

2 November 2020

BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT URGES SOUTH AFRICANS TO SUPPORT MATRIC CLASS OF 2020 AHEAD OF FINAL EXAMS

The Department of Basic Education has urged South Africans to rally behind the matric class of 2020 ahead of the start in earnest of final Grade 12 examinations this week.

The combined examination for Senior Certificate and National Senior Certificate candidates makes this the largest cohort of 1, 058 699 candidates, expected to sit for their examination from 5 November to 15 December 2020.

The breakdown of category of candidates are as follows:

Category of Candidates	Number
Nov NSC Full Time candidates:	616 021
Nov Part-Time Candidates:	113 846
June SC Candidates:	167 733
June NSC Full Time Candidates:	155 935
June NSC Part-Time Candidates:	5 164
Combined Total Number of Candidates:	1 058 699

It should be noted that despite the abnormal context, the Class of 2020 will be subjected to the same high quality of examination that previous cohorts were subjected to, as the Department has not made any changes to the exam papers, which were already set in 2019.

The state of readiness to write the 2020 examinations is predicated on a number of factors beyond the normal indicators of system readiness. The sector has had to **double its efforts** to ensure that the Class of 2020, despite the disruptions of the academic year, are fully prepared for this examination.

Media Enquiries:

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Learner Support and Readiness:

Due to the unprecedented loss of academic time as a result of COVID-19, measures such as the provision of supplementary material, vacation classes, after-school programmes, teacher content training, placement of volunteer teachers, as well as alternative (differentiated) ways of grouping and teaching learners were put in place.

The sector has placed strong emphasis on the areas of psychosocial support for learners and teachers, curriculum coverage monitoring, extra school based tuition such as morning or afternoon and weekend classes, Teacher development related to pedagogy and content, ICT utilisation in the form of TV, Radio, online and web-based platforms, peer-led study groups and the provision of additional LTSM.

The DG, Mr Mathanzima Mveli conducted 198 one on one virtual meetings with 9 provinces from 23 April – 25 September. The meetings monitored and supported aspects related to the following areas:

- Facilities, Water and Sanitation, Learner Transport, Educators, Staff and Learner Orientation;
- Basic Sanitation and Hygiene package, School Nutrition Programme; and
- COVID-19 essentials, Special Schools, Psychosocial Support as well as Curriculum and Assessment progress.

In addition, the DG conducted visits to over 150 Matric weekend camps across all nine provinces.

Support for Learners in 2020, targeted not just Grade 12; but Grade 10 and 11, with the following ICT support:

- Distribution of digital content to provinces.
- Digital State-owned Textbooks.
- Mindset broadcasting solutions.
- Virtual Classrooms.
- Content distribution through websites.
- TV Broadcasting support.
- Zero Rating of educational websites.

Exam Centre Registration:

With regards to Exam Centre Registration, new writing centres were identified in order to accommodate the increased number of candidates for the combined examinations in some PEDs. The Designated centres will mainly be used for the Senior Certificate and Part-Time candidates, while NSC full-time candidates write at their schools. Both public and independent centres have been audited to ascertain the risk profile of the centre and compliance to COVID-19 protocol. Monitoring of the centre will be based on the risk profile of the centre.

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Writing Status:

All Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) have completed the training of chief invigilators and invigilators. There was strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols in Provinces where face-to-face modality was used for the training of invigilators in cluster groupings.

PEDs have appointed private invigilators and private monitors to manage and monitor the administration of the exam at designated centres and also increased coverage of monitoring. All private invigilators have been trained together with the Chief Invigilators by the Head Office examination staff. Provinces completed the training of monitors by the end of October 2020.

Social distancing has been decreased to 1m, and this has assisted with the space provision for the writing of the examination. Provinces have completed the audit of examination centres. Centres have been categorised according to risk profile.

Marking:

All Provinces have completed the marker selection process, and are currently managing the marking of subjects where shortages of markers have been identified.

All Provinces have identified the required number of marking centres to accommodate all the markers for the combined examinations. A plan for the marking guidelines standardisation meetings (MSMs) has been developed with the face to face and virtual modalities that will be used. UMALUSI also participates in these meetings to ensure that the marking guideline complies with the standard of the question paper.

Monitoring of exams:

Daily reports will be submitted to the DBE during the writing period and provinces are expected to **submit the final Irregularity Reports** on or before Monday, 25 January 2021. **The DBE will deploy part-time monitors** to monitor the writing and distribution chain of question papers. Part-time monitors will also monitor the marking of the exams. The DBE will also make use of **online monitoring** of the examinations.

Management of Irregularities:

Parents and learners have participated in pledge signing ceremonies, committing to a credible and fair examination process, as well to be made aware of the consequences if they are implicated in irregularities. Provinces have submitted plans for the finalisation of majority of the irregularities prior to the release of results, and for the **management of irregularities** at the marking centre. Learners are once again urged not to resort to any irregular practice either before or during the examination and to bring to the attention of the school principal any information that may relate to a breach in the examination. Even if the information is

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unsolicited, the failure of the learner to bring such information to the attention of the school principal constitutes an irregularity and the learner will be regarded as being complicit.

The Department, after seeking the expert advice from the Department of Health has amended its writing protocol to allow learners that present a temperature of above 38°C, during the screening process, to write the examination in isolation and such learners will not be allowed to associate with other learners after the examination and will be referred to for medical attention. The condition of such learners will be closely monitored in subsequent examinations.

Despite the negative impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, innovative measures have been developed and used to ensure the readiness of the Class of 2020. Whilst significant efforts have been made to recover the academic year and provide extraordinary support to the learners, the total impact of the abnormal educational context remains an unknown and therefore a concern.

The Department has commended all learners, teachers and SMTs **for the resilience** they have shown in braving the pandemic with a single goal of ensuring the Class of 2020 receives optimum support.

The Department has extended sincere gratitude to provinces, partners, educational stakeholders, parents and civil society for going beyond the call of duty to assist and support Grade 12 learners.

The Department wishes all candidates who will sit for the Final Exams the very best in their endeavours to ensure success in this very important examination.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

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