

## **CEO's Overview of the 2025 End-of-Year National Assessments and Examinations, 09 January 2026, Umalusi, Pretoria**

1. Thank you, Programme Director, and greetings to everyone.
2. Protocol dictates that I start by acknowledging:
  - a) Professor Yunus Ballim: Chairperson of Umalusi Council
  - b) Dr Eva Sujee: Executive Manager: Quality Assurance and Monitoring Branch
  - c) Dr Emmanuel Sibanda: Executive Manager: Qualifications and Research Branch
  - d) Mr Hendrik van der Walt: Chief Financial Officer
  - e) I would also like to acknowledge the hardworking Umalusi staff – the behind-the-scenes people
3. Special recognition goes out to:
  - a) DG of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) – Hubert Mveli (and his team)
  - b) Dr Daniel Ramoroka from the Department of Higher Education and Training
  - c) CEO of Independent Examinations Board (IEB) – Mrs Confidence Dikgole (and her team)
  - d) CEO of South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) – Mr Chris Klopper (and his team)
4. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of:
  - a) Media houses
  - b) Ladies and gentlemen.
5. You are warmly welcome to Umalusi.

6. On 15 October 2025 Umalusi informed the nation through a media briefing that the outcomes of the audit of the state of readiness of the assessment bodies, namely Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI), pointed to the system being ready to conduct, administer and manage the 2025 end-of-year national examinations.
  
7. Today we have convened this briefing to make a pronouncement on the examination results in respect of the following four Umalusi-quality assured qualifications:
  - a) General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET) – assessed by the DHET, IEB and SACAI.
  - b) NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies N3 – assessed by the DHET.
  - c) National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) Level 4 – assessed by the DHET.
  - d) National Senior Certificate (NSC) – assessed by the DBE, IEB and SACAI.
  
8. Before I provide an overview in terms of how these examinations were run, it is necessary to update the public on two policy developments in relation to NC(V) Levels 2-4 and N2-N3 examinations, both of which are assessed by the DHET.

### **Update on Policy Changes in Post School Education and Training**

9. As per the Government Gazette 49518, 2025 is the last year of the issuance of N3 certificates by Umalusi. This is because the NATED Report 190/191 N1-N3 programmes entered a phase out period on 1 January 2024, with 31 December 2023 being the last date of candidate registrations on the programmes. This means that, from now onwards, Umalusi will no longer issue new N3 certificates. However, the organization will continue to do re-issues or replacements of existing certificates, where necessary.

10. We want to reassure the public that the currency of the already issued N3 certificates will not be eroded by these developments. In other words, those certificates remain valid.
11. With regard to the internalisation of the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) Levels 2 and 3 examinations by the DHET, and the cessation of quality assurance thereof by Umalusi, as previously directed through Government Gazette 53015, Umalusi is pleased to report that the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela, positively considered the recommendations of Umalusi Council by issuing a new Directive dated 17 December 2025.
12. According to the latest Directive, no certificates will be issued by Umalusi for learners currently registered for the November 2025 and future examinations for NC(V) Levels 2 and 3. Instead, the DHET will issue a statement of results to confirm learning achievements. Umalusi will continue to externally quality assure and certify NC(V) Level 4 examinations.
13. Returning to today's business, Umalusi has the legislative obligation to subject the examinations to its quality assurance processes.

### **Umalusi quality assurance framework**

14. The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (58 of 2001), as amended, confers a range of powers and functions on Umalusi in respect of the assessments and examinations linked to the qualifications on the sub-framework of qualifications (NQF Levels 1-4). These powers and functions include the:
  - a) external moderation of question papers and institution-based assessments to ensure the maintenance of standards of assessment,
  - b) audit of the readiness of the system to conduct, administer and manage the examinations,

- c) monitoring of the writing of the examinations across sampled examination centres to determine the credibility of the examinations,
- d) participation in marking guidelines standardisation discussions in a selection of subjects to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the marking process,
- e) verification of quality of marking in sampled subjects to ensure marking accuracy and reliability,
- f) standardisation of examination marks to ensure comparability and consistency in learner performance across years, and
- g) approval of the release of the learner results.

15. The goal of these quality assurance processes is to ensure that the assessments and examinations are conducted, administered and managed in accordance with the prescripts of the regulations that govern them and thereby ensuring the highest credibility and integrity of the Umalusi-issued certificates.

16. Umalusi is also pleased that other risk factors such as community protests, load reduction, inclement weather and so on did not materially affect the smooth running of the examinations. We commend members of society for not using national examinations as leverage for their protest actions.

17. Regrettably, Umalusi has learnt that during the examination process some candidates became victims of societal ills such as rape, robbery, etc. Umalusi strongly condemns these criminal acts and urges community members and relevant authorities to support all the victims of such barbaric acts in whatever way possible.

18. I would like to express our thanks to every one of the teachers, examiners, moderators, examination monitors, marking verifiers, Umalusi staff, etcetera for ensuring the full implementation of the quality assurance framework. Umalusi could not have reached this stage without your professional and administrative assistance.

19. Following the conduct, administration and management of the above examinations by the four assessment bodies, the monitoring thereof by Umalusi, and the standardisation of examination results by the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Umalusi Council both the assessment bodies and Umalusi presented their reports for the consideration of the Executive Committee (EXCO) of Council. The outcomes of the deliberations of the ASC and the decisions of the EXCO of Umalusi Council will be presented shortly by Prof Ballim.

### **Standardisation of external examination results**

20. The external examination results were standardised by the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Umalusi Council between 18 December 2025 and 5 January 2026. This 15-member committee spent considerable time carefully analysing numerical data and narrative reports to arrive at standardisation decisions by way of consensus for each one of the over 300 subjects presented. The multiple sources of evidence were considered in conjunction with well-established standardisation principles and approaches.

21. Thus, Umalusi relies heavily on the ASC members' knowledge and wisdom, gained over a long period of time through experience. ASC members are always willing to sacrifice valuable time during the festive season to ensure the best outcome for the South African learners. Just to remind you, the ASC is a Council committee of 15-members who are drawn from various universities and research institutes in South Africa. The committee is chaired by Professor Loyiso Jita (Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State) and his deputy is Professor 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela (Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs) at Rhodes University.

22. As a transparent public entity, Umalusi continued with its firmly established culture of opening itself up for the scrutiny of others during the standardisation process. This year the standardisation processes were observed by representatives from eleven national and international organisations.

23. From South Africa, in attendance were senior officials representing (a) Universities South Africa (USAf), (b) South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), (c) South African Council for Educators (SACE), (d) Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), (e) South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), (f) National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), (g) National Teachers' Union (NATU) and (h) Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU).
24. The international observers were representatives from the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) of the Namibian Ministry of Education. This category of observers closely scrutinised our standardisation processes across all four assessment bodies and qualifications. Beyond that, the observers engaged us in a process of reflection on the standardisation approaches used. Their overall message was that whereas our systems are different in terms of the approaches, the quality assurance processes converge around the need to ensure the highest credibility and integrity of the certificates issued.
25. Taking from that, we salute members of the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Umalusi Council for always ensuring that Umalusi truly honours its vision of being a trusted authority in fostering high education standards in General and Further Education and Training (GFET). Umalusi will forever be indebted to the ASC for always executing its mandate in accordance with the Act, the relevant Umalusi policy and the approved principles of standardisation, which were, once again, applied consistently across all qualifications and subjects.
26. I would now like to talk briefly about examination malpractices which have a potential to affect the credibility of the examinations.

## **The concerns of Umalusi regarding examination irregularities**

27. I would like to express Umalusi's serious concerns at the unending cases of irregularities that are uncovered on an annual basis. The 2025 quality assurance reports indicate that the phenomenon of (group) copying affects all the qualifications, albeit in varying degrees. At the same time, we remain seriously concerned that particular provinces recur in the reports dealing with such malpractices. We urge all Provincial Education Departments and private assessment bodies to tighten their systems to protect the overall credibility of the examinations.
28. Concerning the phenomenon of disallowing candidates from writing the examinations commonly known as gatekeeping or culling to improve the pass rate at school level, Umalusi commends the intervention of the DBE in dealing with this. We continue to urge learners and parents and guardians to report this unlawful incident to the relevant authorities.
29. Regarding candidates who cheated in the examinations, I want to remind them that cheating does not pay by quoting from a court judgment in the matter brought by Rodgers Mkhonto and 62 learners from a number of schools in the Mpumalanga Province who sat for their NSC examinations during October/December 2022. Delivering his judgment in the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court on 19 November 2025, exactly 31 days ago, in which the Minister of Basic Education and Umalusi were cited as first and fifth respondents respectively, Deputy Judge President Ratshibvumo DJP said at Paragraph 55:

*At the heart of the matter are irregularities by learners in the matric examination, arguably the most important exam that learners in schools across South Africa will undertake during their schooling. To maintain the integrity of the matriculation examination and its results, all necessary steps must be taken carefully to identify and eliminate any irregularities in its administration. Allowing irregularities in the matric examination process may encourage*

*learners to resort to unlawful means to obtain their matric certification, rather than through honest, hard work and study. Hard work and diligent study remain the keys to obtaining a matric certificate.*

30. At Paragraph 56, the judgement reads: *...Any irregularity that is proved should be frowned upon and corrected.*
31. Umalusi is pleased with the fact that the court has finally agreed with the sanctions meted against the implicated candidates and that the matter has finally been put to bed.

### **Report on the NSC irregularity detected at DBE offices**

32. On 11 December 2025 the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube, informed the nation that there had been a breach in connection with the NSC Mathematics Papers 1 and 2, Physical Sciences Papers 1 and 2 and English Home Language Papers 1 to 3 examinations. Consequently, the National Investigation Task Team (NITT) was established immediately to independently investigate the source and spread of the breach and report the findings to Umalusi.
33. The NITT is made up of nine members, with Umalusi assuming an observer status. Professor Chika Sehoole chairs the NITT and his Deputy is Mr Brian Schreuder. The other members of the NITT are equally respected leaders and scholars in the field of education. They have also played various leadership roles nationally and internationally.
34. I have the pleasure to inform you that Prof Sehoole and Mr Schreuder presented the report of the NITT to the Executive Committee of Umalusi Council on 6 January 2026. Without going into the specifics, because we have been alerted that the NITT along with the Minister of Basic Education will later today publicly release the findings, the overall conclusion of the investigation is that:

- a) the leak was limited to the 3 subjects or 7 papers mentioned already, and
- b) that the leak was contained to around 40 candidates in 7 examination centres in the Pretoria area.

35. Considering that the report singles out about 40 candidates out of a total population of approximately 600 000 who wrote the examination in the three subjects (Physical Sciences: 204 957, Mathematics: 254 413 and English HL: 135 090) across the country, Umalusi wants to assure the public that the breach was localised and therefore cannot dent the overall credibility of the 2025 NSC results. The approval statement will explain how the results of the implicated candidates will be dealt with.

36. While the number of implicated learners currently stands at around 40 now, there will be consequences for anyone who is not included in the number now should they be discovered later on. This is because the work of the NITT is ongoing. Umalusi is empowered by section 21 sub-sections 2, 3 and 4 of the amended GENFETQA Act to cancel a certificate after it has been issued upon discovery of irregularities.

(2) The Council may cancel a certificate that has been issued to a learner if on investigation the Council found that the learner has not met the requirements for the qualification.

(3) The Council may by notice in writing direct a learner whose certificate has been cancelled to return the certificate to the Council within three weeks after such notice.

(4) Any person who fails to comply with such notice is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months.

37. As a Civil Engineer, Prof Yunus Ballim, Chairperson of Umalusi Council, always reminds us that “fail-safe systems exist nowhere in the world”. Using concrete bridges as an example, he says Engineers design bridges not to collapse, but should they collapse, they must be safe when that happens. This suggests that early detection is key. Taking from this, we can confidently say that just like bridges the DBE's

systems worked exactly as they were designed to: to detect, isolate, investigate and address the irregularity.

38. For this reason, Umalusi applauds the DBE for the swiftness with which they dealt with the breach. They urgently put together a reputable team of investigators to ensure that work get done throughout the December holidays and that the report is submitted for the consideration of Umalusi Council on 6 January 2026. Clearly, this is a true form of accounting to the public.

### **Beware of unaccredited institutions**

39. Working collaboratively with sister Quality Councils (Council on Higher Education, Quality Council for Trades and Occupations and South African Qualifications Authority), Umalusi has been on a campaign trail to warn the public against falling prey to unaccredited educational institutions to curb the practice. Since this is that time of the year when thousands of students will be looking for an opportunity to pursue further education, we thought it important to remind students about the importance of verifying the accreditation status of any institution that they are interested in pursuing further studies with.

40. Finally, I would like to express my warmest, sincerest, and heart-felt congratulations to the Class of 2025, parents and guardians, teachers and lecturers for delivering them to this stage.

41. Thank you!

**Dr Mafu Rakometsi**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**09 January 2026**