

MEDIA STATEMENT

To: All Media
For Immediate Release
8 October 2026

UMALUSI CONFIRMS READINESS FOR THE 2026 YEAR-END NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. Umalusi today confirms the readiness of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) to conduct, administer and manage the 2026 year-end national examinations, as well as its own readiness to quality assure the system during and after the examination period.
2. The amended General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (GENFETQA), No. 58 of 2001, and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, No. 67 of 2008, mandate Umalusi to quality assure qualifications within its scope. This includes auditing the readiness of public and private assessment bodies before they conduct, administer and manage year-end national examinations for the following qualifications.

Table 1: Qualifications and assessment bodies

Qualification	Administered by
a) General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET)	• DHET • IEB • SACAI
b) National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)] Level 4	• DHET
c) National Senior Certificate (NSC)	• DBE • IEB • SACAI

3. Umalusi conducted its state-of-readiness audit from 24 August to 30 September 2026. The audit covered candidate registration; staffing at examination and marking centres; external moderation of internal assessments and question papers; security measures for printing, packaging, storage and distribution of question papers; mark-capturing systems; and structures for managing examination irregularities.

POLICY CHANGES

4. Before presenting the audit findings, Umalusi reminds the public about a recent change to its quality-assurance responsibilities for the NC(V) Levels 2 and 3 and N2–N3 examinations administered by the DHET.
5. Under the Ministerial Directive published in Government Gazette 53015, the NC(V) Level 2 and Level 3 examinations were internalised from 2026. Umalusi therefore no longer quality assures these examinations or issues the associated certificates. The NATED Report 190/191 (N2–N3) qualifications were also phased out under the Ministerial Directive published in Government Gazette 49518. Umalusi conducted its final quality assurance of these examinations in December 2025.
6. The audit findings begin with the external moderation of question papers.

MODERATION OF QUESTION PAPERS

7. Moderation is a critical safeguard for fair, reliable and valid examinations. Umalusi has externally moderated all institution-based assessment tasks and question papers to be administered during this examination period.

Table 2: Number of subject question papers moderated

Qualification	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI	Total
GETC: ABET	n/a	26	7	7	40
NC(V) Level 4	n/a	92	n/a	n/a	92
NSC	68	n/a	59	24	151
Total	68	118	66	31	283

8. Umalusi externally moderated and approved 283 subject question papers across three qualifications and four assessment bodies, confirming their validity, fairness and reliability. The next section presents the number of registered candidates and examination centres per qualification and assessment body.

Table 3: Number of candidates by qualification and assessment body

Qualification	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI	Total
GETC: ABET	n/a	45 699	406	311	46 416
NC(V) Level 4	n/a	44 322	n/a	n/a	44 322
NSC	964 201	n/a	18 631	6 309	989 141
Total	964 201	90 021	19 037	6 620	1 079 879

9. Umalusi has received final subject entries from the assessment bodies. The registration data received shows that approximately 1.08 million candidates are registered for the 2026 year-end examinations with the largest share of about 92%

of the total candidature being accounted for by the NSC. All candidates have received their examination admission letters and timetables.

10. Relevant concessions and accommodations such as extra time, adaptation of question papers into braille and large prints have been granted to eligible candidates in accordance with applicable policies and regulations.
11. The candidates will write at 9 183 examination centres across four assessment bodies, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of examination centres by qualification and assessment body

Qualification	DBE	DHET	IEB	SACAI	Total
GETC: ABET	n/a	1 410	53	40	1 503
NC(V) Level 4	n/a	277	n/a	n/a	277
NSC	7 057	n/a	266	80	7 403
Total	7 057	1 687	319	120	9 183

12. While a desktop evaluation method was employed for all the existing centres, a physical audit was conducted for new examination centres. All the centres have been profiled according to their risk-levels from low, medium and high-risk centres. Resident monitors will be deployed to high-risk centres, supported by regular Umalusi monitoring. This will complement the measures to be implemented by each assessment body.

PRINTING, PACKAGING, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTION PAPERS

13. The printing of examination materials is taking place according to approved printing management plans of the assessment bodies. Security protocols for the printing, packaging, storage and distribution of question papers and related materials are the aspects of Umalusi's quality assurance work which are not discussed publicly due to their confidential nature. Umalusi is satisfied that adequate plans are in place to secure the entire value chain. Regular visits will be made to all assessment bodies.

INVIGILATION AND MARKING PERSONNEL

14. Umalusi is satisfied that all the assessment bodies have adequately trained their invigilation staff to execute all the activities connected with the conduct, administration and management of the examinations.
15. Concerning marking personnel, Umalusi is satisfied that the assessment bodies have sufficient marking capacity. Although the DBE reported marker shortages in Afrikaans Home Language, English Home Language and History, Umalusi is confident that the DBE's plan to start marking early and phase the process will adequately mitigate the risk.

16. Because the DHET will finalise its marker appointment process later in this month, Umalusi will be able to pronounce on the marking capacity of the DHET on or before 19 October.

MARK-CAPTURING SYSTEMS

17. The audit confirmed that the mark-capturing systems used by all four assessment bodies comply with Umalusi's requirements. Each body will use a double-entry process: one official will capture the marks, and another will verify them. All mark capturers will be trained before the process begins.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

18. Umalusi approved all submitted question papers and institution-based assessment tasks after confirming that they had been designed in accordance with the standards for each qualification and complied with the relevant quality-assurance requirements. The papers will be distributed to the approved examination centres in accordance with the approved plans. Candidates have been registered in line with the relevant regulations, and eligible candidates have received concessions and accommodations in accordance with applicable policies.
19. On the evidence presented, Umalusi is satisfied that the system is broadly ready to conduct, administer and manage the 2026 year-end national examinations, which will involve approximately 1.08 million candidates at 9 183 examination centres. Where concerns remain, corrective measures are being implemented by assessment bodies and closely monitored by Umalusi.
20. The areas of concern identified are not systemic and do not threaten the overall credibility or integrity of the 2026 examinations. The responsible assessment bodies have been instructed to implement corrective measures before the examinations begin. Umalusi will continue to monitor the DBE's measures to address marker capacity in Afrikaans Home Language, English Home Language and History.
21. Umalusi applauds the efforts of all assessment bodies, including Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), and all other stakeholders for doing everything humanly possible to uphold the credibility and integrity of the examinations.

RECURRENT CONCERNS

22. The audit confirmed that each assessment body has structures in place to address and manage assessment and examination irregularities. Should they arise, irregularities will be handled within the relevant system and in accordance with the regulations governing the conduct, administration and management of assessments and examinations.
23. Umalusi urges assessment bodies to take every necessary step to identify and prevent irregularities during the examinations. Candidates are also warned against

using unlawful means to gain an unfair advantage. Hard work, honesty and diligent study remain the foundations of academic success.

24. Umalusi remains seriously concerned about recurring irregularities involving Integrated Summative Assessment Tasks (ISAT), Practical Assessment Tasks (PAT) and Internal Continuous Assessments (ICASS) at DHET colleges. Umalusi has repeatedly advised the DHET that successful implementation of ISAT and PAT requires comprehensive planning, including adequate resources and facilities and appropriate scheduling. However, little progress appears to have been made. Umalusi will deploy officials to monitor the conduct of the examinations and ensure full compliance with the relevant regulations.
25. Umalusi sincerely hopes that the persistent practice of teachers and principals preventing registered candidates from writing examinations in particular subjects will not recur. As previously stated, this unlawful practice is driven by attempt to improve examination results. Umalusi urges learners and their parents or guardians to report any such incident immediately to the relevant authorities.
26. As was the case in 2021, this year's examination timetable has had to be amended to accommodate the upcoming local government elections. Umalusi has previously identified political activities and community protests as factors that can disrupt the smooth conduct of examinations. Because the local government elections on 4 November coincide with the examination period, related political activities may affect examination operations. Umalusi will therefore work closely with assessment bodies, provincial education departments and other relevant stakeholders to prevent election-related activities from interfering with the examination process.
27. Communities also play a vital role in ensuring that examinations proceed smoothly and without incident. Many schools, including those used as voting stations, hold extra classes on weekends and during holidays to prepare candidates for examinations. Umalusi therefore urges all stakeholders, including political and community leaders, principals, teachers, parents, etcetera to minimise the disruption caused by political activities, especially in the vicinity of schools serving as examination centres.
28. Umalusi appeals to everyone to provide candidates with the support they need during this critical stage of their educational journey and to take every possible step to ensure that no candidate is unduly disadvantaged.

THE ROAD AHEAD

29. During the examinations, Umalusi will monitor the writing process and the marking of sampled scripts and verify marking in sampled subjects to ensure accuracy and reliability.

30. After the examinations, Umalusi will, through the Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Council, standardise examination results to support comparable and consistent outcomes. The final quality-assurance phase is approval of the results by the Executive Committee (EXCO) of Council. Under section 17A(5)(b) of the GENFETQA Act, EXCO must satisfy itself that assessment bodies have:
- (i) conducted the assessment free from any irregularity that may jeopardise the integrity of the assessment or its outcomes; and
 - (ii) complied with the requirements prescribed by the Council for conducting assessments.
31. The foregoing quality-assurance processes are intended to ensure that assessments and examinations comply with the governing regulations and that Umalusi-issued certificates retain the highest levels of credibility and integrity.
32. EXCO will announce its decision on the release of candidates' results at a media briefing at Umalusi on 8 January 2027. Umalusi will issue certificates of achievement to successful candidates within three months of EXCO's approval, subject to the timely submission of certification data by assessment bodies.

FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INVESTIGATIVE TASK TEAM (NITT)

33. Umalusi has received the final report of the National Investigative Task Team (NITT), established by the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube, to investigate the breach involving the 2025 NSC Mathematics Papers 1 and 2, Physical Sciences Papers 1 and 2, and English Home Language Papers 1 to 3. The report found that, of the 600 000 candidates who wrote the three subjects nationwide, the breach was limited to 40 Pretoria-based candidates. The DBE's disciplinary processes are underway in accordance with relevant policies.

UMALUSI'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

34. The year 2026 marks a significant point in the life of Umalusi. The organisation will host a public lecture on 4 December to mark its 25th anniversary. The event will be held at a Pretoria-based venue and livestreamed on Umalusi's social media platforms for wider audience reach.
35. Umalusi wishes the Class of 2026 strength and determination as candidates enter the final stage of their journey through the general and further education and training system. Our advice to you: approach these examinations with confidence, discipline and integrity. This is the final stage of an important journey, and the country wishes you every success.

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