

MEDIA STATEMENT

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STATE OF READINESS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSESSMENT BODIES TO CONDUCT, ADMINISTER AND MANAGE 2025 END OF YEAR NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (GENFETQA) No. 58 of 2001, as amended, established Umalusi an independent statutory body to take responsibility for quality assurance in general and further education and training in South Africa. In terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008, as amended, Umalusi has the mandate to develop and manage a sub-framework of qualifications at Levels 1–4 of the NQF and related quality assurance processes.
2. In accordance with that, Umalusi has concluded the audit of the state of readiness of the public (Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training) and private assessment bodies (Independent Examinations Board and South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute) to conduct, administer and manage the 2025 end of year national examinations in respect of the following qualifications.

Table 1: Qualifications and assessment bodies

Qualification	Assessment Body
National Senior Certificate (NSC)	• Department of Basic Education (DBE) • Independent Examinations Board (IEB) • South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI)
National Certificate Vocational (NCV) L2 - L4	• DHET
NATED Report 190/191 (N2 - N3) Engineering Studies	• DHET
General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET)	• DHET • IEB • SACAI

3. In auditing the state of readiness of the system, Umalusi uses a framework that looks at various focus areas, including the: (a) registration of candidates, (b) adequacy of the appointed personnel to manage the examinations, examination centres, and marking centres, (c) external moderation of internal assessments and question papers, (d) adequacy of security measures in relation to printing, packaging, storage and distribution of question papers, (e) functionality of the systems used to capture learner marks, and (f) functionality of the structures established to deal with and handle assessment and examination irregularities.
4. The audit process was conducted between 11 August and 9 October 2025 across all nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). The overall goal of the audit process has been to determine whether the measures put in place by each of the four assessment bodies (DBE, DHET, IEB and SACAI) are adequate to ensure the credibility and reliability of the assessment outcomes.
5. The next section reports on the audit outcomes, starting with the number of candidates registered to write the examinations.

SIZE AND SHAPE OF THE SYSTEM

6. Table 2 below shows that over one million candidates are registered across four assessment bodies to sit for the 2025 end of year national examinations. The figures are based on final registration data that Umalusi has received from assessment bodies. The table gives the breakdown of the candidates by qualification and assessment body.

Table 2: Number of full-time candidates by qualification and assessment body

Examination	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI	Total
National Senior Certificate (NSC)	766 543 ¹	n/a	17 427	6 174	790 144
National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4 ²	n/a	40 822	n/a	n/a	40 822
NATED Report 190/191 N3 ³	n/a	X ⁴	n/a	n/a	
General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET)	n/a	50 129	469	231	50 829
Total	766 543		17 896	6 405	

¹ This number excludes 137 018 part-time (out of school) candidates who sat the examination in previous years and now opt to improve their results.

² Government Gazette 53015, published 15 July 2025, directed that NC(V) Levels 2-3 examinations be internalised and that Umalusi ceases quality assurance of the examinations in question. However, L2-L3 examinations will continue in the TVET colleges.

³ In terms of Government Gazette 49518, the NATED Report 191 N1-N3 programmes entered a phase out period as from 1 January 2024. Accordingly, the last set of examinations for which Umalusi will issue N3 Certificates are the October/November 2025 examinations. As for the N2 examinations, they were administered for the last time in April 2025.

⁴ The DHET will complete its registration process on 28 October 2025.

7. The numbers given in the table above show that the NSC accounts for the largest share of the total candidature. The DBE's 766 543 excludes the 137 018 part-time (out of school) candidates who will sit the examination to improve their results achieved in previous examination sittings. So, taken together, the numbers show that the DBE's full-time and part-time candidates amount to 903 561. All the NSC candidates have been issued with examination admission letters.
8. Because the DHET is still busy finalising its candidate registration numbers for N3 examination, with the expected completion date being 28 October 2025, Umalusi is unable to provide the number of N3 candidates at present.
9. Based on the evaluation done for the rest of the qualifications, Umalusi is satisfied that all the candidates have been registered for the 2025 end of year national examinations in accordance with relevant assessment and examination regulations. Similarly, concessions and accommodations have been granted to eligible candidates in accordance with related policies and regulations.
10. The over one million candidates will write the examinations at about 9 400 examination centres spread across the four assessment bodies as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of examination centres by qualification and assessment body

Examination	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI	Total
NSC	6 955	n/a	263	83	7 301
NC(V) Level 4	n/a	249	n/a	n/a	249
NATED Report 190/191 N3	n/a	X	n/a	n/a	X
GETC: ABET	n/a	1 475	55	20	1 550

Key: X = To be available after 28 October 2025.

11. As already indicated, Umalusi is not able at present to provide numerical information in respect of the N3 examination since the DHET is currently consolidating information and the expected completion date is 28 October.
12. The audit of the examination centres and storage points for examination materials, including answer scripts, have been completed. As per the norm, the examination centres have been categorised into low, medium and high-risk centres. The risk level or rating is determined by (a) whether the centre has a history of involvement in irregularities, (b) whether the examination venue is a private centre, especially a private college administering the DHET's examinations, and (c) whether the centre is administering particularly the NSC examination for the first time.

13. Based on the outcomes of risk assessments conducted, Umalusi is satisfied that there are adequate measures in place across all assessment bodies to mitigate the risks identified at high-risk centres.

MODERATION OF QUESTION PAPERS

14. To ensure the credibility of the qualifications, Umalusi subjected the question papers and institution-based assessment tasks for the NSC, NC(V) L4, NATED N3 and GETC: ABET to its rigorous external moderation process. The breakdown of the number of subjects moderated per qualification and assessment body is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of subjects by qualification and assessment body

Examination	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI
National Senior Certificate (NSC)	68 ⁵	n/a	59	24
National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4	n/a	108	n/a	n/a
NATED Report 190/191 N3	n/a	26	n/a	n/a
GETC: ABET	n/a	26	7	7
	68	160	66	31

15. After satisfying itself that all the submitted papers and institution-based assessment tasks were designed in accordance with the standards set for each qualification and that they fully complied with the relevant quality assurance standards, Umalusi approved them.

PRINTING, PACKAGING, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTION PAPERS

16. Because the security protocols concerning the printing, packaging, storage and distribution of question papers and associated materials are classified and are therefore treated with strict confidentiality, Umalusi is unable to provide details in this regard. We can just indicate that Umalusi is satisfied with the plans that are in place to manage the entire value chain.

CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINATIONS

17. Umalusi is satisfied that all the assessment bodies have adequately trained their personnel (assistant invigilators, invigilators, chief invigilators, etc.) to execute all the activities connected with the conduct, administration and management of the 2025 year-end examinations.

MARKING PROCESS

18. Concerning the process for the appointment of markers, while the four assessment bodies are at different stages in relation to appointments, Umalusi is satisfied that based on the work done to date the process has been conducted in accordance with assessment body-specific policy for the recruitment, selection and appointment of markers.

⁵This number excludes 19 non-official languages that the DBE acquired from the IEB.

19. Because the IEB, in respect of GETC: ABET, and the DHET, in respect of NC(V) L4, N3 and GETC: ABET, are busy finalising their appointment processes, Umalusi is hard at work auditing the markers appointed to verify that the processes of these two assessment bodies align with the established criteria.
20. Whereas Umalusi has identified a shortage of markers in certain of the DBE's subjects, namely History and Paper 3 for Home and First Additional Languages, based on the reports submitted, Umalusi is satisfied that the DBE's strategies in place, which include additional recruitment drives, early start of marking and extending the duration of the marking period in the subjects concerned, will ensure that these gaps are bridged by the time the marking of scripts starts.
21. All the markers appointed across the four assessment bodies will be trained prior to the commencement of marking. The marking process will unfold in a staggered manner commencing on 15 November and ending on 18 December 2025. Umalusi will monitor the implementation of a staggered marking approach to ensure that the process is not compromised.

MARK CAPTURING SYSTEMS

22. The outcomes of the audit process have confirmed that the mark capturing systems used by each of the four assessment bodies are compliant with the requirements of Umalusi. In terms of the process, the assessment bodies will use a double entry system where one official captures the marks, and another one verifies the captured marks. Importantly, all the assessment bodies will have their mark capturers trained before the start of the mark capturing process.

MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATION IRREGULARITIES

23. Each of the four assessment bodies does have the relevant structures to address and manage assessment and examination irregularities. Should they arise, irregularities will be managed in accordance with the regulations governing the conduct, administration, and management of assessments and examinations.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

24. Based on the report presented, Umalusi is confident that, by and large, the system is ready to administer the 2025 end of year national examinations. For that reason, Umalusi applauds the efforts of the DBE, Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), DHET, IEB SACAI and all other role players for doing everything humanly possible to uphold the credibility and integrity of the examinations.
25. While the report flagged some areas of concern, the issues are not systemic in nature to compromise the overall credibility and integrity of the November 2025 examinations. All the concerns have been brought to the attention of the relevant Heads of Provincial Education Department and the Directors-General of the DBE and DHET, the CEOs of the IEB and SACAI for the corrective actions to be taken before the start of the examinations.

26. Umalusi encourages all assessment bodies to make use of the remaining days between now and the start of the examinations to tie up all the loose ends.

THE ROAD AHEAD

27. Going forward, Umalusi will undertake the oversight monitoring of the writing of examinations at a sample of examination centres across the four assessment bodies. To ensure that the assessment bodies mark the candidates' scripts according to the approved marking guidelines and that the standard of marking is consistent and fair, Umalusi will conduct verification thereof. These processes are meant to determine whether the assessment bodies conduct, administer and manage the examinations in accordance with the prescripts of the regulations that govern the national examinations. All the processes converge around the need to ensure valid and reliable results and maintain the credibility of the assessments.
28. The last three quality assurance processes that Umalusi will undertake beyond the capturing of learner marks by the assessment bodies are the standardisation of learner results, which is performed by the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Umalusi Council, the approval of the release of learner results conducted by the Executive Committee of Umalusi Council and the certification of learner results.
29. The approval decisions of EXCO of Council will be communicated publicly during a media briefing on 9 January 2026 at Umalusi. In approving the release of learner results, Umalusi confirms that the assessment leading to such certification was of the required standard across all qualifications for all examinations conducted.
30. Finally, Umalusi will issue certificates to successful candidates within three (3) months of the approval of release of results by EXCO. The meeting of this deadline depends on timeous submission of certification data by assessment bodies.
31. Umalusi wishes the class of 2025 strength and determination as they enter the final lap of their journey within the general and further education and training system.

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