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Umalusi gives the thumbs-up to the 2018 matric examinations

After a rigorous process of quality assuring the readiness of assessment bodies to administer the oncoming end-of-year examinations, Umalusi is generally satisfied that the system is ready to administer the 2018 national examinations. As a Council for the Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, Umalusi quality assures all exit point examinations in general and further education (NQF levels 1-4).

Public and independent assessment bodies have been hard at work in the past few months to make sure that their examination systems comply with Umalusi's policy and directives regarding the administration, management and conduct of examinations. As the quality assurer for this important sector of the South African education system, Umalusi's role is to monitor and verify the work of public assessment bodies - Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training – and private assessment bodies - Independent Examinations Board (IEB), the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) and Benchmark Assessment Agency (BAA).

For the National Senior Certificate (NSC), the 2018 examinations will be written by approximately **629 141** full-time and **167 401** part-time candidates with a total of approximately **796 542** candidates. These examinations will take place at more than **8000** centres across the provinces. IEB has registered **11 657** full-time candidates across the country and **929** part-time candidates at **249** examination centres. SACAI has registered **175** full-time candidates and **2404** part-time candidates with a total of **2579** candidates at **76** examination centres.

It is part of Umalusi's legislative mandate to ensure that all assessment processes and national examinations that fall under its authority comply with the quality standards set by Council.

Early this year, Umalusi reviewed and reconceptualised its approach to the quality assurance of assessment with specific reference to the following 10 focus areas: management, registration of candidates, school-based assessment, printing, packaging and distribution of question papers, conduct of examinations, appointment of marking personnel, systems for the capturing of marks, management of examination irregularities, accreditation of examination centres and certification. Unlike the old approach where national examinations were viewed as a once-off event, the new risk management approach, which consists of three phases, views national examinations as a continual process between exam periods.

When addressing the media, the CEO of Umalusi, Dr Mafu Rakometsi, made an impassioned plea to protesting communities to refrain from using examinations and schools as a bargaining tool for their own political ends. "I further want to appeal to various communities across the country to refrain from destroying and burning school property in the hope that they will get attention from authorities" he said.

Lucky Ditaunyane

Senior Manager: Public Relations and Communications

Lucky.Ditaunyane@umalusi.org.za

(012) 349 1510 x 208 (Office)

083 227 6074 (Cell)