



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DIRECTOR: EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENT

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URGENT 2021 EXAMINATIONS MEMORANDUM

TO : CLUSTER CHIEF DIRECTORS
DISTRICT DIRECTORS
DISTRICT CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALISTS:
CURRICULUM, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE AND
LABOUR RELATIONS
DEPUTY DIRECTORS: FINANCE AND SUPPLY CHAIN
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT HEADS OF EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT

FROM : DDG-CURRICULM MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY
MR. RM TYWAKADI

SUBJECT : URGENT REQUEST FOR FOCUSED SUPPORT DURING THE
CONDUCT, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF
NATIONAL SENIOR EXAMINATIONS FOR 2021.

DATE : 12 OCTOBER 2021

Dear Colleagues

INTRODUCTION

Public examinations are defined primarily in terms of their purposes: to certify and select students on the basis of an assessment of their achievements in curriculum area (World Bank: 2020)

The Eastern Department of Education is responsible for the management, conduct and administration of the public examinations for all Grade12 learners in the province – schools, approved independent schools and approved examination centres. This is as provided in the the *Policy and Regulations for the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination and Assessment*.

The basic principles of assessment and examinations that provide for fair and equitable opportunities for all learners are important in the examination processes and drive this mandate.



This enables candidates to write their examinations in a reasonably conducive environment so that they are able to give account of the knowledge and learning they have acquired over several years of learning.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

- They can play an important equity role in improving access as well; they help limit the effects of patronage and open up access to tertiary education to students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds through various forms of support, including elimination of fees and provision of scholarships.
- They tend to enjoy a high measure of public confidence, though they have also been criticized for their overemphasis on the acquisition of low-level cognitive skills and encouragement of rote learning.
- Beyond these basic roles, public examinations have considerable effects on teachers, students, and parents as well.
- They help focus teachers' curriculum and pedagogical priorities and provide for students to study (*Kellaghan and Greaney, Public Examinations Examined, 2020*).
- There has been significant progress in ensuring a common approach to the examination system across all districts and schools.
- However, there are still variations in the interpretation and implementation of Policy and Regulations, Circulars, DBE and ECDoE Examination Instructions and Umalusi Directives.
- In order to ensure that there is common understanding and implementation, mediation meetings of this information are held.
- All of this is done to ensure that when the Department of Basic Education in collaboration with Provincial Education Departments conduct the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate Examinations for all candidates across the country, all the critical stakeholders have been fully prepared and ready for such a big national undertaking.

THE NEW NORMAL

- Overall running costs of public examination systems are likely to escalate with increasing candidate numbers and efforts to broaden the scope of assessment in the interests of enhancing validity.
- Options for cutting costs, such as reducing the number of questions, increasing the proportion of easily scored questions, or lowering payments for examination moderators and markers, should take into consideration their likely impact on the quality of the examination papers, on teaching and learning, and on levels of confidence in the integrity of the results.
- The expense associated with labor-intensive performance examinations, such as orals, art, music, and aspects of science, needs to be weighed against the advantages and disadvantages of not using this type of examination format,



especially bearing in mind the maxim that “what is examined tends to be taught, and what is not examined tends to be ignored.”

- Many systems, even if favorably disposed to offering performance examinations may be unable to afford the additional administrative costs.

SCOPE AND SIZE

- The Grade 12 class of 2021 is a group that has thus far faced over 400 days of lockdown due to the havoc that COVID 19 pandemic created globally.
- COVID 19 pandemic threw the whole world into a tailspin.
- The current Grade 12 class was not spared of the COVID 19 pandemic negative impact.
- This cohort lost over 40% of the effective teaching and learning time in 2020 whilst they were in Grade 11 and the troubled waters did not abate even in 2021.
- They have lost close to 10% of effective teaching and learning days in 2021 alone, albeit the fact that they will be examined in the same standards as the previous cohorts.
- The year 2021 continued to present new, unique and unexpected educational contexts which included amongst others; extended school closures, learner absenteeism, intermittent school closures, intense need for psycho- social support, teacher absenteeism and learning under COVID 19 which mutates from one variant to another.
- But, not to forget that it also has created an opportunity to use a variety of teaching and learning platforms and methodologies, what sometimes is called, ‘business continuity’. However, the intensification of this business continuity is being dampened by the constrained fiscal environment that needs serious trade-offs.
- To make the situation even more challenging, is that this cohort was only exposed to standardized provincial examinations when they wrote the 2021 preparatory examinations in September 2021.
- Nationally, in 2020 the country experienced one of the highest promotion rates in Grade 11 over many years.
- The number of progressed learners from Grade 11 to 12 drastically declined without any sound educational explanation, except to suspect that the standard of the school-based tests used in 2020 is questionable.
- The province has recorded the highest number of Grade 12 full time candidates in a period of more than eight years.
- The Department of Education in the Eastern Cape shall be conducting Grade 12 National Senior Certificate examinations for **894 (94,7%)** full time public schools, **50 (5,2%)** Independent schools, which amounts to **944** centres combined and **144** part time centres.
- Out of the **944** full time examination centres there are **9 Special Schools** that will be writing Grade 12 examinations with **104** candidates.
- The full time centres combined account for **97 127** full time candidates which is **24 201(34%)** more than **2020 (72 926)**.



- There are **7325 (7%)** candidates that are classified as progressed learners from Grade 11 to 12. The **144** part time centres account for **17 656** registered part-time candidates.
- It is clear from the above statistics that the **2021 National Senior Certificate Examinations** in the Province is the biggest in the last 10 years.
- The biggest number experienced in the last 10 years except 2021 was in **2016** wherein **92 748** candidates were registered.
- This calls for the support of all the critical role players such as, the decision makers, parents, community members, learners, teachers, principals, officials, unions and other sister departments to all have, their hands on deck.

THE CONDUCT OF EXAMINATIONS

The period starting from 19 October 2021 to the third week of 21 January 2022 is set aside for three critical activities for the Department of Education at all levels, namely;

- The writing of National and provincial examinations across grades, in particular the NSC Grade 12 examinations.
- Readiness of the Department of Education for 2022 academic year.
- Finalisation of the statutory financial planning for 2022/3, preparations for the oncoming budget adjustment estimates, performance reporting and PPN distribution processes.

In order to conduct, administer and manage the NSC examinations it has become critical at this time that both human and financial resources are re-directed towards the strengthening of successful conduct, administration and management of examinations.

STRICT ADHERENCE TO COVID 19 PROTOCOLS DURING THE CONDUCT OF EXAMINATIONS

Purpose of the Protocol

- Provide standardised procedures for managing COVID 19 infections during the conduct of examinations.
- Safety of both candidates and officials
- Minimize the rate of infections

Key Drivers – Non - Pharmaceutical procedures

- Regularly washing hands with soap and water or sanitizing hands.
- Wearing of mask at all times covering mouth and nose.
- Observing appropriate Social Distancing at all times.





Preparation of the Examination Centre

- Establish a COVID-19 screening team.
- All entering the examination centre must be screened daily
- Adequate number of examination rooms
- Grade 12 examination rooms must be cordoned off from the rest of the classrooms.
- A reserve list of invigilators must be available.

Candidates presenting a temperature above 38°C or other COVID-19 related symptoms.

- Candidate who presents with COVID-19 symptoms, including a temperature reading of more than 38 °C, will not be allowed to proceed to the examination room.
- Isolated and re-screened every ten minutes for thirty minutes if their temperature decreases allow them to exam room and has answered “no” to the other six questions on the screening form, within the first hour of the examination session.
- A candidate whose temperature is consistently above 38 °C after the regular 10-minute checks in the first 30 minutes and/or answers “yes” to two or more of the questions on the screening questionnaire, will be taken to the isolation room at the centre for the candidate to sit for the examination.
- The isolation area may also be an open well-defined and visible space such as a veranda, corridor/passage, provided it is isolated and has no access to other persons.

Candidates that have tested positive for COVID-19, prior to the examination session

- Will be allowed to write the examination, provided they are deemed fit, to write the examination.
- The parent, care-giver or designated family member, of candidates that have tested positive for COVID-19 are obliged to inform the school and be allowed to write in Isolation.

Invigilation under covid-19

- All invigilators are to sanitize their hands prior to and after handling question paper.
- Invigilator must ensure that he/she personally distributes question papers.
- Candidates must report to the invigilator if he/she feels ill during the examination session.
- Invigilators must also report to the chief invigilator if they are not feeling well.
- There is to be NO sharing of writing materials.
- Invigilators must check that candidates are not carrying crib notes in/on their face masks.





- Disposable cups must be provided
- A candidate may be allowed to bring along his/her own water bottle, provided it has no writing.

A special appeal is made to the Cluster Chief Directors and District Directors in particular to support the examination operations in their districts and schools in the following focused ways:

1. Registration of centres and candidate

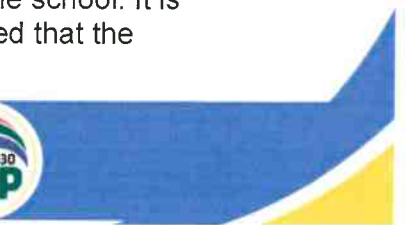
- a. The stability of statistics and compliance to registration requirements by all registered examination centres and the appropriate registration of all Grade 12 candidates for appropriate subjects are critical and have serious implications for the results not only of schools, but for circuits, districts, clusters and province at large.
- b. The strict management of subject changes also contributes to the stability of statistics and eliminate irregularities that emanate from learners writing incorrect subjects/ levels which lead to non -resulting of the affected learners.

2. The efficient management of progressed learners.

- a. It is the responsibility of the principals, examination officials and District Directors to maintain an accurate IECS and physical records of progressed learners in each school and the subjects they are registered for. The schools and districts must have declared and compiled these lists in advance.
- b. It must be noted that all NSC Supplementary and SC open examinations shall be written in May/June 2022 as scheduled.

3. Security and safety of all storage facilities.

- a. All the storage facilities must be secured with armed security guards, CCTV cameras and alarm systems with armed response teams.
- b. Double locking security systems in the form of strong rooms and burglar gates and access control to the premises is mandatory.
- c. No schools shall be allowed to collect both morning and afternoon question papers in the morning. In cases where the collection of the morning and afternoon question papers is inevitable due to geographical location of the school, due evaluation processes to assess compliance of the school shall be implemented by local and provincial examination units.
- d. If the schools fully comply with minimum security standards, compliance certificate to that affect shall be issued to the school. It is only when such a compliance certificate has been issued that the





school(s) can be issued with morning and afternoon question papers in the morning.

- e. The district examination offices must adhere to the protocol document provided to control the issue of question papers and the return of the written scripts.

4. Secure receipt, control, storage, distribution of question papers, admission letters, control lists and mark sheets.

- a. It is of utmost importance that all storage facilities comply with minimum security norms and standards as prescribed in the *examination policy and regulations*.
- b. The allocation of responsibilities such as; **the receipt of examination material, safe key custody, nodal points and distribution points managers, delivery officials, resident monitors, capturers, mark sheet control officials and question paper sorting officials must be done in writing** and allocation files be available at all times upon request.
- c. The moderation and capturing of marks for School Based Assessment (SBA) should be closely monitored as inaccurate capturing/ non - capturing will affect the results of the school, District and the Province will be adversely affected.

5. Secure receipt, control, storage and delivery of candidates' batches of written scripts, mark sheets and attendance registers.

- a. The department must account for all the written scripts and mark sheets of candidates. The security and safety of these sensitive documents is of utmost importance for examination integrity and credibility.
- b. Procedures for receipt, delivery, storage and distribution must be observed at all times, cumbersome as they may look and feel. **NO SHORT CUTS.**

6. The monitoring of the writing of examinations.

- a. The examination officials are mandated to monitor all examination centres in their districts as **per customised monitoring plan**. Priority must be given to all **high risk centres**.
- b. **Implementation of COVID 19 examination conduct protocols** to be strictly monitored as well.
- c. **Resident monitors** must be placed in all high risk centres.
- d. **Daily reports** must be sent to Provincial Office as per the policy requirements.



7. The collection of written scripts.

- a. At regular intervals, the written scripts shall be collected for delivery to various marking centres and provincial office. The written scripts must at all times be found ready, controlled and appropriately batched and secured in scripts bins ready for collection.

All the above responsibilities require additional resources to be redirected to examinations sections to deal with the peak period of examinations activities. Intensive monitoring and integrated execution of examination related work need the support of each and every sub-directorate in the cluster and district offices.

The following list of resources, but not exhaustive, is very vital for enabling successful execution of credible examinations in all district offices:

- Connectivity and availability of computers for 100% SBA mark capturing.
- Secured storage facilities, strong rooms and safes and CCTV cameras.
- Physical security guards to conduct body searches and manage access control to examination sections and nodal points.
- All officials at a distribution point must be accompanied by a security guard.
- Telephones, photocopying, fax and email facilities for providing daily reports must be provided.
- Provision of airtime bundles and vehicles preferably 'bakkies' for monitors and officials operating in nodal and distribution points as well as those official doing direct delivery to schools is critical.
- Additional human resource from other sections can be deployed as per the requirements of the district plan determined by the CES for Curriculum/Examinations and District Head of Examinations.
- The District Director and CES for Curriculum/Examinations must directly monitor the operations at all Examination Sections in their districts at this time.
- District Directors to note the daily reports that are submitted to PDE and DBE in order to timeously intervene where necessary.
- The reporting and management of all examination related irregularity cases to be handled immediately.
- To note the presence of independent monitors from PDE, DBE and Umalusi in all our districts.





The following numbers can be contacted at Head Office to deal with your 2021 NSC Grade 12 Examination queries:

OFFICE	NUMBER	ENQUIRY
Chief Director: Examination's Office	040 602 7002/4	Ms A Mba - PA
Director – Examination Management	040 602 7020/37	Ms Y Mhambi - PA
Acting Director – Examination Administration, Logistics , Systems and Certification	040 602 7028/93	Ms Y Ncethe- PA
Exam Support,	040 6027069	Mr S Mosele - AD
Examination Computer System & Certification	040 602 7069	Ms T Gqozo - AD
Items Development, Moderation and Delivery	040 602 7031	Mr H West - ACES
Examinations Policy Compliance, SBA Irregularities Management and Monitoring	040 602 7039 060 530 3756	Mrs F Bikitsha - CES
Marking Processes Management	040 602 7067 060 523 6670	Mr Z Lolwana - CES

CONCLUSION

Educational standards related to examinations include both content and achievement standards. They facilitate the setting of learning goals, assessment of student learning, and reporting of student achievement. Content standards summarize the knowledge, skills, and understandings expected of examination candidates. Examination achievement standards, on the other hand, describe how the candidate performed on the examination in summary terms.

Although members of the public and policy makers may use examination results to monitor changes in achievement levels over time it is inadvisable to do so, as many factors affect examination results, some of which are unrelated to a student's true achievement level.

Researchers with some public and international examination agencies continue to focus on the problem of inter-subject comparability in grading examinations. They are likely to build on recent efforts in defining, categorizing, and making explicit the knowledge, skills, achievements (performance standards) represented by students' performance in the examination. These efforts may be regarded as worthwhile if they add to the transparency of examinations and if this, in turn, has a positive impact on student learning.



We are confident of the logistical and administrative readiness of all the districts. There are adequate contingency plans in place to reasonably respond to emergency situations.

We sincerely hope that, together we can conduct, manage and administer a credible National Senior Certificate. We rely on your unconditional support to provide for over 114 000 candidates who will be participating in NSC Public Examinations in 2021. If all of us can put our shoulders to the wheel we can achieve and do more.

DDG: CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY
MR. RM TYWAKADI

DATE: 11 OCTOBER 2021