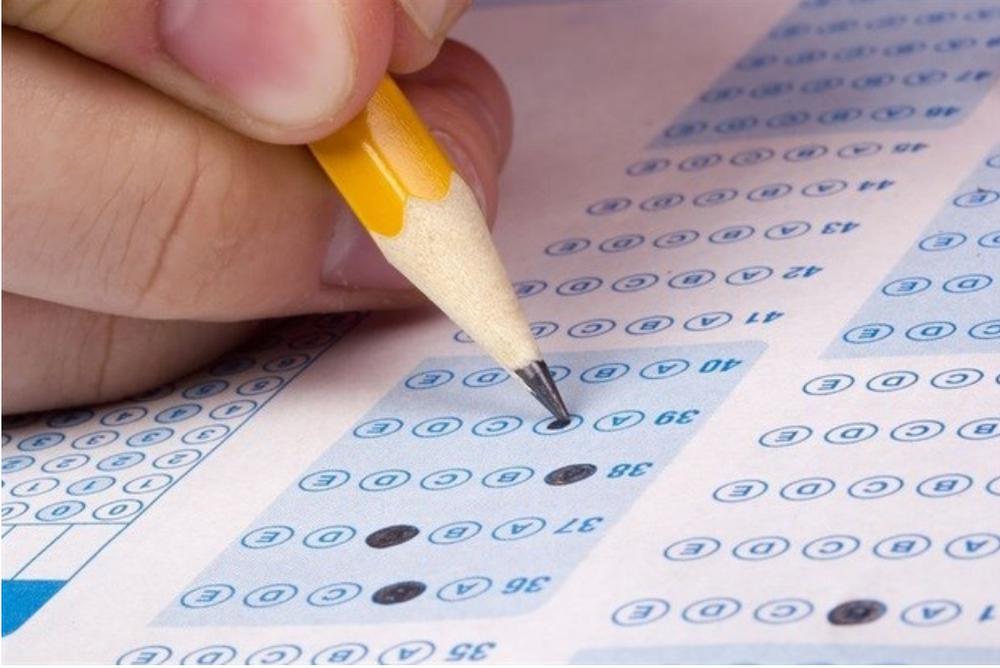


Over 790,000 learners to write 2017 matric exams

Priscilla Ogunbanjo, the Director for Examination and Assessment, says just over 798 000 learners have enrolled to write this year's matric exams, which start on 16 October 2017.



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This was announced when the department briefed the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education in the National Assembly on Tuesday, 12 September.

“Looking at the enrolments for 2017, we can see we have 636,814 full-time candidates that have enrolled to write this examination and 161,475 part-time candidates, giving us a total of 798,289 for this year,” she said.

Overall, 37,838 less students have registered to write exams compared to the 828,020 who registered for the 2016 exams.

On exam irregularities, Ogunbanjo said following the leakage of the Mathematics paper in Giyani last year, an independent auditing company was commissioned to conduct an audit of the processes from the setting to the printing of question papers.

In this regard, she said, a number of weaknesses were identified, particularly at the Government Printing Works, which

have since been attended to. More intensive monitoring of the printing and packaging of question papers will be done by the Limpopo Department of Basic Education, as well as the national department.

She said 212 storage points across the country – excluding the Western Cape – were audited in 2016 to ensure they comply with minimum security standards.

Exam centres

On the trustworthiness of exam centres, Ogunbanjo said the reduction in group copying was noted across all provincial education districts. However, the practice was not completely eradicated.

Provincial education districts have categorised centres in terms of their risk profile and invigilation is based on the risk profile. She said there was a need for higher monitoring capacity.

Currently there are four audits that are being concluded and those are audits of storage points.

Support for learners

Suren Govender, the Chief Director for Curriculum Implementation at the department, said support has been given to progressed learners leading up to the exams.

In the Eastern Cape, a partnership was forged with unemployed graduates specialising in high enrolment subjects to support progressed learners onsite, after school, weekends and during school holidays.

In KwaZulu-Natal, progressed learners were supported through extra classes, Saturday classes, boot camps and radio broadcast lessons.

Gauteng has implemented a revised Secondary School Improvement Plan programme comprising several interventions. These include face-to-face tuition for learners in grade 12 in underperforming schools. This programme started in February and continued throughout the second term, Govender said.

He said a special camp was organised for progressed learners during the April vacation.

Limpopo, Govender said, provided extra lessons on specified content and topics in identified subjects, while extra homework and tasks were crafted specifically for progressed learners.

He said under last push preparations, provinces have been told they must make sure they are not neglecting the focus on literature subjects.

“We also said that for especially those schools that are underperforming, teaching and learning needs to continue up until the very last day before the exams,” he said.

In terms of overall learner readiness, provinces have successfully implemented quarter one and quarter two interventions to support the Class of 2017 and also provided them with the “best possible opportunity” to conclude their year successfully.

Govender said implementation has started for the last push interventions and based on the profile of 2017 learner cohort, the support and interventions provided in the system, the National Senior Certificate Results for 2017 should improve.

Hope for Vuwani protest to be halted

Meanwhile, Basic Education Director-General Mathanzima Mveli said meetings are taking place daily in an attempt to halt a shutdown in Vuwani, Limpopo.

The shutdown, which started on 4 September, comes reportedly over the dissatisfaction by Vuwani residents over service delivery demands from last year's protest.

Mweli said the shutdown has resulted in the loss of six days of writing trial examinations, teaching and learning across the grades.

He said 26 secondary schools and 52 primary schools have been affected by the shutdown, which translates to 29,066 learners. Out of these, 1,657 are grade 12 learners.

There was a concern that the shutdown could spill over to Malamulele, the area where protests started before the Vuwani unrest.

"Meetings have been planned by circuit managers, school principals and teachers of the affected circuits. Meetings are also planned that involve other departments that are involved or affected.

"... There are meetings virtually every day and representatives of the department provincially and from district level have indicated to us that since Friday, there has been a glimpse of hope in that a shutdown could be lifted, but it has not happened as of yesterday [Monday].

"They have another meeting today and we still hope that that meeting will come up with something."

He said catch-up intervention programmes will be organised at the affected schools and that schools will be assisted to draw up a compacted timetable to cover ground lost in teaching and learning. A timetable for trial exams and other term three formal assessment tasks will be drawn for all grades.

To ensure that there is a safe and conducive environment for writing exams, the department will involve the provincial joint operations centre (ProvJoc) in order to monitor and be visible in all 26 affected secondary schools.

Police will during this period escort question papers in transit from the storage centre to schools and also escort scripts after writing.

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