tau Tona ABET Centre	24/11/2015	Mathematical Literacy	9
	Camdeboo Women's Trust	24/11/2015	Mathematical Literacy	23
Gauteng	Johannesburg Centre B	26/11/2015	Communication in English	24

4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The summary of the findings on the examination centres monitored by Umalusi are reflected in Table 4.2 below. The diagram reflects good compliance with the eight criteria on the conduct and management of examination. Further details on each criterion are presented in the sections to follow.

Table 4.2: *Level of Compliance in Relation to Criteria*

CRITERIA	COMPLIANCE		
	ALL	MOST	LIMITED / NONE
1. Delivery and storage of exam material before writing	4	2	0
2. The invigilators and their training	5	0	1
3. Preparations for writing and the examination venue	3	3	0
4. Time management for crucial activities during the examination	3	3	0
5. Checking of the immediate environment	5	1	0
6. Activities during writing	4	2	0
7. Packaging and transmission of scripts after writing	3	3	0
8. Monitoring by the assessment body	2	2	2

4.3.1 *DELIVERY AND STORAGE OF EXAMINATION MATERIAL*

Examination materials were delivered to examination centres one week in advance of the examinations, according to Benchmark's roster. It was evident that all question papers were received sealed and stored in strong rooms or lockable steel cabinets before the commencement of the writing session. The keys to the safes and strong rooms were, generally, kept by the centre manager who was also the chief invigilator.

All examination centres monitored had basic security features such as safes, lockable steel cupboards, security guards and burglar bars. It was only at one centre where question papers were stored in a small wooden cupboard in the

exam venue to which candidates had access. The keys were held by the chief invigilator.

4.3.2 THE INVIGILATORS AND THEIR TRAINING

The centre managers/coordinators and the educators/facilitators were appointed as chief invigilators and invigilators respectively. The appointment of the chief invigilators was confirmed in writing by the Benchmark Assessment Agency. Invigilators were officially appointed by the chief invigilators. The chief invigilators were trained by Benchmark; whereas invigilators were trained on the conduct of the invigilation of the writing phase of examination by the chief invigilators.

4.3.3 PREPARATIONS FOR WRITING AND THE EXAMINATION VENUES

All six centres monitored offered an environment conducive for the writing of examinations in terms of temperature, adequate light, quietness and sufficient and appropriate furniture. All examination room walls were cleared of posters. Seating plans were prepared and used to guide the seating arrangements of candidates in the examination rooms, except in one centre where no seating plan was prepared.

Examination centres were equipped with clocks visible to all candidates, and writing boards displayed the centre number, examination date, name of subject being written and the starting and finishing times. Invigilators signed the attendance register at five of the six centres monitored and wore name tags. Examination files were available in all examination centres. All contained the necessary documents, including an invigilation timetable, examination manual, appointment letters of the invigilation team, and other forms.

Candidates were subjected to measures to prove identification through presentation of identity documents and admission letters. These were checked either when candidates were admitted into the examination room or while seated in the examination venue. Question papers were opened in the examination room in front of candidates by the chief invigilator/invigilator at all centres.

Question papers, which also served as answer books, were distributed to all candidates. All candidates were registered in all examination centres. There were no special concessions being applied on the dates of monitoring by Umalusi. All examination centres complied with the policy of not allowing cell phones into the examination room.

4.3.4 TIME MANAGEMENT

The invigilators arrived in good time at the examination venues, thus giving themselves sufficient time to complete all their administrative tasks before

commencement of the examinations. The examination material arrived at the examination venues between 35 and 55 minutes before the start of writing.

Candidates were admitted into the examination venues at least 30 to 45 minutes before the scheduled start time of the examination. Question papers were checked with candidates for technical accuracy. At two centres, candidates were not provided with the required reading time. Examinations started and ended on time as scheduled by Benchmark, at all centres.

4.3.5 *CHECKING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT*

Invigilators in all examination centres indicated that they checked the toilets prior to the start of writing. The invigilators also indicated that toilets were checked before candidates were allowed to enter, when accompanied by an invigilator.

4.3.6 *ACTIVITIES DURING WRITING*

The writing phase of the examinations was conducted successfully, with no disruptions at any examination centres. Question papers written during the monitoring period had no errata issued by the assessment body. Invigilators ensured that candidates completed the cover page of the examination answer books correctly before writing commenced, as well as before candidates left the examination room after finishing writing. Candidates completed the prescribed attendance registers immediately after completing the cover page.

Invigilators were attentive, vigilant and mobile in all examination centres during the writing sessions. No candidates requested that invigilators clarify aspects in the question paper during the writing of examinations. No candidates were allowed to leave during the first hour of the examination, or during the last 15 minutes. At one centre only, candidates left the examination room to use the toilets; however, they were accompanied by invigilators of the same gender.

4.3.7 *PACKAGING AND TRANSMISSION OF ANSWER SCRIPTS*

The collection of scripts from candidates who had finished writing was carried out differently in the various examination centres. Invigilators in four centres collected scripts from candidates while they were seated and scripts were checked before candidates left the exam room.

In two centres, candidates were allowed to leave the scripts on the desks for invigilators to collect. The examination rooms were used for the counting and packaging of scripts at the various examination centres.

The chief invigilator, invigilators on duty and monitor assigned to monitor the exam centre for the day were always present when the answer scripts were counted and packed. Scripts were checked and arranged according to the sequence of the mark sheets for the papers written on specific days.

Invigilators ensured that the number of scripts corresponded with the number of candidates marked 'present' on the mark sheets. Transparent plastic satchels supplied by Benchmark were used to secure scripts for transportation. A courier company collected the candidates' answer scripts, according to in-house arrangements.

4.3.8 MONITORING BY THE ASSESSMENT BODY

Five of the six centres were monitored by Benchmark during the writing of the examinations, by the date of the Umalusi visit.

4.3.9 IRREGULARITIES

There were no irregularities identified by Umalusi monitors in the centres they monitored. The following irregularities were reported by Benchmark to Umalusi:

- At Medium B Centre, Barberton, examinations started 30 minutes after the scheduled time due to a search for contraband in the prison by officials. The paper written on the day was Communication in English and 17 candidates were writing.
- At Johannesburg Centre B, two candidates were omitted from the entry register for the Mathematical Literacy examination.

4.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The storage facilities for examination material were of a good standard.
- The training provided to the chief invigilators and invigilators, and its effect on the excellent management of the writing of the examinations.
- The examination rooms were conducive to writing examinations.

4.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

The following issues, which must be addressed, were noted during the monitoring visits:

- The storage of question papers at Camdeboo Women's Trust where candidates had access to the cupboard in which the question papers were stored.
- A seating plan not prepared at one centre.

- No time for reading question papers was allocated to candidates at two centres.

Table 4.3: Summary of Areas of Concern – Writing Phase

CRITERIA	NATURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE	CENTRES IMPLICATED
Delivery and storage of examination material	Small wooden cupboard in the exam venue created at-risk conditions. Learners had full view of and full access to the cupboard	Camdeboo Women’s Trust
Invigilators and their training	Insufficient evidence of invigilator training	Johannesburg Centre B
Preparations for writing and the examination venues	Attendance register for Invigilators was not signed	Modikwa AET Centre
Time management	No reading time was allotted for candidates	Tau Tona ABET Centre Modikwa AET Centre
Activities during writing	Invigilators did not ensure that candidates completed the cover page	Modikwa AET Centre

4.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- The storage of question papers at Camdeboo Women’s Trust should be improved immediately.
- Benchmark should ensure that examination centres prepare and keep copies of the candidates’ seating plans for every examination session.
- Candidates should be allocated reading time for every examination session.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The few deviations identified in some of the examination centres did not pose a threat to the credibility and integrity of the conduct, management and administration of the writing phase of the examinations.

Chapter 5

Monitoring of Marking

5.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This chapter is based on the report of the monitoring of marking of the November 2015 General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) examination conducted by Benchmark Assessment Agency. All the marking was conducted centrally at Benchmark's administration office in Rivonia, Gauteng.

As a quality council, Umalusi has an obligation to ensure that the conduct, administration and management of examinations are credible. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to report on the integrity of Benchmark's marking process in the November 2015 GETC examination.

This report provides a brief account of Benchmark's planning for marking, the state of the marking centre, the security at the marking centre, training of marking personnel, marking procedure, monitoring of marking, handling of irregularities, quality assurance procedures and reports. This chapter, further, records the areas of concern and areas for improvement, as well as directives for compliance and improvement.

5.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

The Benchmark marking process was conducted centrally at Benchmark's administration office in Rivonia. The table below details Umalusi's monitoring of Benchmark's marking of the GETC examination.

Table 5.1: Marking Centres Monitored by Umalusi Monitors

NO.	PROVINCE	CENTRE	DATE
1.	Gauteng	Benchmark Administration Office	5 December 2015

An Umalusi-approved monitoring instrument was completed by the monitors. Through this, they were able to gather critical information relating to the process of marking at the marking centre. Additionally, they observed the practices, interviewed the marking centre manager and recorded the findings, as presented in the following sections.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 5.2: Level of Compliance in Relation to Criteria

CRITERIA	COMPLIANCE		
	ALL	MOST	LIMITED/ NONE
Planning for Marking		x	
Marking Centre	x		
Security	x		
Training of Marking Personnel		x	
Marking Procedure	x		
Monitoring of Marking	x		
Handling of Irregularities	x		
Quality Assurance Procedures	x		
Reports	x		
TOTAL:	7	2	0

5.3.1 PLANNING FOR MARKING

While a marking management plan was not in place, Benchmark produced an annual plan. This highlighted marking as a process but did not provide planning details. The marking centre management team (chief markers and internal moderators) reported for duty at the centre on 2 December 2015 while markers reported on 5 December 2015. A list of all marking personnel was readily available on request and was verified on-site.

5.3.2 MARKING CENTRES

Benchmark used its administration office as a marking centre. Although the environment at the marking centre was conducive for marking, the two offices used for marking were relatively small. In one office, a round table was used to accommodate seven marking personnel, for Communication in English. In the second office, two tables were used to accommodate another seven marking personnel, for Mathematical Literacy. This arrangement posed a risk of scripts going missing or becoming mixed up.

The general manager's office was used as a script control room and was big enough to accommodate all the scripts. All necessary communication facilities were available at the marking centre. Very clean and sufficient ablution facilities were observed. The operational times for marking were from 09:00 to 16:00 daily. There was no provision for accommodation. Catering was provided with provision for special dietary requirements.

5.3.3 SECURITY

Two security guards were assigned to the marking centre, one at the gate and another at the marking office. The security guard at the gate ensured that all marking personnel and visitors to the marking centre signed in before they gained access to the complex. However, cars were not searched at the gate because this entrance was also used for other tenants.

The marking centre was equipped with surveillance cameras, alarms and fire extinguishers. Systems were in place to ensure that all scripts were accounted for during marking. The scripts were physically counted on arrival and as and when they were distributed to and from the markers. The scripts were couriered from the writing venues to the marking venue.

5.3.4 TRAINING OF MARKING PERSONNEL

There was no formal training for the centre manager, who was also the quality assurance manager. This was considered to be part of the job description. On 13 November 2015, markers and examination assistants (EAs) were trained by the centre manager in general administrative issues.

Chief markers held memorandum discussions and training of markers on 5 December 2015. All the markers were professional teachers and subject specialists and were not subjected to any marking competency test.

5.3.5 MARKING PROCEDURES

The marking personnel signed an attendance register, controlled by the centre manager, on arrival in the morning. Benchmark appointed markers who did not work at their learning centres; thus there was no chance of markers marking scripts of their own candidates. A uniform approach of marking entire scripts was adopted. Markers were not permitted to change the memorandum once approved by the external moderator.

The practice was that alternatives were discussed, agreed upon and approved by the internal and external moderators. In instances where a candidate either answered both optional questions in a particular paper or answered the same question twice, the first answer was to be marked. Marking was supervised by the chief marker and the internal moderator. In the event of incidents where candidates were advantaged or disadvantaged, the internal moderator was to discuss this with the marker and necessary changes would be effected.

5.3.6 *MONITORING OF MARKING*

A very effective system of chief markers monitoring the performance of markers was in place. Chief markers and senior markers completed an evaluation form at the end of marking through which they identified underperforming markers who were then assigned to work closely with the internal moderator. Underperformers were allocated fewer scripts and were recommended for re-training.

More scripts marked by underperformers were sampled for moderation. Marker performance informed the selection process for the next marking process. An ability matrix was drawn up, placing the markers at levels A, B or C. Level A meant markers were doing extremely well, level B indicated average or good performance, and level C indicated underperformance and could be considered only for marking lower levels in the future.

5.3.7 *HANDLING OF IRREGULARITIES*

Markers were aware of what constitutes an irregularity as this was part of their training. They also knew the procedure to follow when they detected an irregularity. First, they were to report the alleged irregularity to the chief marker; thereafter it would be escalated to the centre manager. A template to record irregularities was available. The general manager, centre manager and exam certification administrator constituted the irregularity committee. No irregularities were reported at the time of monitoring by Umalusi officials.

5.3.8 *QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES*

The examination assistants (EAs) and chief markers were responsible for verifying that entire scripts were marked. The EAs also made sure each question had a total, marks were captured per sub-question/item and that subtotals, totals and the final total were correct. They also verified the correct transfer of marks to cover sheets and mark sheets.

5.3.9 *REPORTS*

The marker, chief marker and internal moderator used standard templates to complete qualitative reports. The reports were controlled by a tracking system, whereby the markers submitted to the chief marker and the chief marker to the centre manager. The reports were not necessarily used to improve future performance, but for growth and marketing of the organisation.

5.4 **AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE**

- The support and presence of senior management of the organisation was commendable.

- Training markers in two phases was very good.

5.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

The following areas of concern were noted. These need to be addressed.

- The non-availability of a management plan at the marking venue.
- The marking venue was small and too cluttered.
- The reports compiled by the marking personnel are not utilised to improve future performance.

5.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- Benchmark Assessment Agency should prepare a detailed management plan and a daily operational plan before the start of the marking session.
- A bigger venue for marking should be arranged as the venue this year was small and too cluttered.
- The reports compiled post-marking should be shared with the centres to improve candidates' performance.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the administrative areas of concern mentioned above, Benchmark has demonstrated the capacity to manage the marking process successfully. Good management has certainly yielded an efficient marking process. The marking process can be accepted as legitimate, competitive, reliable and fair.

Chapter 6

Memorandum Discussions

6.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The assessment body presented a marking memorandum with the question paper for each learning area for external moderation. Although the memoranda were approved with the question papers, it was necessary to revise and finalise them as the marking process involves a large number of markers, chief markers and internal moderators, each of whom may have a slightly different interpretation of the question paper and marking memorandum. Furthermore, each script marked is unique and a judgement of its adherence to the memorandum must be made.

The memorandum discussion workshops provide a platform for markers, chief markers, internal moderators and Umalusi's external moderators to discuss and approve the final marking instrument. This is the platform where all possible model answers are considered and taken into account.

The purpose of the workshop is to ensure that all possible variables are considered; that all role-players in the marking process adhere to the same marking standard; and that marking is fair, consistent and reliable.

6.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

Benchmark Assessment Agency facilitated memorandum discussions for L4LCEN and L4MLMS at their offices in Rivonia, Johannesburg, on 5 December 2015. Examiners and internal moderators discussed the marking instrument and considered all possible model answers. The external moderator for each learning area attended the marking guideline discussions to:

- Ensure that the approved question paper was the one presented to candidates.
- Guide the interpretation of the questions and the required answers.
- Approve the final memorandum to be used by all markers in specific learning areas.

The external moderators evaluated the finalisation of the marking memoranda for L4LCEN and L4MLMS using the revised 2015 instrument. The revision groups all sub-criteria into six key areas, as illustrated below:

- Attendance of Internal Moderator, Chief Marker and Markers
- Verification of Question Papers
- Preparations for Memorandum Discussions
- Memorandum Discussions Process
- Sample Marking
- Approval of Amendments to Memorandum.

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The internal moderator, chief marker and the markers form the discussion panel for each question paper. The internal moderator and chief marker lead the discussions. The chief marker and the markers mark a section of exemplar scripts after the memorandum discussions are completed.

Marking of the examination scripts starts only once the internal moderator is satisfied that all markers have an acceptable level of understanding and competence to mark the scripts. The only challenge is that this process is time consuming and impacts negatively on the scheduled marking time.

Overall the evaluation reports showed that internal moderators, chief markers and markers had a clear understanding of the purpose of the meetings and their roles in the marking process. Below is a summary of the findings for each criterion.

C1. ATTENDANCE OF INTERNAL MODERATOR, CHIEF MARKER AND MARKERS

- The internal moderators and chief markers for both L4LCEN and L4MLMS attended the memorandum discussion workshops and the marking process thereafter.

C2. VERIFICATION OF QUESTION PAPERS

- Both external moderators could verify that the question papers written were the ones that Umalusi approved during the question paper moderation process.
- The verification process also confirmed that no new or additional changes were made to the question papers after they were approved.

C3. PREPARATIONS FOR MEMORANDUM DISCUSSIONS

- Benchmark Assessment Agency sent copies of the question paper, the memorandum and 10 dummy scripts for each learning area to the internal moderators and the chief markers before the scheduled dates for marking.
- The internal moderators and the chief markers revised the memoranda in collaboration.
- The chief marker then marked the 10 dummy scripts using the revised memorandum and noted additional amendments as necessary.
- The internal moderator then moderated the scripts marked by the chief marker.
- The revised memoranda and marked dummy scripts were then sent back to Benchmark Assessment Agency.
- The revised memoranda were used to workshop marking memoranda with the markers during the memorandum discussions.

C4. MEMORANDUM DISCUSSION PROCESS

- The internal moderator for each learning area chaired the workshop, attended by the chief marker and the markers.
- The panel worked systematically through the question paper and the memorandum, and discussed understanding of the questions and all possible responses.
- The chief marker and the internal moderator confirmed amendments to the memorandum.
- The internal moderator consulted the external moderator as and when necessary. The external moderator advised the panel when necessary.

C5. SAMPLE MARKING

- The markers were asked to re-mark the dummy scripts that were marked by the chief marker and moderated by the internal moderator, and to provide feedback. This process was used to assess their understanding of the question paper and the memorandum.
- The markers were then given a new dummy script to mark. The internal moderator and the chief marker evaluated their marking and advised as necessary. The L4MLMS markers marked a total of 24 sample scripts.
- Marking only commenced once the internal moderator and chief marker were satisfied that the marker had the required competency to mark.

C6. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO MEMORANDA

- The external moderators were part of the memorandum discussions and advised the panel as and when required to do so.
- The amendments to the L4LCEN memorandum were minor and of a technical nature.
- The question paper for L4MLMS omitted an important variable in Question 11.2. Learners were given two right-angled triangles ABC and DEF with AB = 12cm and DE = 1.8m. They were then asked to calculate AC (3 marks); DF (2 marks) and express $\frac{\text{Area of } ABC}{\text{Area of } DEF}$ in its simplest form (5 marks). It was agreed that the learners could not answer this question as at least one variable was missing. The L4MLMS question paper was thus marked out of a total of 90 marks.
- The amendments to the memoranda were generally technical errors, except for Q11.2 in the L4MLMS paper (as noted above). The amendments did not impact on the quality and standard of the memoranda.
- The external moderators approved all amendments as discussed and signed the final memoranda with the internal moderators and the chief markers.

6.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The internal moderator and chief marker worked through the draft memorandum and proposed amendments in preparation for the memorandum discussions. This added value to the memorandum discussion process.
- The marking of dummy scripts before and during the memorandum discussions helped to improve the quality and standard of the approved memorandum.

6.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

- Some of the markers were novice markers in AET NQF 1 exams, which resulted in lengthy discussions and training on the day of marking. This was a concern since the assessment body scheduled only two days for memorandum discussions and marking.

6.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- Marker training should be conducted before the memorandum discussions; alternatively, the assessment body should add another day to its planning schedule.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The memorandum discussions served the intended purpose, to improve the quality of the marking memoranda. The internal moderators and chief markers were well prepared and supported the markers throughout the process. The amendments to the marking guidelines were mostly technical and minor; except for one question in the L4MLMS question paper and memorandum, as explained above. Umalusi moderators approved all recommended changes to the marking memoranda as they believed that the exercise had improved the quality of the marking guidelines.

Chapter 7

Verification of Marking

7.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Verification of marking is a critical process in the quality assurance of an examination because the marking process involves a large number of people, each of whom may have a slightly different interpretation of the question paper and the marking memorandum.

Verification of marking validates the process of marking and determines whether marking has adhered to the marking memorandum approved by the external moderators after the memorandum discussions. The verification process evaluates adherence to marking standards.

In addition, the external moderators scrutinised answer scripts for possible irregularities.

7.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

Umalusi conducted on-site verification of marking at Benchmark offices on 5 and 6 December 2015. The external moderators sampled 40 scripts per learning area for L4LCEN and L4MLMS over the two-day moderation period.

The challenge for external moderators was that the memorandum discussions and the marking of dummy scripts took almost the first half of day one. As a result, markers started marking real scripts only during the second half of the day.

The external moderators verified the marking of learner scripts for L4LCEN and L4MLMS using the revised 2015 instrument. The revision groups all the sub-criteria into five key areas, as illustrated below:

- Adherence to Marking Memorandum
- Quality and Standard of Marking
- Irregularities
- Performance of Candidates
- Findings and Suggestions.

7.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The external moderators for L4LCEN and L4MLMS moderated 40 scripts per learning area during the two-day verification of marking process. Overall, the quality and standard of both marking and internal moderation was good. However, it was slow as a lot of time was spent on marker training and marking dummy scripts.

C1. ADHERENCE TO MARKING MEMORANDUM

- The external moderators approved the marking memoranda for L4LCEN and L4MLMS after the finalisation of the memorandum discussions.
- The markers for both learning areas adhered to the approved memoranda. No additional changes were made.

C2. QUALITY AND STANDARD OF MARKING

- The internal moderators and the chief markers facilitated question and answer sessions with the markers. They ensured that all markers had the same understanding of each question, and possible answers. This exercise helped to improve the quality of marking.
- Some markers made minor mistakes during sample marking but were helped by the chief marker to correct their mistakes.
- The quality and standard of marking met all moderation requirements.

C3. IRREGULARITIES

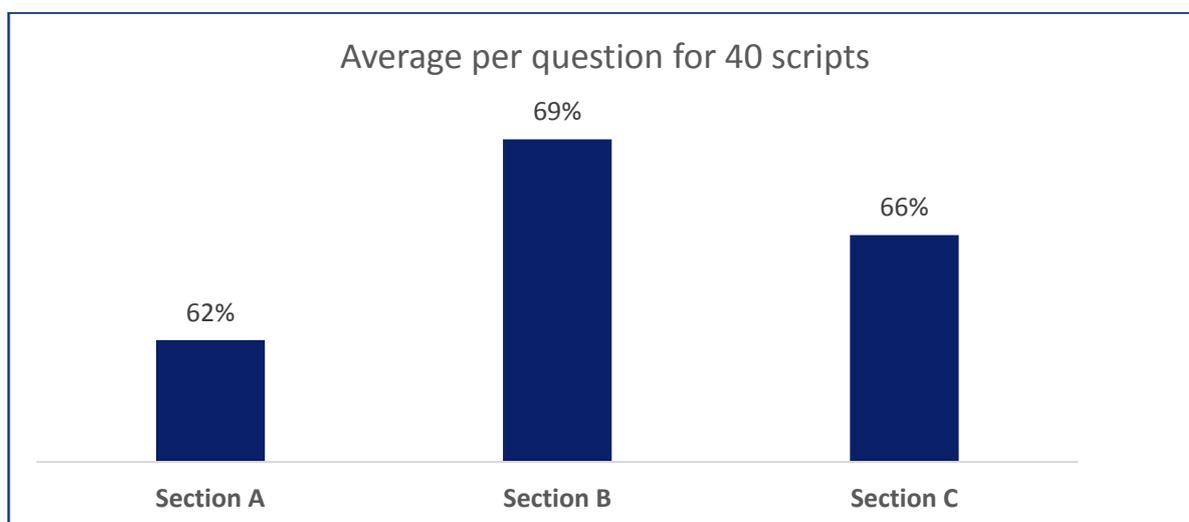
- The external moderators were vigilant for possible irregularities. They also asked the markers and chief markers to pay special attention to this aspect during the marking process.
- No irregularities were noted during the marking, or internal and external moderation processes.

C4. PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

The external moderation instrument was amended to record learner performances in the moderation sample, as indicated below:

C4.1 COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH

Figure 7.1: Learner Performance per Question – L4LCEN



- The question paper appears to have been relatively easy, as illustrated in Figure 1.

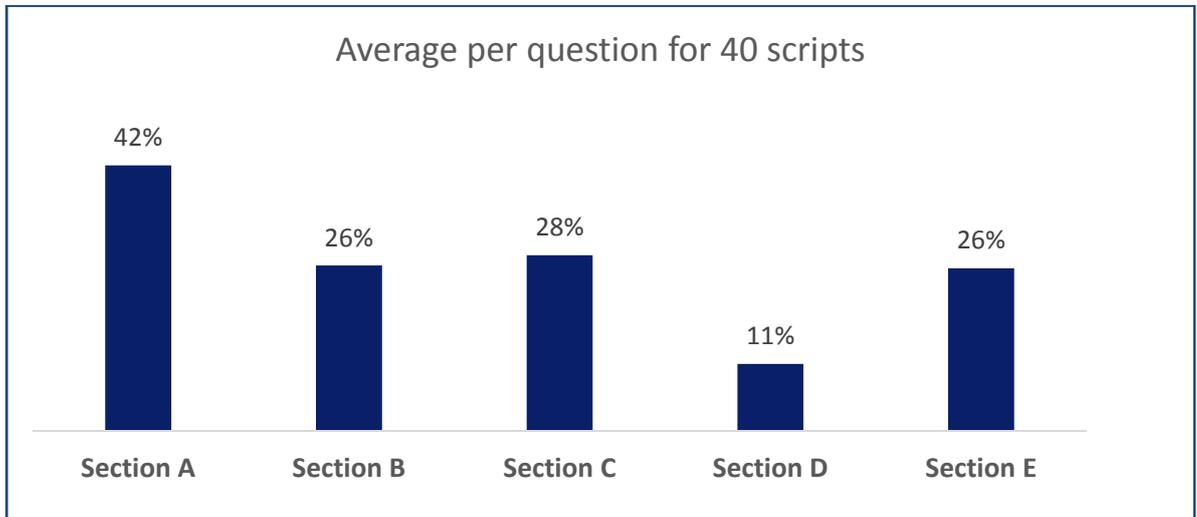
Table 7.1: Mark Distribution as a Percentage – L4LCEN

MARK DISTRIBUTION (PERCENTAGE)									
0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100
1	1	1	2	3	3	5	17	6	1

- The table shows that the learners found the question paper easy, as 60% scored in the 70-100% ranges.
- Only 12% of the learners in the sample failed the question paper.
- Learners from Modikwa AET Centre struggled with synonyms and did not answer this question (5 marks).

C4.2 MATHEMATICAL LITERACY

Figure 7.2: Learner Performance per Question – L4MLMS



- The five sections had weightings of 14 marks, 20 marks, 20 marks, 14 marks and 22 marks respectively, for a total of 90 marks.
- Q11.1, Q11.2 and Q11.3 (Section D) were not marked (10 marks) as the question paper omitted important information required to answer the questions.
- The graph illustrates that learners found Section D (14 marks) difficult. This section had 3 questions worth 3 marks, 5 marks and 6 marks respectively.

Table 7.2: Mark Distribution as a Percentage – L4MLMS

MARK DISTRIBUTION (PERCENTAGE)									
0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100
9	8	9	5	5	1	2	1	0	0

- The table shows that 31/40 (78%) of the learners in the sample failed the question paper.
- It is a concern that 26 learners (65%) obtained less than 30%.

C5. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

- The external moderator for L4LCEN stated that, based on the performance of the learners, the question paper was a good paper and adhered to the cognitive levels as prescribed in the assessment guidelines.
- The external moderators for both learning areas noted discrepancies with the recording of marks and brought this to the attention of the chief markers and markers, who addressed this issue with the examination assistants.
- Overall, the quality of marking was good with some minor mistakes that were corrected by the chief markers, since the small groups allowed for good interaction.

7.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The internal moderators and chief markers were present in the marking rooms and provided support to the markers during the marking process. All issues related to marking and internal moderation were resolved as and when raised.

7.5 AREAS OF CONCERN

- The markers for L4LCEN found Section C difficult to mark as they struggled with the marking rubric for this section. The chief marker did, however, explain the use of the rubric in detail, and supported the markers with marking this section.
- Marker training and marking dummy scripts took longer than anticipated and resulted in pressure on the markers to meet the norm times.

7.6 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- Benchmark Assessment Agency should explore strategies to strengthen the capacity of novice markers in AET NQF 1 examinations prior to the marking process.

7.7 CONCLUSION

The assessment body planned and executed the marking process very well. All logistical and administration arrangements, together with an environment conducive to good marking practices, were in place.

The internal moderators and chief markers were very knowledgeable and experienced in their respective learning areas. They supported the markers very well; especially considering some were new and inexperienced in marking at ABET Level 4. Notwithstanding this, the quality and standard of marking was good, although at a slow pace.

Umalusi moderators were satisfied that the marking process met the moderation requirements; and that no learner was disadvantaged by poor or incompetent marking.

Chapter 8

Standardisation and Verification of Results

8.1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Standardisation is a statistical moderation process used to mitigate the effects on performance of factors other than learners' ability and knowledge. The standardisation of examination results is necessary in order to reduce the variability of marks from year to year. The sources of variability may occur due to the standard of question papers, as well as the in the quality of marking. Thus standardisation ensures that we deliver a relatively constant product to the market.

According to the *GENFETQA Act, 2001*(as amended, *2008*) *Section 17A (4)*, the Council may adjust raw marks during the standardisation process. During the standardisation process, qualitative inputs from external moderators, internal moderators, post examination analysis reports as well as the principles of standardisation are taken into consideration to carry out the statistical moderation process.

The standardisation involves various processes to ensure that the procedure is carried out accurately, mainly the verification of subject structures and electronic data booklets, development norms, and approval of adjustments.

8.2 SCOPE AND APPROACH

The Benchmark presented a total of 2 learning areas for the statistical moderation of the GETC ABET Level 4, a qualification at level 1 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Umalusi conducted the verification of the capturing of marks at the Benchmark head office.

8.3 STANDARDISATION AND RESULTING

8.3.1 *DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL AVERAGES*

The subject structures were verified and approved. Since Benchmark GETC: ABET L4 has a subject history of less than three years, an historical average could not be calculated.

8.3.2 CAPTURING OF MARKS

Umalusi verified the capturing of the examination at the Benchmark offices. The system administrators described the capturing process, and a sample of mark sheets was verified.

The verifiers also checked the data capturing rooms, which were appropriate for the purpose. In addition, the captured marks were verified against the mark sheets, and alignment between the two was evidenced. The guidelines for the capturing process were also provided; but no evidence of training or training manuals was available.

However, the examination capturing centres did not have the guidelines or procedural documents used for authenticating mark sheets, appointment and training of capturers and management of capturing centres. Thus, the capturing examination centre complied 'mostly' with the procedures, but it is recommended that these procedures be documented.

8.3.3 ELECTRONIC DATA SETS AND STANDARDISATION BOOKLETS

The electronic data sets were verified before the printing of the final standardisation booklets. The following data sets were verified and approved after several moderations, the statistics distribution, raw mark distribution and the graphs per subject, paying particular attention to different colours and raw mark adjustments. The pairs analysis and the percentage distribution per subject were also verified and approved.

8.3.4 PRE-STANDARDISATION AND STANDARDISATION

The external moderators' report and the standardisation principles were used in determining the adjustments per subject. Since Benchmark did not have subject histories for either subject, the historical average could not be used since it was a fictitious norm. Subsequently, the pairs-analysis could also not be used because the assessment body has just one pair. A growth in candidate numbers was also noted, making comparison with the previous year unreliable.

8.4 STANDARDISATION DECISIONS

The decisions for the Benchmark November 2015: GETC: ABET L4 were informed by the external moderators' reports as follows.

Table 8.1 Standardisation Decisions

Description	Total
Number of learning areas presented for standardisation	2
Raw marks	1
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	1
Adjusted (mainly downwards)	0
Number of learning areas standardised:	2

8.5 POST STANDARDISATION

The assessment body was not required to resubmit the data sets as no adjustments were made during the standardisation meeting.

8.6 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- They used the “double capture” method as per requirements
- Benchmark Assessment Agency’s adherence to its capturing of examination management plan.
- Benchmark Assessment Agency’s adherence to policy for submitting and presenting booklets was highly commendable.

8.7 AREAS OF CONCERN

- The Benchmark Assessment Agency’s management plan needs to be further refined with detailed specifics, especially with standard operating procedures.
- The Benchmark Assessment Agency needs to develop policies or procedures with detailed standard operating procedures to enhance its administrative processes at all stages of the examination process.

8.8 DIRECTIVES FOR COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- The Benchmark Assessment Agency should ensure that a policy or procedural document is developed to clearly guide the capturing procedure.

Chapter 9

The Status of Certification of the GETC: ABET L4

9.1 BACKGROUND

Through its founding Act, Umalusi is responsible for the certification of learner achievements in South Africa for qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Sub-framework of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These include the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training.

Umalusi ensures adherence to policies and regulations promulgated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the awarding of the General Education and Training Certificate.

Certification is the culmination of an examination process conducted by an assessment body, in this instance, Benchmark Assessment Agency.

This process has a number of different steps, commencing with registration of the candidate to the writing of the examination. After the candidate has written the examinations administered by the assessment body, the examination scripts are marked, the marks are processed and, after quality assurance and approval by Umalusi, candidates are presented with individual statements of results. These are preliminary documents that outline the outcomes of the examination and are issued by the assessment body. The statement of results is, in due time, replaced by the final document, a certificate issued by Umalusi.

To give further effect to its certification mandate, Umalusi must ensure that certification data has been submitted in the format prescribed by the Council, and is both valid and reliable. For these reasons, Umalusi publishes directives for certification that must be adhered to by all assessment bodies when they submit candidate data for the certification of a specific qualification. Umalusi further verifies that the information supplied at certification corresponds with the quality-assured data. Should there be any discrepancies, the assessment body is required to submit explanations and, where necessary, supporting documentation to support such differences.

The assessment bodies must ensure that *all* records of candidates who are registered for the General Education and Training Certificate examination in a specific examination cycle are submitted to Umalusi for certification. The data sets must include all who are awarded the qualifications, as well as those who have passed one or more learning areas. The data sets must also include the records of candidates who have not qualified for a certificate, such as

candidates who have withdrawn from the course/qualification (candidates who registered to write examinations but did not write any subjects) and those candidates who failed all learning areas (candidates who wrote the examination but could not pass any learning area).

The closing of the examination cycle is confirmed by the issuing of certificates, learning area certificates, and confirmation of those candidates who have not qualified for any type of certificate – viz. in instances where the candidates failed all learning areas or did not write the examinations.

Certification fees are payable by private assessment bodies; those of public institutions are funded through an agreement with the Department of Basic Education for public assessment bodies.

The GETC: ABET provides an opportunity for candidates to accumulate credits toward the qualification across a number of examinations. Each examination sitting is certified and the candidate receives a learning area certificate for those learning areas passed. These results can be combined for the awarding of the GETC qualification once the candidate has achieved the requisite number of credits.

Therefore, in reporting on the status of certification for the GETC: ABET in 2015, it is important to examine the status of certification of the 2014 GETC: ABET cohort.

9.2 CURRENT STATUS – BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT AGENCY

Benchmark Assessment Agency is a new private assessment body that piloted the writing of the GETC examinations in 2014. Because they are piloting the examinations, Benchmark Assessment Agency conducts the examinations for two subjects only, i.e. Mathematical Literacy and Language; and Literacy and Communication: English.

The 2014 examination was conducted without any irregularities and certification took place on time, although the certification module of Benchmark Assessment Agency's information technology system had not been completed at the time of the state-of-readiness visit in October 2015. To fulfil their future certification responsibility to their clients, the assessment body must ensure that this is completed.

Benchmark staff attended a training session on the certification of the General Education and Training Certificate with Umalusi in October 2015, which was well-received.

The assessment body conducts examinations only during the annual October assessment period.

Table 9.1 *Statistics for the 2014/10 assessment period*

Total number of candidates	84
Full-time	0
Part-time	84
Pass GETC	0
Learning area certificates	54
Failed all	14
Dropouts	16
GETC certificates issued	0

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