Report on the Quality Assurance of the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) November 2020 National Senior Certificate examinations and assessment

REPORT ON THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE (SACAI) NOVEMBER 2020 NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

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FOREWORD

Over the past years, Umalusi has made great strides in setting, maintaining and improving standards in the quality assurance of the National Senior Certificate (NSC).

Umalusi has managed to achieve its success by establishing and implementing an effective and rigorous quality assurance of assessment system with a set of quality assurance processes that cover assessment and examinations. The system and processes are continuously revised and refined.

Umalusi judges the quality and standard of assessments and examinations by determining the:

    a. Level of adherence to policy in the implementation of examination and assessment processes;

    b. Quality and standard of examination question papers and practical assessment tasks;

    c. State of readiness of assessment bodies to conduct the national examinations;

    d. Efficiency and effectiveness of examination processes and procedures for the monitoring of the conduct, administration and management of examinations and assessments; and

    e. Quality of marking, as well as the quality and standard of quality assurance processes that the assessment body has put in place.

Furthermore, Umalusi has established a professional working relationship with the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI). As a result, there has been notable improvement in the conduct, administration and management of the NSC examinations and their assessment. There is ample evidence to confirm that the SACAI continue to strive to improve systems and processes relating to the NSC examinations and assessment. However, despite numerous improvement initiatives, there remain critical aspects, such as the processing of applications for registration of the examination centres, which are of great concern and that require immediate attention beyond 2020.

The Assessment Standards Committee (ASC), a committee of Council met in January 2021, and the Executive Committee of Council (EXCO) met in February 2021 to scrutinise evidence presented on the conduct, administration and management of the November 2020 NSC examinations. Having studied all the evidence presented, the Executive Committee of Council (EXCO) noted the isolated irregularities reported during the writing and marking of examinations. However, EXCO is satisfied that there were no systemic irregularities reported which might have compromised the credibility and integrity of the November 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations administered by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

EXCO approved the release of the SACAI results of the November 2020 NSC examinations based on the following:

    a. The November 2020 National Senior Certificate examinations were administered in accordance with the examination policies and regulations.

However, the SACAI is required to:

    a. Ensure compliance with the conditions for its provisional accreditation as an assessment body, including not assisting unaccredited examination centres to bypass the registration and accreditation requirements;

b. Ensure that the challenges highlighted in Annexure A are addressed, develop strategies to mitigate recurrence of the challenges as outlined and submit a progress reports to Umalusi by 26 March 2021; and

c. Address the directives for compliance and improvement highlighted in the quality assurance of assessment report as highlighted in Annexure B, develop and submit an improvement plan to Umalusi by 26 March 2021.

The EXCO commended the SACAI for conducting a successful examination, despite challenges presented by COVID-19.

Umalusi will continue to ensure that the quality, credibility and integrity of the NSC examinations and assessments are maintained. Umalusi will also continue in its endeavour towards an assessment system that is internationally comparable, through research, benchmarking, continuous review and the improvement of systems and processes.

Umalusi would like to thank all the relevant stakeholders who worked tirelessly to ensure the credibility of the November 2020 NSC examinations.

Dr Mafu S Rakometsi
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act mandates Umalusi to develop and implement policy and criteria for the assessment of qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF).

Umalusi is mandated, through the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No. 58 of 2001, as amended in 2008), to develop and manage its sub-framework of qualifications, to quality-assure assessment at exit-point, approve the release of examination results and to certify candidate achievements.

The Act, in terms of these responsibilities, stipulates that Umalusi, as the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training:

a. Must perform the external moderation of assessment of the different assessment bodies and education institutions;
b. May adjust raw marks during the standardisation process; and
c. Must, with the concurrence of the Director-General and after consultation with the relevant assessment body or education institution, approve the publication of the results of candidates if the Council is satisfied that the assessment body or education institution has:
   i. Conducted the assessment free from any irregularity that may jeopardise the integrity of the assessment or its outcomes;
   ii. Complied with the requirements prescribed by the Council for conducting an assessment;
   iii. Applied the standards prescribed by the Council with which a candidate is required to comply to obtain a certificate; and
   iv. Complied with every other condition determined by the Council.

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on the processes followed by Umalusi in quality assuring the November 2020 NSC examinations. The report also reflects on the findings; areas of improvement and good practice; and areas of non-compliance; and provides directives for compliance and improvement in the management, conduct and administration of the examination and assessment. The findings are based on information obtained from Umalusi moderation, monitoring, verification and standardisation processes, as well as from reports received from the SACAI.

Umalusi undertakes the quality assurance of the national qualifications through a rigorous process of reporting on each of the assessment processes and procedures. The quality assurance of the standard of assessment is based on the assessment body's ability to adhere to policies and regulations designed to deal with critical aspects of administering a credible national assessment and examinations.

In addition to the November 2020 examinations, supplementary examinations will also be conducted later in 2021 than usual, during March/April 2021. The results of the November 2020 examinations were released and the quality assurance of assessment reports made available on the Umalusi website.
The SACAI November 2020 NSC examinations were quality assured and reported on by Umalusi. This report covers nine quality assurance processes (summarised into eight chapters) conducted by Umalusi, for which a brief outline is given:

a. Moderation of question papers (Chapter 1)

b. Moderation of school-based assessment (SBA) and practical assessment tasks (PAT) (Chapter 2)

c. Monitoring the state of readiness to conduct examinations (Chapter 3)

d. Audit of appointed markers (Chapter 4)

e. Monitoring the writing and marking of examinations (Chapter 5)

f. Marking guideline discussions and verification of marking (Chapter 6)

g. Standardisation and resulting (Chapter 7)

h. Certification (Chapter 8)

The findings from these quality assurance of assessment processes enabled the EXCO of Umalusi Council to decide whether to approve the release of the November 2020 NSC examinations or not.

The role and responsibilities of the SACAI are to:

a. Develop and internally moderate examination question papers and their accompanying marking guidelines; and submit these to Umalusi for external moderation and approval;

b. Develop and internally moderate SBA tasks and their accompanying marking guidelines; and submit these to Umalusi for external moderation and approval;

c. Manage the implementation and internal moderation of internal assessment;

d. Conduct, administer and manage the writing of examinations in all examination centres;

e. Conduct the marking of examination scripts and submit the results to Umalusi for the standardisation process;

f. Manage irregularities;

g. Report to Umalusi on the conduct, administration and management of examinations during the meeting for approval of the release of results;

h. Have in place an IT system that complies with the policies and regulations so all candidate records can be submitted according to the certification directives; and

i. Process and submit records of candidate achievements to Umalusi for certification.

Umalusi moderated and approved all question papers and their marking guidelines. The November 2020 approved question papers were comprised of different sets: 35 question papers from 25 subjects were moderated for the November 2020 NSC examinations; 12 other question papers used had been approved during previous moderation cycles but not used. In addition, the SACAI used 43 question papers sourced from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and two question papers sourced from the Independent Examinations Board (IEB). For a question paper and a marking guideline to be approved, both must be evaluated against an appropriately designed instrument. This has a set of three overarching aspects/criteria: moderation of the question paper; moderation of the marking guideline; and overall impression and general remarks on the question paper. Approval of a question paper is determined by its level of compliance with criteria set in accordance with Umalusi's standards.

As discovered in 2020, the criterion on overall impression was the only one that showed an improvement, by a small margin, between November 2019 and November 2020. Although there was a slight decline in November 2020, more than 80% of the question papers had, for the past three years, complied fully with the criterion on predictability. However, the percentage of question papers complying in all respects declined in nine criteria, i.e., all criteria, excluding overall impression; and fewer than 50% of the moderated question papers complied in all respects with each of the following criteria: technical details; cognitive skills; text selection, types and quality of questions; language and bias; accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines; and overall impression.

Umalusi sampled ten subjects for SBA moderation and two subjects for practical assessment task (PAT) moderation. There was an improvement in the quality of assessment tasks in Physical Sciences, especially those set and moderated by the SACAI. Although substantial improvement must still be made in internal moderation practices at many institutions/schools, there were pockets of improvement in pre- and post-moderation compared to that of previous years, especially in Afrikaans Home Language. The moderation challenges found related to poor quality of marking emanating from non-adherence to the marking guidelines; inconsistency in marking; poor use of rubrics and/or inconsistency in the allocation of marks was also noted.

Umalusi, working remotely, successfully evaluated the SACAI state of readiness to conduct the November 2020 NSC examinations. The evidence submitted by the SACAI demonstrated high compliance levels. The assessment body adapted its moderation processes to accommodate the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic; and used online platforms to moderate assessments and successfully train chief invigilators. They, further, developed a significant and detailed information document for dissemination to centres, markers and monitors to mitigate health risks associated with COVID-19. However, there were discrepancies evidenced concerning the registration of candidates, as well as challenges related to the processing of applications of centres. These were noted.

An audit of appointed markers is undertaken by Umalusi to ensure that the assessment bodies' internal controls, processes, guidelines and policies for appointing markers for the NSC examinations are adhered to and in compliance with the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM). The PAM provides the requirements the assessment body must adhere to in appointing personnel to the various NSC examination-related positions. The SACAI was audited in ten sampled subjects in 2020, using a desktop audit to evaluate the evidence made available by the SACAI. It was, however, noted that the SACAI is required to improve on its failure to submit a list of reserve markers. The accreditation of centres remains an area where the SACAI is required to put in place measures to ensure that challenges in the processing of unregistered centres and providers are resolved. It is necessary and of the utmost importance that the SACAI maintains systems that ensure unregistered independent schools do not use the assessment body to bypass requirements for registration and accreditation.

Umalusi monitored 30 examinations centres pre-sampled from the SACAI's 72 established examination centres; and one marking centre was monitored. The SACAI was able to establish strict and necessary health and safety measures for candidates at writing venues and markers at the marking centre. A notable compromise was found, with a batch of English Home Language Paper 1 question papers located in an unsecured area prior to the commencement of the examination session. There were additional irregularities reported: a candidate was alleged to be in possession of a cell phone prior to the commencement of the writing session; and high noise levels around an examination centre made the environment non-conducive for writing an examination.

Verification of marking was undertaken in ten subjects. Marking guideline meetings for these subjects were attended by Umalusi moderators and the marking guidelines were signed off. All marking guideline discussions included a more rigorous approach during the discussion; this was raised as a concern in the report on the 2019 marking guideline discussions. Although there were pockets of improvement noted during verification of marking process, it was discovered that there were evidence of poor marking.
The SACAI presented 25 subjects for standardisation and statistical moderation for the November 2020 NSC examinations. The SACAI presented error-free electronic standardisation booklets for standardisation and submitted all qualitative input reports, as required.

Lastly, the SACAI adapted and aligned their processes to the quality assurance processes of Umalusi and was compliant in submitting the requests for certification.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
EIC	Examination Irregularities Committee
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EXCO	Executive Committee of Council
FAL	First Additional Language
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
HL	Home Language
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PAT	Practical Assessment Task
QAA	Quality Assurance of Assessment
SACAI	South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SOR	State of Readiness

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CHAPTER 1 MODERATION OF QUESTION PAPERS

1.1 Introduction

The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) develops and internally moderates examination question papers. The question papers are submitted to Umalusi to conduct external moderation. The main objective of this is to ensure that the assessment body conducts a fair, valid and reliable examination. Through the moderation process, Umalusi ensures that the standards of question papers administered in a particular year are comparable with those approved in previous years.

Umalusi moderates the question papers to ensure that they meet their required quality assurance standards, as well as those of the assessment body. The approved question papers should, therefore, cover the curriculum, relevant conceptual domains and appropriate cognitive challenges.

It is against this background that this chapter reports on the extent to which question papers and their marking guidelines developed for the November 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination met the set criteria.

1.2 Scope and Approach

The SACAI submitted 35 question papers and accompanying marking guidelines to Umalusi for external moderation in preparation for the November 2020 NSC examination. The SACAI had, additionally, 12 question papers that had been moderated, approved and reported on in previous quality assurance of assessment (QAA) reports. These had not been used in any previous examination and were sourced from the examination bank for use in the November 2020 NSC examinations. This report concentrates on the moderation of the 35 question papers and their marking guidelines that were presented for external moderation during the 2020 moderation cycle. All these question papers were approved at various levels of moderation. Annexure 1A lists all the question papers moderated for the November 2020 NSC examinations.

For a question paper and a marking guideline to be approved, they must be evaluated against a set of three overarching aspects: moderation of the question paper, moderation of the marking guideline and overall impression and general remarks. All the question papers and their marking guidelines were moderated using criteria as indicated in Table 1A. Each of the overarching aspects is comprised of a number of criteria, themselves consisting of different quality indicators, as shown in Table 1A. To be approved, a question paper and its marking guideline must comply fully with these quality indicators.

Table 1A: Criteria used for moderation of question papers and marking guidelines

Part A Moderation of question paper		Part B Moderation of marking guideline		Part C Overall impression and general remarks	
1	Technical details (12)[a]	8	Conformity with question paper (3)[a]	10	General impression (9)[a] and General remarks
2	Internal moderation (3)[a]	9	Accuracy and reliability of marking guideline (10)[a]		
3	Content coverage (6)[a]				
4	Cognitive skills (6)[a]				
5	Text selection, types and quality of questions (21)[a]				
6	Language and bias (8)[a]				
7	Predictability (3)[a]				

[a] Number of quality indicators

All question papers and their marking guidelines are expected to have undergone an internal moderation process that ensures their reliability and validity before they are presented for external moderation. The internal moderation process uses the same criteria as shown in Table 1A to gauge the extent to which the question papers and marking guidelines comply with the criteria for approval. This process determines whether they comply in all respects, in most respects, have limited compliance or do not comply at all with each of the quality indicators. The same goes for external moderation: to ensure that the two processes measure the same thing. They are, therefore, expected to yield the same results.

When a question paper and its marking guideline do not comply fully with the set criteria, they must undergo subsequent moderation, internally and/or externally. This next section details the issues that hindered approval at first external moderation level.

1.3   Summary of Findings

The findings, summarised below, chiefly detail factors that hindered the approval of question papers and marking guidelines at first moderation. However, the section begins with the status of question papers and compliance rates, per criterion, at first moderation.

1.3.1   Status of Question Papers Moderated

Given directives issued to the SACAI in previous years, to improve the number of question papers approved at first moderation, the expectation was to see an improvement. The section below highlights the status at first moderation of the 2020 examination question papers and marking guidelines.
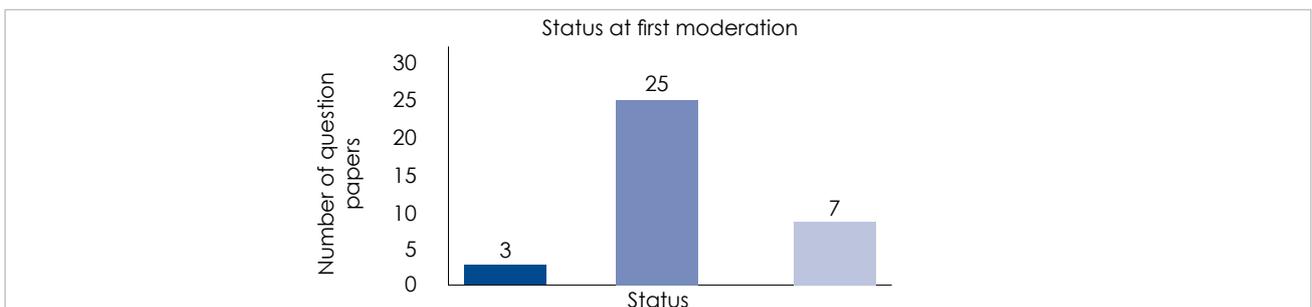
Figure 1A: Status of question papers and marking guidelines at first moderation

Figure 1A graphically indicates the status of the 35 question papers and their marking guidelines at first moderation. It is evident that three were approved, while 25 were conditionally approved and seven were rejected.

A comparative analysis of the status of question papers and their marking guidelines approved at first moderation for the November 2019 and November 2020 examinations draws a clear picture of whether there was positive development or not, given that the directives to the SACAI were aimed at improving performance levels in 2020.
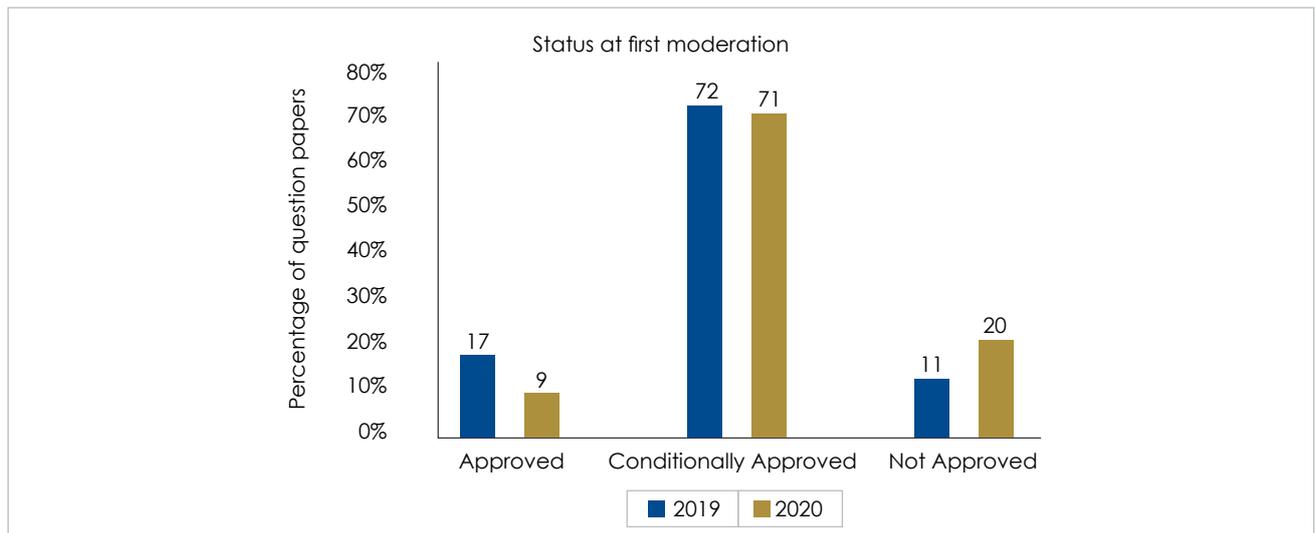
Figure 1B: Comparison of the status of question papers at first moderation for the November 2019 and November 2020 examinations

It is evident in the graphic representation in Figure 1B that 9% of the question papers were approved at first moderation in November 2020, amounting to an 8% decline when compared to November 2019. The approval rate had a domino effect on question papers that were rejected, as these increased by 9%. The low performance is attributed to several factors, as outlined in Section 1.3.3 of this report.

1.3.2 Compliance Rate per Criterion

As set out in the preceding paragraph, this section presents findings related to how question papers and their marking guidelines faired, pertaining to the four levels of compliance (no compliance, limited compliance, compliance in most respects and compliance in all respects) in relation to each of the ten criteria provided in Table 1B.

When a question paper and its marking guideline comply with all quality indicators in a particular criterion, it is rated as 100% compliant. A compliance rate of 60%–99% with quality indicators in a particular criterion is rated as being compliant in most respects, while a compliance rate of 30%–59% with quality indicators in a criterion is regarded as limited compliance. Non-compliance is detected when less than 30% of the quality indicators in a criterion are met.

Table 1B: Percentage compliance of question papers and marking guidelines at first moderation

Criteria	Level of compliance per criterion (%)			
	All respects	Most respects	Limited respects	No compliance
Technical details	17	83	0	0
Internal moderation	54	40	3	3
Content coverage	54	43	3	0
Cognitive skills	49	37	14	0
Text selection, types and quality of questions	17	77	6	0
Language and bias	34	60	6	0
Predictability	86	11	0	3
Conformity with question paper	51	43	6	0
Accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines	17	80	3	0
Overall impression	34	54	12	0

Therefore, Table 1B shows a compliance rate in all respects that is less than 60% for all the question papers with all the criteria, except for the criterion on predictability, which had a compliance rate of 86%. The compliance rate of the question papers in relation to internal moderation, content coverage and conformity of marking guidelines criteria was just above 50%. The criteria on cognitive skills and language and bias sat at 49% and 34%, respectively while the rest of the criteria were below 20%. Consequently, the low level of compliance with these criteria affected the overall impression adversely, as only 34% of the question papers and their marking guidelines complied in all respects.

An in-depth analysis of non-compliance of all the question papers and their marking guidelines for each of the criteria is illustrated below, while another section towards the end of the report dwells on a comparative analysis of compliance rates over three years.

1.3.3 Question Paper and Marking Guideline Moderation Criteria

As set out in the preceding paragraph, this section presents findings related to how question papers and their marking guidelines faired, pertaining to the four levels of compliance (no compliance, limited compliance, compliance in most respects and compliance in all respects) in relation to each of the ten criteria provided in Table 1B.

The section below reports, in detail, the findings per criterion drawn from the first moderation of question papers and their marking guidelines. The level of compliance per criterion of each question paper is summarised in Annexure 1A.

a) Technical details

Every process has guiding principles, just as every text is known for features that distinguish it from others. Similarly, all 12 quality indicators that comprise this criterion, outlined in the moderation instrument, are specifically meant to identify a question paper and its marking guideline. However, 29 question papers of the 35 did not comply fully with this criterion, having failed to satisfy the following quality indicators:

  i.   Relevant details such as time allocation, name of the subject, number of pages and instructions to candidates were excluded in two question papers. The lack of these items could have misled the candidates and jeopardised the integrity of the examination.

  ii. It is paramount that instructions are always clear so that candidates can respond appropriately.

Unclear instructions lead to nullification of questions as they can be rendered unfair to candidates. This affects the standard of an examination negatively. Ambiguous instructions to candidates were found in seven question papers.

iii. The layout of seven question papers was cluttered and not reader friendly. This could have caused confusion and delayed candidates' responses while they tried to bring pieces of information together.

iv. Some questions in two question papers were incorrectly numbered. This potentially caused confusion for candidates.

v. Page numbering in one question paper was incorrect. The numbering of pages helps with sequencing of questions and ties in with the general instructions of a question paper. Therefore, in their absence, a lot could go wrong.

vi. Headers and footers on each page of two question papers were not consistent and did not adhere to the required format. Had this not been detected, candidates could have been misled as to whether they were writing the correct question paper.

vii. Different fonts were used throughout five of the question papers. It needs to be understood that different font types and sizes are intended to tell something to the audience. Therefore the use of inappropriate fonts instead of the prescribed fonts could have misled candidates.

viii. Mark allocations do not only indicate how much each question is worth but also guide candidates in terms of the length of their responses. Non-indication of marks on some of the questions, as detected in three question papers, could have denied candidates this benefit.

ix. Two question papers were deemed too long and could not have been completed in the time allocated.

x. The quality of drawings, illustrations, graphs, tables, etc. in 18 question papers were inappropriate, either because they were not clear or contained errors and were, therefore, not print-ready. It is crucial to have high-quality illustrations, since questions are based on these. When this is not the case, the performance of candidates is impacted negatively. It, further, does not reflect well on the standards of the assessment body.

xi. Non-adherence to prescribed format requirements of the curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) and examination guidelines is a gross deviation. To safeguard the integrity of an examination, the prescribed formats must be adhered to. Unfortunately, this was not the case in three question papers.

b)   Internal moderation

Internal moderation plays a crucial role in eliminating mistakes that could be prevented when question papers and their marking guidelines are submitted for external moderation. However, this was not the case for 46% of question papers, which did not comply fully with this criterion. The reasons for non-compliance with this criterion are highlighted below:

i. Two question papers were presented for external moderation without a full history of the development of those question papers. This means a crucial step in the internal moderation process was not satisfied. This is required to establish whether proper guidance was provided during the development of the question paper. In its absence, the external moderation process may not be able to comment on the effectiveness of inputs made by an internal moderator, or whether such inputs were ultimately addressed by an examination panel. This has a domino effect on the other quality indicators of the criterion, because it results in an external moderator having to speculate on the quality of the question paper presented.

ii. Non-compliance with the quality, standard and relevance of inputs from the internal moderator was noted in 13 question papers. In some, there was no evidence that the internal moderators' recommendations had been addressed. This ought to have been evident to guard against a situation where the internal moderator is sidelined or undermined.

iii. In one question paper, there was no evidence at all that the internal moderator's recommendations had been addressed.

c)   Content coverage

Of the 35 question papers and their marking guidelines presented for external moderation, 19 complied fully with content coverage. Knowledge of what content constitutes a question paper is a good indicator of understanding of the policy prescripts of a subject. It was, therefore, worrying to establish that 16 question papers were not fully compliant with this criterion, based on the following:

i. Analysis grids that accompanied four question papers did not map each of the questions with a topic as expected.

ii. Four question papers did not cover the topics as prescribed in the policy and examination guideline documents. As alluded to earlier, this could have dire consequences. Therefore the examining panels must ensure that they follow the prescripts of the subject policy religiously. Some of these issues were detected in four question papers that were found not to complied with the broad scope of the relevant examination guideline and CAPS documents.

iii. Three question papers had questions that were not representative of the latest developments in those subjects. Since subjects evolve, assessments must follow suit, to gauge candidates' aptitude for current discourse on issues.

iv. Content that included examples, text and illustrations in seven question papers were deemed either inappropriate or academically incorrect.

d)   Cognitive skills

When developing a question paper, careful consideration must be taken to ensure that all candidates, including those who perform at low and high ends, are catered for. In doing so, a question paper needs to make a distinction between the two extremes of candidate performance, while also encompassing average performance. This is guided by policy prescripts for the cognitive skills required for every question paper. Internal moderators of 17 question papers ensured that this prescript was fully adhered to before submitting their question papers for external moderation. However, 18 question papers were submitted without ensuring full compliance with this criterion. The following are some of the factors that hindered full compliance:

i. Four question papers had analysis grids that did not clearly map each cognitive skill required for each question/sub-question. Depending on the extent of these deviations, speculation was rife as to whether it was an honest mistake by the internal moderator, even though there is no room for errors in this process. It could also mean that the internal moderators did not know where to place some of the questions. However, a concerted effort must be made to upskill in the subject entrusted to the individual.

ii. Eleven question papers had varying degrees of inappropriate distribution of cognitive skills. One question paper was deemed to be too challenging. Eight were deemed to be slightly difficult, while two others were slightly easy.

iii. Three question papers had choice questions that were not equal in their cognitive challenges. This represents an unfair assessment practice since choosing an easy question may advantage one group of candidates, while those who choose the challenging question would be at a relative disadvantage.

v. Taking cognisance of cognitive skills when developing a question paper provides an opportunity for a question paper to assess candidates' varying cognitive abilities, such as to reason, translate information from one form to another or to respond appropriately to communicate the message most effectively. However, three question papers lacked this ability and focused on certain types of questions and neglected the other forms of assessment. This had a knock-on effect on the coverage of cognitive skills.

vi. Trivial information was included in three question papers.

vii. As noted earlier, mark allocation also guides candidates in the extent to which they must respond to a question. If there is disparity in the correlation between mark allocation, cognitive skills and time allocation, candidates may be misled in numerous ways. This disparity was found in ten question papers.

e) Text selection, types and quality of questions

The criterion on text selection, types and quality of questions forms the crux of every question paper. Non-compliance is, inevitably, tantamount to nullification of a question paper. A variety of text selections and types, as well as the quality of the questions, afford candidates with multiple intelligences an opportunity to respond to those questions that they find accessible. Only four question papers complied with this criterion, while 31 question papers were not compliant. The following were noted as reasons for non-compliance:

i. In two question papers limitations of diverse types of questions, e.g., multiple-choice, paragraph, data/source-based response, essay, real-life scenario and real-life problem-solving questions were evident. Since candidates learn differently by making deductions from given scenarios, data, tabulations or paragraphs, a lack of variety impinges on candidates' multiple intelligences, advantaging some and disadvantaging others.

ii. Source material selected in three of the question papers was not of appropriate length. For instance, a lengthy source can impact negatively on the candidates' ability to read for comprehension within the stipulated time frames and could result in candidates running out of time and losing marks. Conversely, a noticeably short source material could yield skewed results, in that candidates would be considered to have mastered the assessed aspect or question paper when, in fact, they were advantaged by the source material.

iii. Source materials used in a question paper need to be specifically selected to perform a particular function. Failure to select accordingly results in sources being deemed irrelevant or inappropriate as they are not fit for purpose. Six question papers failed in this regard. Had it not been for external moderation processes, this could have indicated that the examining panels posed irrelevant questions to make up for the prescribed scope of questions.

iv. In two question papers, the selected source materials would not have allowed for testing of skills. As a result, it was suggested that those source materials be replaced.

v. The content of selected source materials in three question papers did not allow for the generation of questions across cognitive skills, either because they contained too little information, or the information was trivial to the intention of the question paper.

vi. Equally important in incorporating references in questions to source materials, whether they come in the form of prose texts, visuals, drawings, illustrations, examples, tables or graphs, is to ensure that the references are relevant and correct. In six question papers, this was not the case.

vii. Of utmost importance is the quality of the questions derived from the source materials. In two question papers, some questions did not relate to what was pertinent in those subjects. Therefore, examining panels must design questions that have a clear, decisive relevance to the subject at hand.

viii. In 19 question papers questions were not concise: they were not free of vaguely defined problems and/or contained ambiguous wording, trivial, extraneous or irrelevant information and unintentional clues to the correct answers.

ix. Key words/verbs are pivotal in any question as they act as a compass to candidates to determine what is expected of them and how they should approach their response to the question posed. Some questions in 13 question papers did not provide clear, instructional key words/verbs.

x. The crux of any question is pivotal in the information used to elicit appropriate responses and all questions are expected to satisfy this requirement. But ten question papers had questions with insufficient information. This was potentially detrimental to the candidates in their selection of responses.

xi. Careful attention must be given to finding factual errors or misleading information in questions. In some instances, a question suggests an answer, as was evident in five question papers. This would be giving away marks. Questions would be discredited if the answers can be sourced in the question paper. Fourteen question papers failed in this regard.

xii. There were double negatives in some questions in one question paper.

xiii. Six question papers contained questions that suggested answers to other questions.

xiv. There were overlaps of questions in seven question papers.

xiii. It was found that some of the options in the multiple-choice questions of five question papers did not satisfy standard prescripts in formulating multiple-choice options. Careful attention is required when developing options for multiple-choice questions to avoid misleading candidate performance.

f) Language and bias

Language plays a pivotal role in the formulation of question papers; however, the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) for most learners is not their home language. Therefore examining panels must take precautions to guard against disadvantaging such candidates. While 12 question papers complied fully with this criterion, 23 question papers were non-compliant, at distinct levels, for the following reasons:

i. The subject terminology or data in five question papers was used incorrectly. Examining panels should refer to the terminology used in the subject policies and the prescribed textbooks and must refrain from using regional dialects or terminology taken from elsewhere, as this could hamper candidates' performance.

ii. The language register and the level and/or complexity of the vocabulary in question papers must be appropriate for Grade 12 candidates. As stated above, policy documents and prescribed textbooks can guide in this matter. Five question papers failed to comply with this quality indicator.

iii. While an arrangement of words and phrases is crucial to formulate questions, these must be as direct as can be. It is as important to formulate simple sentences and avoid over-complicated syntax. Six question papers failed in this regard. Consequently, candidates could have been lost in overly complicated syntax and would have forfeited marks, when they knew the responses to those questions.

iv. Equally, subtleties in grammar were detected in seven question papers. Subtleties in grammar must be avoided at all costs, to avoid ambiguity.

v. Grammatically incorrect questions impinge on the standard of a question. For instance, an addition or omission of one letter in a word can give such a word an entirely different meaning and cause unnecessary confusion. Incorrect grammar was highlighted in 15 question papers and was brought to the attention of the examining panels for correction.

vi. There was evidence of the use of foreign names, terms and jargon in three question papers. While this is discouraged, if the examining panels feel compelled to make use of such, this usage must be accompanied by a glossary to explain the terms.

viii. In two question papers, questions were found to have been designed in such a manner that they would not have allowed for adaptations and modifications for assessing candidates with special needs. This is necessary in the interest of inclusivity.

g)   Predictability

One of the guiding principles in developing a question paper is to avoid taking questions verbatim from question papers of the previous three years. This is done to avoid predictability of questions. Adherence to this criterion indicates a level of innovation. It is commendable that 30 question papers eliminated the challenge pertaining to predictability. This number translates into the highest percentage of compliance, compared to compliance rates with the other criteria. Only five question papers did not satisfy full compliance with this criterion, because:

i.   Three question papers contained questions that could have been easily spotted or predicted, given the fact that previous years' question papers are in the public domain. Creativity and innovation must be tapped into to create new questions based on distinct aspects of the subject.

ii.   One question paper contained questions that were repeated verbatim from question papers in the past three years. This sets a bad precedent because candidates use previous years' question papers for revision. Should this anomaly be detected by learners and their teachers, teachers will teach to these aspects in the future.

iii. Even though innovation is advocated in the development of question papers, the examining panels of three question papers could not ensure that such innovation was appropriate.

As much as question papers are pivotal in the administration of the examination process, marking guidelines are equally important in ensuring that the assessment is fair, reliable and valid for all candidates. To ensure this, marking guidelines are measured against two criteria. Some elements were not satisfied, as spelled out below.

h)   Conformity with question papers

It is of utmost importance for any question posed to have a corresponding response. Equally, when questions are altered during the internal moderation process, the correct responses must accompany the revised questions. To avoid mistakes, it is crucial that the two processes run concurrently. Fifty-one percent of the marking guidelines satisfied this criterion fully; however, the rest of the marking guidelines did not conform to the questions as they appeared on the question papers. This was a result of the following factors:

i.   Twelve marking guidelines contained responses that did not correspond with the questions in the question papers. This could have negatively affected the validity of the assessment.

ii.   Responses in ten marking guidelines did not match the command words in the questions. As it was alluded to earlier, command or key verbs have a crucial role in determining an expected response. If the marking guideline does not adhere to this, it could set a flawed precedent for future generations, since past question papers are used as a benchmark to gauge what is examined, as well as the expected responses.

iii. Marking guidelines respond to the question papers and must, therefore, align with the question papers and the allotted marks for each (sub-) question. Failure to do so can be detrimental to the examination. Two question papers did not comply with this quality indicator.

I)   Accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines

When question papers and marking guidelines are submitted for first moderation, careful attention must be paid to ensuring that each of the answers in the marking guideline responds accurately to the questions posed. Failure to ensure this impinges heavily on the validity and reliability of the entire assessment. The compliance rate with the accuracy of the marking guidelines stood at 17%. The other marking guidelines did not comply with this criterion because:

i. Some responses to questions in ten marking guidelines were incorrect in terms of the subject matter. This is detrimental as not only does it reflect on the competency levels of the examining panels; it impedes the process. Some question papers had to be returned to the examining panels twice or more for changes to be effected.

ii. Typographical errors were picked up in 15 marking guidelines. This spells disaster, as these checks are the least that both the examining panels and the internal moderators could do to quality-assure a marking guideline.

iii. In addition, eight marking guidelines were not clearly laid out. This could have negatively affected the marking process and lengthened marking guideline discussions that followed, before marking could commence.

iv. Four marking guidelines were incomplete. Some showed no mark allocations or did not communicate guidance to markers of how marks should be distributed in each of the questions.

v. Some responses in two marking guidelines offered such a small range of marks that the ability to discriminate between low-end and high-end performers would have been compromised.

vi. There was negative marking in one marking guideline.

vii. Ten marking guidelines did not provide sufficient detail to ensure reliability of marking. While in certain instances markers must apply their professional judgement when marking, not all instances of a marking guideline should leave it to a marker to make such judgements. Such judgements could create an assortment of problems, including introducing prejudice and bias and leaving the internal moderators and chief markers in an indefensible position.

viii. No room was made for relevant/correct alternative responses in ten marking guidelines, as some questions may have had various responses depending on how they were posed. This must be given careful attention.

j) Overall impression and general remarks

After moderating all 35 question papers and their accompanying marking guidelines, only 12 question papers were compliant in all respects with the overall impression at first moderation. Therefore, the rest of the question papers and marking guidelines were not approved, owing to the following:

i. Five question papers were found to be not in line with the current policy or examination guideline documents.

ii. Twenty-one question papers were deemed unfair, invalid and unreliable as they did not assess the objectives of the CAPS and examination guidelines, or were not framed according to the assessment frameworks. Consequently, their standard was questionable.

iii. Nine question papers were not comparable to those of the previous years in relation to their standard.

iv. At the same time, 21 marking guidelines could not satisfy the quality indicator for fairness, validity and reliability. Consequently, the standard of 14 of these marking guidelines was questionable, while the standard of seven of these could not compare favourably with those of previous years.

1.3.4 Comparison of compliance per criterion and levels of moderation: November 2018 to November 2020

Table 1C compares the compliance rates, per criterion, over three years (November 2018, November 2019 and November 2020) at first moderation level.

Table 1C: Comparison of compliance, per criterion, of question papers and marking guidelines at first moderation in November 2018, November 2019 and November 2020

Criteria	November 2018 (% of question papers)	November 2019 (% of question papers)	November 2020 (% of question papers)
Technical details	26	45	17
Internal moderation	68	72	54
Content coverage	66	74	54
Cognitive skills	51	51	49
Text selection, types and quality of questions	34	32	17
Language and bias	39	53	34
Predictability	83	89	86
Conformity with question paper	61	72	51
Accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines	24	28	17
Overall impression	34	19	34

When comparing the findings of question paper compliance with the criteria in all respects in November 2020 with those of the two prior examinations, November 2020 is at the lower end. This is worrying and efforts need to be made to establish what could have caused this decline. It is of concern when 83% of the question papers do not comply fully with the criteria on text selection, types and quality of questions; and accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines. These two criteria are the backbone of question paper development. In the November 2019 QAA report, these two criteria, together with the cognitive skills criterion, were singled out for the SACAI to focus on when training the examining panels. The low compliance with these criteria clearly demonstrates that training did not remedy this challenge. Therefore, a concerted effort needs to be made by the SACAI to mitigate this situation so that it does not get worse.

It is also of great concern that only 17% of the question papers complied fully with the technical details' criterion. It is the sole responsibility of the internal moderator to ensure that all the technical details are complied with before declaring a question paper ready for external moderation. These undesirable findings had a negative impact on the overall impression of the question papers and their marking guidelines.

1.4   Areas of Improvement

As much as the bulk of this report has reflected on and captured the essence of the compliance levels identified during the moderation of the November 2020 NSC question papers, it also strives to highlight areas of improvement to commend the assessment body for work well done.

a. The criterion on overall impression is the only one that showed an improvement, by a small margin, between November 2019 and November 2020, as can be seen in Table 1C, by attaining the same performance as in November 2018.
b. Although with a slight decline in November 2020, more than 80% of the question papers have complied fully with the criterion on predictability for the past three years.

1.5 Areas of Non-Compliance

The following are areas of non-compliance that the SACAI should make a concerted effort to improve on:

a. The percentage of question papers complying in all respects declined in nine criteria, i.e., all criteria excluding overall impression.

b. Less than 50% of the question papers moderated complied in all respects with each of the following criteria: technical details; cognitive skills; text selection, types and quality of questions; language and bias; accuracy and reliability of marking guidelines; and overall impression.

1.6 Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must ensure that during the training of their examining panels, the moderation tool and question papers that were not approved at first moderation form part of the training to exemplify how various aspects of the question papers did not comply fully.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the major findings based on an analysis drawn from the question paper and marking guideline moderation reports for the November 2020 examinations. It highlighted not only areas of improvement (and good practice) but also areas of non-compliance, which consisted of a large part of the report. This affords the SACAI some insight into areas of improvement and equally, areas that need intensified support so that these can be improved. Based on the identified areas of non-compliance, this chapter provides a directive to be implemented to curb a resurgence of a lower number of question papers complying with the criteria. Adherence to the directive will undoubtedly yield guaranteed improvements in years to come.

CHAPTER 2 MODERATION OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT AND PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT TASKS

2.1 Introduction

Umalusi conducts the moderation of school-based assessment (SBA) and practical assessment tasks (PAT) to ensure that assessment tasks meet the required quality and standard, as well as to verify the moderation of the learner tasks conducted by the assessment bodies. In line with the above mandated responsibility, Umalusi verified the validity of the SBA and PAT components of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations administered by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

2.2 Scope and Approach

Umalusi sampled ten subjects for SBA moderation and two subjects for PAT moderation in 28 centres/schools, as indicated in Annexures 2A and 2B, between 2 and 5 November 2020. Owing to COVID-19 circumstances, an online platform was used.

The subjects were moderated using the SBA moderation instrument, which consists of two parts, as highlighted in Table 2A. The first part focused on the moderation of teachers' files (seven criteria) and the second part on the moderation of the learners' files (three criteria).

Table 2A: Criteria used for the moderation of SBA

Part 1 Moderation of teacher files	Part 2 Moderation of learner files
Technical aspects	Learner performance
Content coverage	Quality of marking
Quality of tasks	Internal moderation
Cognitive demand	
Marking tools	
Adherence to policy	
Internal moderation	

2.3 Summary of Findings

The findings of the external moderation of the SBA and PAT are summarised below.

2.3.1 Moderation of Teacher Files

a) Technical aspects

Umalusi conducted the moderation of SBA and PAT online for the first time. The different centres/schools had to ensure that documents such as the teacher files with relevant assessment tasks, mark sheets and learner files were made available electronically. Five of the initially sampled centres/schools had difficulty scanning the assessment tasks, organising the documents into folders and submitting them

online. As a result, the centres were removed from the sample. Of the remaining 28, three centres were not able to submit all the documents required, such as the SBA tasks with their marking guidelines and rubrics. Twenty-one of the 28 moderated centres/schools succeeded in uploading complete teacher files, learner files and mark sheets in all the selected subjects.

A programme of assessment for the current academic year was not included in the teacher files of nine of the 28 sampled centres/schools. There was evidence of pre- and post-moderation in ten of the 12 sampled subjects, including PAT. The pre- and post-moderation reports were available as evidence of the moderation conducted. However, some centres/schools did not include completed sets of pre-moderation forms. Some centres/schools made the pre- and post-moderation forms available, but moderators' signatures were missing. In two of the centres moderated, the forms were dated 2019. It was noted that in one centre where PAT implementation moderation was conducted, strict COVID-19 safety protocols were observed. The sampled files indicated a large degree of good structural organisation.

b) Content coverage

In seven of the selected ten subjects, the SACAI supplied common preliminary examination question papers to ensure adequate content coverage. The sampled centres/schools did not submit their full portfolios because of the realigned 2020 academic programme, a consequence of the COVID-19 lockdown and on the instructions of the SACAI. Despite the challenges in submitting the full complement of teachers' and learners' files, centres/schools made a concerted effort to adhere to the content coverage, as outlined in the SACAI subject assessment guidelines across the subjects. The content coverage in preliminary examinations was used to arrive at this conclusion.

c) Quality of tasks

One centre in the sample presented assessment tasks of good quality in Afrikaans Home Language. This centre can be regarded as the most improved, from 2018 to date. In Business Studies, there was evidence of high-quality tasks in all centres/schools sampled for moderation. Assessment tasks in Life Sciences displayed adequate weighting, good content coverage for the grade and alignment with the subject assessment guidelines. The moderated tasks were representative of subject-specific teaching strategies, project-based learning and discovery learning in teaching, learning and assessment of the subject, all of which contributed to the quality of tasks. Assessment tasks for Life Orientation showed sound compliance with quality imperatives in the subject assessment guideline.

Mathematics assessment tasks had insufficient problem-solving questions at five of the seven sampled centres/schools. Assessment tasks in Physical Sciences were of good quality, except for Question 3.3.1 and Question 8.2 of Paper 1 of the preliminary examinations, which covered topics that were not compliant with the Physical Sciences subject assessment guideline.

Computer Applications Technology reported tasks of a high standard in all moderated centres/schools.

d) Cognitive demand

There was evidence of a sound distribution of cognitive levels in all sampled centres/schools that offered Afrikaans Home Language. In Business Studies, it was evident that no sampled centres/schools had developed a cognitive analysis for non-test SBA tasks; consequently, cognitive levels were not appropriately distributed. Only one out of the nine moderated centres/schools had a good quality Business Studies project that met the required standard. However, the choice questions of the

preliminary examinations of both Paper 1 and Paper 2 did not adhere to the SACAI subject assessment guideline for cognitive weightings of 30%, 50% and 20%.

In English Home Language, the Common Assessment Task 1 (Listening Comprehension Test), Task 5 (Controlled Test), Task 6 (Literature Test) and Task 10 (preliminary examinations – Papers 1 and 2), the cognitive demand and scaffolding of questions, from lower- to higher-order, were not adhered to. These assessments lacked higher-order cognitive questioning: the bulk of the marks ranged from lower to middle order. Action verbs were appropriate and correlated with the mark allocation. Mathematics was based mostly on routine and complex procedures and lacked knowledge questions.

The weighting of the cognitive levels in Task 6 of Physical Sciences was good; however, there were few higher-level skills questions in Task 1. Innovative questions in Task 6 were noted.

For Computer Applications Technology, all the selected centres/schools improved in the distribution of cognitive demand from 2019, as they included the cognitive levels' analysis grids for all tasks.

e)   Marking tools

As in 2019, in almost all centres/schools that offered Afrikaans Home Language provisions for alternative answers/interpretations/approaches in the marking guidelines were neglected. In Business Studies, there were several marking guideline oversights: inconsistency in the allocation of ticks for answers in the marking guidelines for all tasks (marks were not allocated according to the guide provided by note 11 of the notes to markers in the NSC and preliminary examinations' marking guidelines); the marking guideline of Paper 1 of the preliminary examinations had an excess of six marks in Question 6 that were not part of the questions asked in the essay.

The rubrics used by all centres/schools for oral assessments, literary essays (Paper 2) and transactional writing (Paper 3) in English Home Language were from the current SACAI examination guidelines. In the contextual-type questions, the marking guidelines were aligned with the questions and mark allocation and facilitated marking. However, in Paper 2 the responses to the essay questions did not include all relevant guidance.

The marking tools of eight of the nine centres/schools sampled for moderation in Life Sciences were fully compliant with the SACAI subject assessment guideline. The marking guidelines were accurate, relevant and appropriate, were clearly laid out and neatly typed. However, the marking guideline for Task 2 (Practical) of one centre was not evident in the teacher's file; and for Task 8 (Project), the marking guideline of a test was submitted instead of the required marking guideline.

In Mathematical Literacy, one centre did not provide alternative responses in the marking guideline for the Term 3 Test. Mark allocation for the Term 3 Test was not clear, as there was no indication in the marking guideline of where marks were to be awarded. In two of the moderated centres/schools sampled for Mathematical Literacy, the awarding of ticks for correct facts was not indicated on the marking tool of Task 2 (Practical). In Life Orientation, the marking guidelines facilitated fair and reliable marking in the centres/schools moderated, except for one school, which used an incorrect rubric for marking. In Mathematics, there was evidence of marking guidelines and rubrics in all teacher files and the description of mark allocation was clear on the marking guidelines of the preliminary examinations' question papers. In Physical Sciences, the marking guideline for Paper 1 did not comply with the SACAI standard rule of awarding one mark for the correct formula used in a calculation-type question. The marking guideline also did not indicate how the marks were to be allocated for every question.

In Computer Applications Technology, all marking guidelines facilitated fair and valid marking and alternative answers were included. This was important in the Practical paper, where problem-solving questions could be answered using different formulae.

f)   Adherence to policy

Seven of the eight centres/schools moderated for Afrikaans Home Language adhered fully to policy requirements. In Business Studies there was, in most respects, compliance with policy stipulations, except for adherence to and implementation of the programme of assessment, as it was not included in the submitted documents. In English Home Language, the sampled centres/schools used typed, consolidated mark sheet templates provided by the SACAI. However, it was concerning that there were centres/schools that teachers had made manual changes to the mark sheets, with marks struck off or removed with correction fluid and adjusted in ink. Mark sheets submitted for moderation should be free from errors. Errors picked up during internal moderation should be corrected prior to submission to the next level of moderation. In Life Sciences, the moderated centres/schools adhered to assessment policies and systematic assessment practices. The teachers complied with and implemented the subject programme of assessment. The same was true for Life Orientation and Mathematics. The moderator noted incorrect calculation of the final SBA mark in one centre/school, which had included the Term 2 tasks that had been removed from the 2020 SBA. There were errors in the calculations of final SBA marks in three centres sampled for SBA moderation.

In Computer Applications Technology, the centres/schools that were moderated adhered, in most respects, to the assessment policies and systemic assessment practices, as required by the SACAI subject assessment guideline. As in 2019, there were still centres/schools that did not have all the required documents (data files) electronically available. As such, it was not possible to conduct a thorough moderation for those centres/schools. In contrast, the files of one moderated centre/school contained all the electronic documents. One centre moderated for Consumer Studies complied with all the quality indicators of this criterion.

g)   Internal moderation

There was a marked improvement in the internal moderation practices for nine of the 12 moderated subjects. However, for three subjects, improvement is still needed. Feedback from internal moderation at centre/school and national levels reflected thorough and meaningful interaction between the internal moderator and the teacher/examiner of different subjects. Umalusi noted an improvement at three centres/schools in all the moderated subjects regarding the provision of constructive pre- and post-moderation feedback to teachers.

In English Home Language, the internal school moderation in all verified centres/schools was not consistently completed and not signed off by the internal moderator. In the centres/schools moderated, internal moderation of Mathematics mirrored the marking of the marker. There was evidence of constructive feedback given to subject teachers in all the centres/schools sampled in Mathematical Literacy. The internal moderators provided inputs that were of good quality, were relevant, appropriate and developmental.

2.3.2   Moderation of Learner Files

a)   Learner performance

Performance of learners in the moderated subjects was average to well done across sampled centres/schools, with variance across the sampled subjects. Most learners struggled with higher-order questions and/or questions that required critical thinking in the selected subjects. One centre/school

presented a sub-standard Practical Examination Task 6.1 of Computer Applications Technology: it did not meet the requirement of a Practical work, as stipulated on the subject assessment guideline. At two centres/schools, many of the learners either obtained a zero on the mark sheets or no marks were allocated (blank) for a task, with no reasons given. There were no records in the teacher files to indicate if the candidates with no marks against their names had been offered a second chance (extended opportunity) to do the task, in line with the prescripts of regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12. In English Home Language, learners performed poorly in literature tasks, especially Task 10 of Paper 2. The learners did not understand the texts and poems and therefore had difficulty answering contextual questions based on the prescribed texts. Learners found answering Literary Essay questions challenging: they merely provided a brief narration of the plot of the text they had studied, without answering the question.

In Mathematics, there was no correlation between performance in Projects and Investigations, and the preliminary examinations. Candidates performed exceptionally well in Projects and Investigations and extremely poorly in the preliminary examinations. Most candidates across all centres/schools obtained a mark of less than 40%. Some candidates displayed poor content knowledge, which also illustrated a lack of clear understanding of foundational concepts. In Mathematical Literacy, learners interpreted the questions in Paper 1 of the preliminary examinations correctly, as compared to Paper 2, where learners were unable to interpret questions correctly. In some cases, the learners demonstrated poor ability in responding to questions that required calculations and interpretation. At most centres/schools, learners experienced challenges in answering Paper 2. In Physical Sciences, the learners' performed below 50% in both Paper 1 and Paper 2.

b)   Quality of marking

The quality of marking of the assessment tasks in most of the sampled schools was acceptable and consistent with the prescribed marking guidelines, except for the following: in four centres/schools, non-adherence to the Business Studies' marking guideline was observed; in English Home Language, teachers were not vigilant when marking the Literary Essay and fluctuations were observed in the marking of the Literature (Paper 2). Further, in all the moderated centres/schools, leniency was observed in the marking of Paper 3, as language and grammatical errors were not identified or highlighted during marking. Additionally, teachers and the SACAI moderators could not use the rubric correctly when assessing creative writing and literary essays for marking, a problem that applied also to Afrikaans Home Language, to a large extent.

In Life Orientation, the quality of marking at two centres/schools was of concern, with lenient marking and deviations from the marking guideline noted. However, teachers in the other centres/schools demonstrated good quality, accurate marking.

In Physical Sciences the marking displayed in four centres/schools was of poor quality: incorrect answers were awarded full marks and discrepancies in mark allocation were observed between marker and moderator, of 9%–10%. The moderator also noted poor marking in Physical Sciences Task 1, with mark differences of 18% between the marker and the moderator. The conversion of marks on the mark sheet for Task 1 was incorrectly done at another centre, while the transfer of marks to the mark sheet was incorrect at yet another centre.

c)   Internal moderation

All centres/schools implemented some form of internal moderation of assessment tasks, although the quality varied from one to another.

In Business Studies, the quality of internal moderation was good and acceptable in four out of nine centres/schools, while it was poor in one centre/school. In Computer Applications Technology, not all centres/schools had pre- and post-moderation reports in the teacher files. There was evidence of national moderation by the SACAI of Task 6.1, Task 6.2, and the PAT for Computer Applications Technology in all sampled centres/schools. The internal pre-and post-moderation instruments that the assessment body provided to the centres/schools allowed for feedback from the internal moderation. However, very few internal moderators provided feedback to either the teachers or the learners.

In English Home Language, moderation conducted post the teacher assessment of the learners' work was mirrored on the marking the teachers. No notes or guidance were provided for the teachers or the learners. In Life Orientation the levels and quality of moderation varied across centres/schools. There was evidence of moderation; internal moderators made very few, if any, comments (feedback) to assist learners to improve; and no major changes were made to marks after moderation.

There was evidence of moderation of learner assignments for Mathematical Literacy and Physical Sciences in all centres/schools. However, moderation was not able to pick up errors that teachers committed during marking.

2.4   Areas of Improvement

Umalusi noted the following areas of improvement:

a. Although substantial improvement still needs to be made in internal moderation practices at many centres/schools, most showed improvement in pre- and post-moderation, especially in Afrikaans Home Language, compared to that of previous years;

b. Centres/schools offering Computer Applications Technology demonstrated great improvement, with the inclusion of cognitive level analysis grids for all assessment tasks; and

c. There was an improvement in the quality of assessment tasks in Physical Sciences, especially those set and moderated by the SACAI.

2.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

Umalusi noted the following areas of non-compliance:

a. Assessment tasks were not fully compliant with the SACAI subject assessment guidelines (Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy);

b. Poor quality of internal moderation was evidenced (English Home Language and Life Orientation); and

c. There was poor quality of marking from non-adherence to the marking guidelines, inconsistency in marking, poor use of rubrics and/or inconsistency in the allocation of marks (English Home Language Paper 3, Afrikaans Home Language, Physical Sciences, Business Studies, Life Orientation, Mathematical Literacy and Computer Applications Technology).

2.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must:

a. Capacitate subject teachers, particularly on item development, i.e., the development of assessment tasks that comply with the requirements of the SACAI subject assessment guidelines on distribution of questions across cognitive levels;

b. Ensure that internal moderation is conducted efficiently and effectively at all levels of the system; and

c. Train teachers to develop and apply rubrics and adhere to marking guidelines when marking.

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter highlighted Umalusi's findings on the teachers' files and learners' evidence of performance, as sampled and verified over a range of subjects from several centres/schools administered by the SACAI. The administration of SBA was found to be on the right track, with significant improvements evident in certain areas. However, in other areas there is a need for improvement. Some centres/schools displayed a thorough understanding of sound assessment practices, but others remain lacking in implementation competencies that are required to respond to high-level educational imperatives.

CHAPTER 3 MONITORING THE STATE OF READINESS TO CONDUCT EXAMINATIONS

3.1   Introduction

Annually, Umalusi evaluates the state of readiness (SOR) of assessment bodies to conduct, administer and manage the national examinations, using a risk management-based approach.

The administration of the self-evaluation instruments, which capture the key indicators of readiness to deliver credible examinations, remains the most critical tool Umalusi uses to audit and make a fair determination on the state of readiness of an assessment body to conduct, administer and manage the national examinations.

Umalusi undertook an SOR audit of the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) to conduct, administer and manage the November 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations to, among others:

a. Evaluate the level of preparedness to conduct the November 2020 examinations;
b. Evaluate the systems in place to deliver credible examinations; and
c. Track the progress made in addressing the directives for compliance and improvement issued in respect of the November 2019 examinations.

3.2   Scope and Approach

The risk management approach was used to timeously identify areas with a potential risk to impact negatively on the delivery of credible examinations; and to advise the SACAI accordingly.

The following process was followed:

a. Completion of self-evaluation instrument by the SACAI
    This instrument allowed the SACAI to conduct a self-evaluation and submit a report to Umalusi on its state of readiness to conduct, administer and manage the examinations. Umalusi conducted a desktop analysis of the submitted report and developed a risk profile.
b. Evidence-based audits
    The 2020 SOR process was carried out differently from that of previous years. Umalusi did not conduct on-site audits to evaluate the supporting evidence presented in the SACAI self-evaluation report. This shift was necessitated by the outbreak early in 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SACAI evidence was submitted electronically and evaluated, online, by Umalusi.

The two processes provided critical information that was instrumental in Umalusi determining the state of readiness of the SACAI to conduct the November 2020 NSC examinations.

3.3   Summary of Findings

3.3.1   Compliance Status on Readiness Levels to Conduct, Administer and Manage Examinations

a)   Management: capacity to carry out the quality assurance of examination and assessment **process by assessment body**

The outcome of the audit indicated that the SACAI had adequate financial and human resources to manage and conduct the November 2020 NSC examinations, despite the devastating impact and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on the financial and human capacity of institutions.

Based on the availability of basic resources as presented by the SACAI, it was found to be prepared for ensuring that the examination-related deliverables necessary to conduct the November examinations were available.

b)   Registration of candidates and centres
   i.   Candidates' registration
        The registration of candidates was finalised timeously. The SACAI registered 2 927 candidates to write the November 2020 NSC examinations, compared to 2 073 candidates registered in 2019.
   ii.   Examination centres
        The SACAI examination centres were audited and a detailed report was submitted for verification. For the November 2020 examination cycle, the SACAI had registered 72 examination centres, including one in Namibia. In the process of approval of examination centres, the SACAI had to replace some proposed centres that were not accredited with Umalusi, to comply with the regulations set out for the establishment of examination centres.

c)   Printing, packing and distribution

All necessary preparations for printing examination question papers were in place. The SACAI entered into a service level agreement with a private service provider for the printing, packaging and distribution of question papers. In addition, the SACAI had in place all required security measures, including signed conflict-of-interest forms and confidentiality agreements, which were signed by all personnel appointed to handle question papers as well as by all other external service providers contracted to perform examination-related tasks. Additional measures were extended to include the security of the answer books.

The level of preparation for the security of question papers and other examination material was a critical area to which the SACAI paid special attention and strengthened. Umalusi noted the following from the evidence provided:

   i.   The printing and packaging room was fitted with a surveillance camera to monitor movement into and out of the area;
   ii.   The strong room was secure and used a double-locking mechanism. This was a requirement in their norms and standard document to secure question papers;
   iii.   Tamper-proof bags were to be used for packaging question papers. Security measures for question paper distribution to examination centres, and the return of scripts to the SACAI storage room, were in place. These measures included a tracking system for all deliveries made per distribution consignment, as per a distribution plan for examination question papers.

d)   Management of school-based assessment (SBA)/practical assessment task (PAT)

The SACAI had developed systems to conduct and quality-assure the SBA component. Strategies and protocols for moderation of the SBA were well developed, documented and in order.

Considering COVID-19 and the various lockdowns that restricted any form of gatherings regardless of importance, the SACAI opted to conduct SBA-related processes online. The SACAI provided Umalusi with their moderation plans. It was noted that the SACAI was well prepared to carry out its obligation in this regard. The findings of the SBA moderation are reported in the chapter on SBA (Chapter 2).

e)   Monitoring of examinations

It was notable from the audit of the evidence provided that the SACAI could demonstrate its level of preparedness to monitor the examinations. Monitors were appointed and were to be trained prior to the writing of the examinations. The monitors' contracts were due to expire in March 2021. The SACAI would monitor all their registered centres during the writing of the examinations.

The SACAI had planned adequately to train chief invigilators, using an online platform accessed via the SACAI administration portal. Umalusi planned to attend and evaluate the quality and standard of the online training sessions.

In the main, the demonstrated level of preparedness by the SACAI to monitor the conduct of examinations was of an acceptable standard.

f)   Management of examination irregularities

The SACAI had established an Examination Irregularities Committee (EIC) to deal with examination- and assessment-related irregularities. A plan was in place to manage examination irregularities and the November 2020 EIC meeting date had been determined.

g)   Marker audit and appointments

The SACAI established one marking centre and a plan to manage staggered marking was in place at the time of the audit. This plan, developed by the SACAI, was aligned with COVID-19 protocols to ensure the health and safety of all personnel at the centre.

Marker selection and appointments were finalised in good time and a database of appointed markers was in place. The SACAI had appointed 377 markers to mark the examination scripts.

h)   Systems for capturing of examination and assessment marks

The SBA and examination mark capture management plans were in place and related preparations for the end-of-year mark capturing had been finalised.

3.3.2   Areas with Potential Risk to Compromise the Credibility of the Examinations

The verification audit revealed the following discrepancies concerning candidate registration:

   a. Thirty-seven candidates were registered under Edu-Funda Learning Centre, centre number 803302, as a distance education provider, although the institution had not been granted a concession as a distance education provider.
   b. Six candidates were registered under Free2bme Academic Centre, centre number 805302, despite the institution not having been granted a concession as a distance education provider.

c. Candidates were registered under centre 803309, with the name Odyssey Academy, whereas a concession had been granted for centre 803309, as The Boost Centre Glenhazel.

3.3.3   Compliance with accreditation-related matters

The SACAI is provisionally accredited and was able to adhere to minimum accreditation requirements in a number of key indicators in line with its status, except for the following critical issues, as outlined below:

a)   Challenges Relating to Processing of Applications
  i.   In certain instances, applications for concessions to establish examination centres were submitted for centres that were operating as schools but were not registered or accredited.
  ii. When queried with the SACAI, the application for a concession for those centres was withdrawn and a SACAI centre was set up close by, with the principal/ manager from that centre appointed as the chief invigilator.
  iii. In one case, when it was queried, the chief invigilator was replaced by a family member of the original person appointed, thus it was still linked to the unregistered, unaccredited centre. The SACAI changed the chief invigilators of the centres that had been queried.
  iv. A staff member from Umalusi asked at one of the schools whether they had Grade 12 learners at the school. The school responded that they knew they would not meet the criteria for accreditation for Grade 1–12 and therefore changed their accreditation application to Grade 1– 9 and enrolled their Grade 12 learners through the SACAI. They indicated that their Grade 12 candidates would write at a SACAI centre in the same town.
  v.   Candidates from the unregistered, unaccredited centres wrote at the SACAI centres close to those centres. Therefore the candidates were still accommodated and the centres have continued to operate

b) Specific Concerns with the Following Implicated Centres

Table 3A: Specific concerns and implicated centres

Implicated institution/ provider	Concern(s) raised
Centre "E"	a. The SACAI requested permission to use the venue as a SACAI-managed venue. b. Umalusi queried how learners received tuition at this centre, in order to determine whether it was a distance education provider or a "tutor centre". c. The SACAI withdrew their application for the centre to be used as a designated examination centre, and set up a separate centre: SACAI Boksburg. d. The SACAI's application for a concession for Centre E as a distance education provider was not processed further, on the understanding that the application was withdrawn. e. Candidates were subsequently registered under Centre "E", although a concession had not been granted for this centre. f. According to their website, Centre "E" operates as a school, therefore a concession cannot be granted for this centre as a distance education provider.
Centre "F"	a. The SACAI requested permission to use the venue as a SACAI- managed examination venue. b. Umalusi queried how learners received tuition at Centre "F", in order to determine whether it was a distance education provider or a "tutor centre", since the SACAI indicated that the school had applied for registration as a school and was awaiting an Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) number. c. The SACAI withdrew their application for the centre to be used as a designated examination centre, and set up a separate centre, SACAI Polokwane, initially appointing the chief invigilator from Centre "F" to manage the centre. This was changed when queried by Umalusi. d. The SACAI's application for a concession for "Centre F" was not processed further, on the understanding that the application was withdrawn. Umalusi informed the SACAI that no candidates may write the examination at centre number 805302, Centre "F" Polokwane. e. Six candidates were subsequently registered under Centre "F", centre number 805302 and wrote at the SACAI Polokwane venue.
Centre "OA": using centre number 803309	The SACAI was granted a concession for Centre "TBCG", centre number 803309. The SACAI registered three candidates under Centre "OA", using the centre number 803309, for which the SACAI had been granted a concession for Centre "TBCG". This is problematic because: a. The Centre "TBCG" is a registered combined school operating from two separate premises. The primary school operates at the registered address, while the high school operates at a separate address, under the name of "OA". The "OA" is therefore operating as an unregistered, unaccredited school. b. In addition, there is a centre with the same name as the one granted a concession in Cape Town, whose candidates register under the Centre "OA" centre number, which is irregular. Paragraph 26A(3) of the national policy on the conduct, administration and management of the NSC examination requires that independent schools "must apply to the relevant assessment body for registration as examination centres under their own names".

3.4   Areas of Improvement

There were good initiatives, the need for which the assessment body had anticipated:

a. To mitigate health risks associated with COVID-19, the SACAI had, in good time, developed significant, well-documented information for dissemination to centres, markers and monitors; and

b. The assessment body had planned ahead to use online platforms to moderate SBA and to train chief invigilators.

3.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

The following areas of non-compliance were noted:

a. Discrepancies concerning the registration of candidates were evidenced and the SACAI was officially informed about the issues; and

b. Challenges relating to the processing of accreditation applications of centres were noted.

3.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI is required to ensure that:

a. The discrepancies discovered in the registration of candidates must be addressed, in line with Umalusi's evaluation and accreditation requirements; and

b. The challenges relating to the processing of accreditation applications of centres are addressed, strategies developed to mitigate any recurrence of the challenges as outlined, and the progress report submitted at SACAI and Umalusi scheduled bilateral meetings.

3.7   Conclusion

The findings from the SOR audit indicated that the SACAI was adequately prepared to conduct, administer and manage the November 2020 NSC examinations, despite the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluated evidence showed that the SACAI fully met the key indicators that determine state of readiness, even under COVID–19 conditions.

CHAPTER 4 AUDIT OF APPOINTED MARKERS

4.1   Introduction

Umalusi conducts an audit of appointed markers to ensure that the assessment bodies' internal controls, processes, guidelines and policies for appointing markers for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations are adhered to and in compliance with the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM). The PAM provide assessment bodies with requirements to adhere to in appointing personnel to the various NSC examination-related positions. This ensures that only personnel with the requisite qualifications, skills and experience are appointed.

This chapter presents the audit report on the appointment by the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) of marking personnel for the November 2020 NSC examinations.

4.2   Scope and Approach

SUmalusi sampled ten subjects for the audit of the appointed markers in 2020 as indicated in (Annexure 4A) and adopted and implemented a new approach in conducting the audit.

A desktop audit was conducted from the evidence made available by the SACAI, as per requirements. The documents submitted for the audit of appointed markers included:

   a.   The SACAI requirements/criteria for the appointment of markers across levels/positions;
   b.   2020 circulars/advertisements for the recruitment of markers and the marker application form(s) issued;
   c.   The database/spreadsheets/records/electronic files extracted from the database of all appointed markers for all subjects, including the lists of appointed markers and novice markers; and
   d.   Minutes of the selection panel meetings.

Umalusi analysed the SACAI submission using criteria as listed in Table 4A.

Table 4A: Criteria used for the audit of the selection and appointment of markers

Marking personnel	Criteria
Markers	Compliance to notional marking time
Senior markers	Qualifications and subject specialisation
Deputy chief markers	Teaching experience
Chief marker	Marking experience
Internal moderators	Enhancements to PAM

4.3   Summary of Findings

4.3.1   Compliance to Notional Marking Time

a)   Markers

Umalusi used the notional marking time and the number of days allocated for marking a subject to determine the sufficiency of markers per subject. The notional marking times varied from subject to subject. The number of markers appointed per subject for all the audited subjects aligned with the notional marking times and the number of days allocated for marking.

In the sample of subjects audited, there were no shortages of markers. Umalusi evidenced the appointment of novice markers in History and Mathematics. Because of low candidate enrolments, the SACAI did not appoint senior markers and deputy chief markers in all subjects.

b)   Chief markers and internal moderators

The SACAI appointed examiners and the internal moderators of the different question papers as chief markers and internal moderators, respectively, for marking examination scripts. Where a subject consisted of two papers, the chief marker of one paper acted as the internal moderator of another paper, and vice versa.

4.3.2   Qualifications and Subject Specialisation

a)   Markers

All the appointed markers in the verified subjects complied with the criteria. All possessed a second-year level qualification in the subject they had applied to mark and all were currently teaching the subject at Grade 12 level. All the appointees possessed a minimum qualification of a Bachelor's degree.

b)   Chief markers and internal moderators

The appointed chief markers complied with the criteria regarding qualifications and subject specialisations for appointment to their various positions. Experience as a SACAI marker was a prerequisite for appointment as a chief marker.

4.3.3   Teaching Experience

a)   Markers

All appointed markers complied with all the requirements for appointment as markers. Each had at least two years' teaching experience in the subject they had applied to mark. The appointed markers were currently teaching the subject at Grade 12 level. Unlike in previous years, no retired teachers were appointed to mark in 2020.

b)   Chief markers and internal moderators

The appointed chief markers and internal moderators complied with the SACAI's appointment criteria of a minimum of two years' experience as a teacher of the subject in Grade 12 in the past three years.

4.3.4 Marking Experience

a) Markers

The SACAI complied with the requirements regarding the marking experience of appointed markers. Preference was given to teachers with previous marking experience at the SACAI. However, according to the SACAI requirements, a marker with little or no experience of marking the SACAI NSC question papers may be appointed on a probation basis. The SACAI appointed two novice markers for Mathematics and one novice marker for History.

b) Chief markers and internal moderators

Experience as a SACAI marker was a prerequisite for appointment as a chief marker or an internal moderator. The appointed chief markers and internal moderators complied fully with the criteria.

4.3.5 Enhancements to PAM

The SACAI used the PAM requirements for appointing marking personnel at all levels; no enhancements were made to the PAM.

4.4 Areas of Improvement

Umalusi noted the following area of improvement:

a. Non-appointment of retired teachers for the marking of the November 2020 NSC examinations.

4.5 Areas of Non-Compliance

Umalusi noted the following area of non-compliance:

a. Non-submission of the list of reserve markers.

4.6 Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must:

a. Ensure that all the necessary information required for the audit of appointed markers is submitted to Umalusi as requested.

4.7 Conclusion

The SACAI's requirements for appointing marking personnel were aligned to the PAM requirements. The SACAI has, to a large extent, complied with all the requirements when appointing marking personnel. However, the SACAI must attend to the area of non-compliance noted.

CHAPTER 5 MONITORING THE WRITING AND MARKING OF EXAMINATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) administered and managed the November 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations under the constraints of the unprecedented COVID-19 global outbreak. Health and safety protocols put in place by the Department of Health to mitigate the spread of the virus required that examinations be written under strict health and safety conditions.

These examinations commenced on 28 October 2020 and ended on 29 November 2020. The session for marking the candidates' answer scripts was successfully conducted in a staggered marking programme comprised of seven groupings. The first marking sessions commenced on 12 November 2020 and the marking of the last group of subjects ended on 30 December 2020.

Umalusi monitored the marking and writing phases of the examinations at sampled examination centres established by the SACAI.

This chapter reports on the two quality assurance processes undertaken by Umalusi.

The chapter provides a summary of the findings of the monitoring and, further, gives an account of areas of improvement and areas of non-compliance. It highlights the directives for compliance and improvement the assessment body is required to address and report on.

5.2 Scope and Approach

The SACAI established 72 examinations centres, including one in Namibia, and Umalusi monitored a predetermined sample of 30 examination centres.

In line with Umalusi's quality assurance approach, the data was collected using the instrument for monitoring the writing of examinations and marking centres and related methodologies (observations and interviews).

5.3 Summary of Findings

The findings are addressed in two sections: monitoring the writing of examinations in Section A; and the monitoring of the marking centre in Section B.

SECTION A: Monitoring of the Writing of Examinations

Umalusi observed the writing phase of the examination, commencing with the activities related to preparing for each session, all activities during the writing, to the packaging and transmission of answer scripts after writing.

5.3.1 General Administration

General administration relates to the execution of tasks that ensures a seamless and efficient writing of the examinations.

a) Management of examination question papers

Umalusi noted that all the examination centres monitored had paid special attention to the management of examination question papers in relation to their safekeeping and distribution to the examination venues. The appointed chief invigilators carefully checked the question papers for correctness, in line with signed delivery notes, and subsequently placed the question papers in lockable strong rooms for safekeeping.

The question papers were brought to the examination rooms by chief invigilators and were opened by the chief invigilators in front of the candidates. At the end of the writing sessions, the answer scripts were packed and sealed in plastic bags before being placed in lockable bins. This procedure was uniformly executed across all monitored examination centres.

b) Appointment records of invigilators

Chief invigilators at eight examination centres delegated other persons as deputy chief invigilators to manage the examination sessions and, where this occurred, letters of delegation on their appointment were available for verification by Umalusi. The appointed chief invigilators had letters of appointment, which Umalusi verified as these were available in the examination files. It was further noted that chief invigilators appointed invigilators, in writing, at all the examination centres.

c) Management of invigilators' attendance

It was observed that chief invigilators managed the attendance registers for invigilators consistently well across the examination sessions monitored. All the invigilators at all the examination centres signed the attendance registers.

d) Management of examination documents

All examination centres complied fully with the requirement for record-keeping of examination-related documents. Substantive evidence of relevant documentation was presented for verification. Available in the files were, inter alia, the examination manual; examination timetable; invigilation and relief timetables; appointment letters of the chief invigilators and invigilators; seating plans; and absentee and irregularity forms.

5.3.2 Credibility of the Writing of Examinations

The credibility of the writing of examinations hinges on compliance with the Regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of National Senior Certificate examinations (2014), Regulation 33 (1) and 33 (2).

This sub-section outlines the findings of the monitoring of issues as specified in the criteria that Umalusi uses to determine whether the examination may have been compromised in any way. These relate to the security of question papers at centres, examination administration in examination venues and application of examination procedures when examinations are in progress, as well as the handling of answer scripts by invigilators and examination incidents and/or irregularities.

The findings, outlined below, were noted:

a)   Security and supply of question papers

It was found that all monitored examination centres had the necessary measures in place for storage of the question papers. At all centres the SACAI supplied lockable bins in which to store the question papers and answer scripts, in addition to strong rooms.

The question papers were supplied to the examination centres once a week by courier services. All delivered consignments were in locked crates/bins and sealed in satchels. The chief invigilators verified if the delivery of question papers for their centres was correct.

Umalusi was able to verify that chief invigilators collected question papers from the strong rooms prior to their distribution to the examination venues on the day of writing. This procedure was observed and it was uniformly implemented across all centres monitored.

An area of concern noted at one centre was that, on the day of the writing of the English Home Language Paper 1, question papers were found in a room that was shared with other personnel.

b)   Admission of candidates in the examination venue

Umalusi noted that all monitored examination centres performed all activities for admitting candidates into the examination venues distinctly well. The following areas of compliance were observed:

   i.   Candidates were admitted into the examination venue at least 30 minutes before the start of the examination;
   ii. The invigilators verified the admission letters/identity documents of the candidates on admission into the examination rooms;
   iii. Candidates signed the attendance register; and
   iv. Candidates occupied their seats according to the seating plans.

An area of non-compliance was noted at one centre where a candidate was admitted into the examination venue being in possession of a cell phone. The invigilator was alerted and the device was taken by the invigilator for safekeeping, prior to the distribution of question papers.

c)   Conduciveness of the examination venue

All examination centres complied with the following conditions regarding the conduciveness of examination venues:

   i.   Sufficient space to accommodate all candidates, with one metre between them, was adhered to;
   ii. Suitable furniture was provided for the candidates;
   iii. Proper and sufficient lighting was available; and
   iv. Water and ablution facilities within easy reach were in place.

d)   Administration of the writing session

The administration of the writing sessions was well-managed in many of the examination centres. This was demonstrated by the level of adherence in managing the following activities:

   i.   The signing of the attendance registers by the candidates;
   ii. The issuing of the candidates with official answer books;
   iii. The verification by invigilators of the correctness of information on the cover page of the answer books;

iv. The opening of question papers by the chief invigilator and distribution thereof; checking the question paper for technical accuracy with the candidates;

v. Reading examination rules to the candidates;

vi. Granting candidates the regulated ten minutes' reading time before writing; and

vii. Starting and ending the examination at the times stipulated on the timetable.

The administration in some centres was inconsistent and, to some extent, compromised the administration of the writing session. The following were noted:

i. At one centre reading time was interrupted when the chief invigilator read examination rules that should have been read earlier, as regulated;

ii. At another centre, candidates were given five minutes of reading time instead of the regulated ten minutes; and

iii. At another centre, the Information Technology Paper 1 question papers, which were scheduled to be written on 21 October 2020, were mistakenly opened on 20 October 2020 instead of the Computer Applications Technology question papers, which were to be administered on the day. However, the question papers were not handed out to the candidates. It was noted that clear procedure was duly followed, as highlighted at the time the error was noted: the matter was reported to the SACAI and the question papers were resealed under the supervision of a SACAI monitor. As a result of the action taken, the question paper was not compromised.

e)   Compliance with examination procedures

All monitored examination centres demonstrated an acceptable level of adherence to the regulated examination procedures during the writing phase of the examinations as required, as indicated below:

i. Candidates were escorted every time they temporarily left the examination room;

ii. No unauthorised personnel were in the examination venues during the examination session; and

iii. Invigilators were vigilant and did not engage the candidates during the sessions, except in instances where it was necessary to do so and as allowed in the Regulation.

f)   Handling of answer scripts

The handling and management of answer scripts was found to be seamless and followed procedure in an orderly and sequential manner. All the centres monitored uniformly demonstrated acceptable standard practice, as highlighted:

i. The scripts were collected by the invigilators from the candidates when the prescribed duration of the examination expired, or when candidates signalled that they had finished writing and were ready to hand their scripts to the invigilator;

ii. The scripts were counted and packaged according to the examination numbering sequence, as reflected on the mark sheets; and

iii. The scripts were then sealed in official satchels provided by the SACAI, after which the chief invigilators completed situational reports.

In line with the SACAI security of examination question paper measures and procedure, the chief invigilators locked the scripts in lockable security bins, which were kept in strong rooms to await collection by the contracted courier service. This was in line with the consignment plan for collection of answer scripts, as outlined by the SACAI.

g)   Incidents/occurrences with possible impact on credibility of the examination session

Three incidents, as highlighted in the reports, had the potential to impact negatively on the credibility of the examination sessions:

i. The Information Technology Paper 1 question papers, to be written on 21 October 2020, were mistakenly opened on 20 October 2020, in place of the Computer Applications Technology question papers. However, appropriate action was taken. This matter was reported to the SACAI and the question papers were resealed, under the supervision of a SACAI monitor. As a result of the action taken, the question paper was not compromised;

ii. At one examination centre, a batch of English Home Language Paper 1 question papers were not secured in a safe place prior to the writing of the examination. The batch was found, in the open, in a room occupied by other personnel, before being taken to the examination room; and

iii. At another centre, a candidate was found to be in possession of a cell phone before the commencement of the writing session. The cell phone was confiscated.

SECTION B: Monitoring of the Marking of Examinations

The SACAI used its head office in Pretoria as the marking centre for the duration of the marking period.

5.3.3   Planning and Preparation

Umalusi observed that planning and preparation for marking activities, such as management of scripts, was satisfactory.

a)   Appointment of marking personnel

Umalusi was provided with a list of appointed marking personnel for verification and all markers had been appointed, in writing. These included chief markers, deputy chief markers, senior markers, internal moderators, markers and examination assistants. The list of appointed markers was verified as the list submitted to Umalusi.

b) Availability of marking management plans

Marking management plans that captured all critical activities related to marking processes were in place and implemented accordingly.

c)   Availability of scripts and marking guidelines

It was noted that all required scripts and marking guidelines were readily available to the marking personnel on the first day of marking.

d)   Storage and safekeeping of scripts

The SACAI had clear procedures for storage and safekeeping of scripts when scripts were received at the marking centre from the courier service. These were scanned and stored in the distribution/script control room by SACAI officials. No unauthorised persons were allowed into the distribution room.

e)   Management and control of scripts

The marking centre used two rooms for the management and control of scripts. One room was used for the distribution of scripts and another for the storage of marked scripts. Scripts for marking were signed off by the chief markers, on receipt. After marking, the scripts were recounted and accounted for, before being taken back for capturing of marks and subsequent storage.

5.3.4 Resources (Physical and Human)

Umalusi observed that the SACAI marking centre was well resourced in terms of physical and human resources to undertake the marking process.

a)   Suitability of the infrastructure and equipment required for marking

The infrastructure and equipment at the marking centre were adequate and suitable to facilitate marking. Communication facilities, adequate space and suitable furniture were available for the marking process. All the marking venues were suitable and conducive for marking processes to be undertaken.

b)   Capacity and availability of marking personnel

In its preparation for marking, the SACAI had selected and appointed 377 markers to mark the November 2020 examination. Due to the staggered marking programme the SACAI implemented, it was found that on the day of monitoring there were 33 markers, eight chief markers and eight internal moderators available for marking nine examination papers.

c)   Conduciveness of the marking centre and marking rooms (including accommodation for markers)

The script control rooms had sufficient space to accommodate scripts before distribution to the marking venues and for storing the marked scripts. The SACAI did not provide overnight accommodation for the markers.

d)   Quality of food provided for markers

The provision of well-prepared meals, complemented by broad dietary requirements that catered for all marking personnel, was noted. The marking personnel adhered to the meal breaks as outlined by the SACAI.

e)   Compliance with occupational, health and safety requirements

It was observed that an Occupational Health and Safety certificate was displayed at the marking centre and the centre complied with the health and safety requirements.

5.3.5 Provision of Security Measures

Umalusi observed that security measures provided by the SACAI at the marking centre were adequate.

a)   Access control to the marking centre

Security personnel controlled access to the premises under strict conditions. Marking personnel and visitors signed a register when they entered the marking centre. Visitors were required to be escorted by the centre manager to the marking venues.

b)   Movement of scripts within the centres: script control and marking rooms

All in-house movement of scripts was controlled through a register and checklist. This ensured that all scripts distributed to markers, and marked scripts, were fully accounted for.

5.3.6 Training of Marking Personnel

a)   Quality and standard of training sessions across subjects

Umalusi was informed that the first day of marking was devoted to the training of chief markers and internal moderators. The second day was used for the training of markers. Umalusi did not, however, evaluate the quality and standard of training sessions on the day of monitoring. The training undertaken for the marking of the subjects Umalusi verified is reported on in the chapter on verification of marking (Chapter 6).

b)   Adherence to norm time

The norm time for the marking was 12 hours. The daily start and closing of the marking centre when marking was in progress was 07:00 to 19:00.

5.3.7 Management and Handling of Detected Irregularities

The SACAI has a well-structured Examinations Irregularity Committee (EIC) in place to deal with and handle examination irregularities. The EIC had a plan in place for the management of any alleged irregularities.

Appointed markers were trained and well-informed on the management of different types of irregularities that might be detected during the marking process. It was noted that markers were aware of the reporting protocols. Any irregularity detected by the markers would be reported to the chief marker for verification and, if confirmed, the irregularity would be referred to the EIC.

5.4   Areas of Improvement

No areas of improvement were noted during the monitoring of the writing and marking of the 2020 November NSC examinations. Umalusi commends the SACAI for establishing strict and necessary health and safety measures for candidates at writing venues and markers at the marking centre.

5.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

The following areas of non-compliance were identified:

a. At one examination centre a batch of the English Home Language Paper 1 question papers were found in an unsecured area, prior to commencement of the examination session. These were found in the open, in a room occupied by other personnel, before they were taken to the examination room;
b. At another centre, a candidate was found to be in possession of a cell phone prior to the commencement of the writing session;
c. The noise level around an examination centre was found to be unacceptably high;
d. Candidates at two centres were not given the regulated 10 minutes' reading time before the commencement of writing; and
e. An incorrect question paper was opened at one examination centre.

5.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must ensure that:

a. The training of chief invigilators and invigilators is strengthened; and
b. All irregularities are dealt with in accordance with the procedures as outlined in Regulation 47, as provided in the Regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate examinations (2014), as amended.

5.7   Conclusion

Notwithstanding the challenges experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, minimal areas of non-compliance were noted at the examination centres monitored. The SACAI was able to manage writing and marking of the November 2020 NSC examinations in a satisfactory manner.

Furthermore, the SACAI planned adequately for its writing and marking phases to protect the lives of candidates and markers by ensuring that all necessary COVID-19 protocols and health and safety measures were complied with.

The list of centres found to be non-compliant with the criteria is included as highlighted under annexure 5B in the report.

CHAPTER 6 MARKING GUIDELINE DISCUSSIONS AND VERIFICATION OF MARKING

6.1   Introduction

As a measure to maintain appropriate standards and quality of marking of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, Umalusi quality assures the marking guideline discussions and verification of marking processes. The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) marking guideline discussions and the marking of the NSC examinations were conducted on-site at the SACAI offices in Garsfontein, Pretoria. Only one subject was verified off-site. The benefit of conducting the marking guideline discussions and verification of marking process on-site was the ability to identify and address inconsistencies or discrepancies in marking immediately.

This chapter reports on the marking guideline discussions and the verification of marking.

6.2   Scope and Approach

The marking guideline discussion meetings were divided into seven groups: Group A comprised two subjects (four papers), Group B, four subjects (five papers), Group C, three subjects (six papers), Group D, four subjects (five papers), Group E, five subjects (seven papers), Group F, five subjects (six papers) and Group G, six subjects (11 papers). Of the 25 subjects, Umalusi verified the marking of ten subjects, comprised of 17 question papers. The plan was put in place to adhere to the regulations addressing social distancing requirements.

The SACAI held the marking guideline discussion meetings on 12 November 2020 for Group A, 19 November 2020 for Group B, 26 November 2020 for Group C, 3 December 2020 for Group D, 10 December 2020 for Group E, 17 December 2020 for Group F and 23 December 2020 for Group G. The focus of these meetings was to standardise the marking guidelines. Umalusi participated and signed off the marking guidelines of selected subjects, as listed in Table 6A, and immediately embarked on the verification of marking of these subjects.

6.2.1   Marking Guideline Discussions

Table 6A shows the subjects/question papers sampled for marking guideline discussions.

Table 6A: Subjects/question papers sampled for marking guideline discussions

Subject		
Life Sciences Paper 1 and Paper 2	Geography Paper 1 and Paper 2	Mathematics Paper 1 and Paper 2
English Home Language Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 3	Mathematical Literacy Paper 1 and Paper 2	Physical Sciences Paper 1 and Paper 2
Consumer Studies Paper 1	Visual Arts Paper 2	Business Studies Paper 2
Dramatic Arts Paper 1		

The criteria listed in Table 6B below was used in evaluating the marking guideline discussions.

Table 6B: Criteria for the marking guideline discussion meetings

Part A	Part B	Part C
Pre-marking guideline discussion meeting	Processes and procedures	Training at marking guideline discussion meeting
Preparation of chief markers and internal moderators		Quality of the final marking guideline

The focus of Part A was on the pre-marking guideline discussion meetings held by the examination panels for each question paper, together with Umalusi. This includes assessing the level of preparedness of the chief markers and internal moderators as participants in the marking guideline discussions. Part B deals with processes and procedures followed during the marking guideline discussions. Part C addresses the quality of the training of markers and the quality of the final marking guidelines.

6.2.2 Verification of Marking

This part of the chapter reports on the findings of the verification of marking conducted on the ten sampled subjects, comprised of 17 question papers, as listed in Table 6A. The verification of marking process was analysed and evaluated using four criteria with a variable number of quality indicators, as listed in Table 6C:

Table 6C: Criteria for verification of marking

Pa Criterion 1: Policy matters	Criterion 2: Adherence to the marking guideline (MG)	Criterion 3: Quality and standard of marking and internal moderation	Criterion 4: Candidates' performance
Statistics		Quality and standard of marking	
Official appointment of markers		Internal moderation	
		Addition and transfer of marks	

Criterion 1 focuses on statistics and policy matters and has two quality indicators. Criterion 2 is concerned with adherence to the marking guideline. Criterion 3 looks at the quality and standard of marking and internal moderation and has three quality indicators. Lastly, Criterion 4 addresses candidate performance.

6.3   Summary of Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from the marking guideline discussion meetings and the verification of marking.

6.3.1 Marking Guideline Discussions

a)   Part A: Pre-marking guideline discussion meetings and preparation of chief markers and internal moderators

The criterion intends to elicit whether the pre-marking discussion meetings between the SACAI examination panels and Umalusi took place for each question paper sampled and what transpired at the meeting.

i.   Pre-marking discussion meetings
Umalusi attended the pre-marking guideline discussion meetings for all 17 question papers of the ten subjects sampled for verification. While six pre-marking guideline discussion meetings were held via virtual platforms, the remaining 11 were held on-site at the SACAI offices in Garsfontein, Pretoria. For all 17 question papers, the panels at the meetings were able to reach consensus on the amendments to be effected to the marking guidelines.

ii. Preparation of chief markers and internal moderators
The processes for all 17 marking guideline discussion meetings were managed professionally. The number of scripts marked prior to the meetings, in preparation for the marking guideline discussions, ranged from three to nine. The chief markers and internal moderators used scripts selected from the pre-marked sample for training markers. The training was conducted satisfactorily.

b)   Part B: Processes and procedures

The SACAI convened the pre-marking guideline discussions to ensure that the marking guidelines were sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate all possible alternatives in all subjects. The meetings were attended by all role-players, namely, the SACAI setting panel (chief markers, internal moderators) and the Umalusi question paper moderators and verifiers, as per the requirement.

The SACAI maximised the space at their offices by dividing marking sessions into groups or categories, to comply with the COVID-19 protocol for social distancing. The marking sessions for all categories were streamlined to ensure that only a few marking personnel attended at a time. The SACAI had all COVID-19 protocols in place and the markers adhered to the protocols.

The SACAI managed the 17 marking guideline discussion meetings successfully. There were rigorous discussions and substantive contributions to the marking guidelines, especially where specific questions posed a challenge to the markers. The marking guidelines used in pre-marking discussions for all 17 question papers represented the final versions approved by Umalusi prior to the writing of the examinations.

Umalusi approved all changes and additions made to the marking guidelines during the discussions. Some question papers had no changes or additions made to their marking guidelines because the approved marking guidelines were adequate to facilitate consistent and accurate marking. Those changes and additions made to marking guidelines did not have an impact on the cognitive levels of expected responses.

Due process was followed in making additions and changes to the marking guidelines in the sample of 17 question papers.

c) **Part C: Training at marking guideline discussion meetings and quality of the final marking guidelines**
   i.   Training at marking guideline discussion meetings
        Training at the marking guideline discussion meetings, and the quality of the approved marking guidelines, depend solely on the level of preparedness of the chief markers and internal moderators.

        The chief markers and the internal moderators attended pre-marking guideline meetings well prepared. The internal moderators and chief markers marked between three and nine scripts each and prepared alternative answers, where necessary, before the meetings. During training, a marking map, drawn on a board for each item to generate and elicit alternative responses and for all markers to see, helped to stimulate possible alternative responses. The 17 sampled question papers were in full compliance with the quality indicator for quality of training at marking guideline discussion meetings.

   ii. Quality of the final marking guidelines
        The final marking guidelines:
        a.   Included general instructions on marking that were neither vague nor general and permitted uniform/standardised marking;
        b.   Were unambiguous, clearly laid out and provided enough detail to ensure reliability of marking; and
        c.   Did not seek to accommodate every possible case but reflected the different approaches that candidates might take.

6.3.2   Verification of Marking

The criteria listed in Table 6C created the framework for analysis of the verification of marking conducted for the 17 question papers sampled for verification of marking.

a) **Policy matters**
   i.   Statistics
        All marking personnel met the requirements for appointment as markers, chief markers and internal moderators for the 17 question papers verified. The number of marking personnel was proportional to the number of scripts per question paper.
        The number of scripts to be marked ranged from 69 to 1 665 per question paper. Given the relatively low enrolment numbers per subject, the SACAI did not appoint deputy chief markers and senior markers.

   ii. Official appointment of markers
        All marking personnel were officially appointed in writing. Umalusi verified the official appointment letters of the chief markers, the internal moderators and all markers appointed for the verified question papers.
        All markers whose credentials were verified met the criteria for required qualifications and Grade 12 teaching experience.

b)   Adherence to the marking guidelines

In all 17 question papers verified, the marking guidelines were those finalised after the pre-marking guideline discussions with the chief markers and internal moderators.

There were no changes and/or additions made to the marking guidelines during the marking process. The changes and/or additions to the marking guidelines were addressed and signed off in the pre-marking guideline discussions. No deviation to a marking guideline was observed during marking.

The SACAI complied fully with adherence to the marking guideline quality indicator in marking all subjects verified.

c)   Quality and standard of marking and internal moderation

i.   Quality and standard of marking

For all 17 question papers verified, it was found that while there were inconsistencies during the initial stages of marking, these were addressed and consistency was attained as the marking continued.

Although consistency was attained after the first day of verification, initial inconsistencies by markers were a result of marking specific words and phrases instead of contextual meaning. This was noted in the marking of Business Studies. In Mathematics, it was noted that thorough training of markers impacted favourably on marking consistency. The other 15 question papers verified indicated that the marking was consistent and within the tolerance range.

A total of 16 question papers complied with the tolerance range of 3% of the total mark of each paper, as per the policy provided by the assessment body. Consumer Studies did not meet the tolerance range criteria as the chief marker and internal moderator failed to provide the allocated tolerance range to the markers.

ii.   Internal moderation

The internal moderation of answer scripts ranged from 10% to 20% for the question papers verified. All question papers sampled satisfied the requirements of the criterion on the quality of internal moderation; however, for English Home Language Paper 3 an erratic marker was found to have been neglected. The chief marker was advised to revisit the scripts marked by the identified marker and further moderate at least 30% of each batch/pack before the marks were captured. Non-moderation of the whole script for some batches of Physical Sciences Paper 2 led to marking discrepancies in other sections/questions not being immediately identified.

In English Home Language Paper 1 and Paper 2 and Life Sciences Paper 1 and Paper 2, a chief marker of one paper platooned as internal moderator of the second paper, and vice versa. This practice compromised effective internal moderation.

iii. Addition and transfer of marks

Marks for all the sampled subjects were accurately calculated. Where there were discrepancies in totalling the marks, these were verified and double-checked by the examination assistants. The transfer of marks from scripts to mark sheets could not be quality assured as the mark sheets were not available with the batches/packs during the marking process. Umalusi was informed that the marks were captured on the mark sheets after the verification of marks had been completed.

d) Candidate performance

An analysis of the reports of the 17 question papers verified showed that the overall performance of candidates ranged from average to poor, with only a few candidates achieving scores in the good to excellent range.

The analysis of the candidate performance in the subjects verified is summarised below:

i. English Home Language showed a very good range in the allocation of marks across the levels in all three papers verified. Paper 1 had an overall average of 57%, Paper 2 an overall average of 54% and Paper 3 an overall average of 60%. Although Paper 1 and Paper 2 showed a marked improvement compared to 2019, Paper 3 showed a decline in achievement from that of 2019.

ii. Business Studies showed a fair spread of marks across the performance level. The average performance from the sample verified was 53%, which was a marked improvement on the 2019 performance.

iii. Consumer Studies also showed fair to average performance from the scripts verified. Some candidates excelled in specific content while others performed poorly to average. The average achievement from the sample verified was 48%.

iv. In Dramatic Arts the distribution of candidates' achievement, from the sample verified, showed approximately 50% on the lower end [Level 1-3] and 50% on the average to higher achievement [Level 4-7]. There was a fair spread across most categories, except for Level 1 and Level 5. The average achievement from the sample verified was 52%.

v. In Visual Arts, verification and moderation was completed across the spectrum of levels. Average achievement from the sample verified was 51%.

vi. Geography showed a decline in candidates achieving at the higher end of performance. There were more candidates who offered responses that were acceptable within the confines of the marking guideline, as evidenced by achievements at the lower end of performance. Paper 1 showed an average performance of 33%, which was a decline from the performance recorded in 2019. Paper 2, at 40%, showed average improvement.

vii. The average performance in Life Sciences for Paper 1 in all questions was above 30%, while Paper 2 had average performance, of 40%.

viii. Mathematical Literacy Paper 1had a fair range in achievement from fair to average, with an overall average of 56% from the sample verified. Paper 2 showed an outstanding average achievement of 75%.

ix. In Mathematics, the average of the externally moderated scripts for Paper 1 was 38.9%. Candidates performed poorly in questions that were set in a complex or problem-solving context. Paper 2 achieved an average of 36% from the sample verified.

x. Physical Sciences showed a marked improvement since 2019 in both papers from the sample verified. Paper 1 achieved an average of 53%, while Paper 2 was at 49%.

External moderators provided the following possible reasons for candidates' unsatisfactory performance:

i. Poor content knowledge and inadequate/gaps in understanding of subject-specific terminology (Business Studies, Consumer Studies, Dramatic Arts, Life Sciences, English Home Language, Geography, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics, Visual Arts and Physical Sciences);

ii. Inability to respond adequately to opinion-based questions and higher-order questions (English Home Language);

iii. Inadequate responses. The responses lacked insight and depth (Geography, Consumer Studies, Business Studies and English Home Language);

iv. Inability to make comparisons and value judgements (Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Physical Sciences); and

v. Poor interpretation of texts and inability to think in creative ways (English Home Language, Visual Arts, Dramatic Arts).

The overall unsatisfactory results might be attributed to a lack of development of cognitive academic language proficiency skills.

6.4   Areas of Improvement

The following areas of improvement were noted:

a. All marking guideline discussions included a more rigorous approach during the discussion. This had been raised as a concern in the 2019 marking guideline discussions report;

b. Visual Arts markers and chief marker applied themselves consistently to the marking process; and

c. Effective and consistent adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

6.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

The SACAI is required to take note of and address the following areas of non-compliance:

a. Inappropriate knowledge on how to use the 'Layout'(L), 'Analysis'(A) and 'Originality'(O) for Business Studies as a tool to measure candidates' skills/insight; and

b. Non-moderation of the whole script for some batches of Physical Sciences Paper 2.

6.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must ensure that:

a. The Business Studies markers are trained on the use of the 'Layout'(L), 'Analysis'(A) and 'Originality'(O) as a tool to measure candidates' insight; and

b. There is adherence to the moderation of the entire script and not part of a script in all subjects.

6.7   Conclusion

The 2020 findings of the marking guideline discussion meetings have shown that the discussions were effective for all 17 question papers verified. Overall, the chief markers and internal moderators were seen to be thorough and fair in their moderation processes during marking. However, the shortage of internal moderators in some subjects was of great concern. As in 2019, the candidate performance in several subjects verified continues to be a cause for concern.

CHAPTER 7 STANDARDISATION AND RESULTING

7.1   Introduction

Standardisation is a process that is informed by evidence presented in the form of qualitative and quantitative reports. Its primary aim is to achieve an optimum degree of uniformity, in a given context, by considering possible sources of variability other than students' ability and knowledge. In general, variability may occur as a consequence of the standard of question papers, quality of marking and many other related factors. It is for this reason that examination results are standardised: to control their variability from one examination sitting to the next.

Section 17A (4) of the GENFETQA Act of 2001, as amended in 2008, states that the Council may adjust raw marks during the standardisation process.

In broad terms, standardisation involves verification of subject structures, mark-capturing and the computer system used by an assessment body. It also involves the development and verification of norms, as well as the production and verification of standardisation booklets in preparation for the standardisation meetings. Standardisation decision are informed by, among others, principles of standardisation, qualitative inputs compiled by internal and external moderators, examination monitors and intervention reports presented by assessment bodies. The process is concluded with the approval of mark adjustments, per learning area; statistical moderation; and the resulting process.

7.2   Scope and Approach

The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) presented 25 subjects for the standardisation of the November 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. In turn, Umalusi performed verification of the historical averages, monitoring of capturing of marks and verification of standardisation adjustments, statistical moderation and the resulting datasets.

7.2.1   Development of Historical Averages

Historical averages for NSC examinations were developed using average marks obtained from the previous three to five examination sittings. Once this was done in accordance with policy requirements, the SACAI submitted to Umalusi historical averages, or norms, for verification purposes. Where a distribution contained outliers, the historical average was calculated with the exclusion of data from the outlying examination sitting/s. It is normal practice for Umalusi to apply the principle of exclusion when calculating the historical average for such instructional offerings. Finally, during the standardisation process Umalusi considered historical averages.

7.2.2   Capturing of Marks

Umalusi followed a three-phase procedure during verification of the mark-capturing process. The phases aimed to establish whether the marks had been captured accurately and were, therefore, credible. The first phase involved the SACAI completing and submitting a self-evaluation questionnaire from Umalusi, on their readiness and the procedures in place for capturing marks. Umalusi carried out a desktop analysis of the information and compiled a report. The second phase consisted of monitoring

the capturing of marks at the SACAI capturing centres, collecting copies of mark sheets, and verifying the IT and security systems (for securing the capturing venue) and transits of mark sheets from the marking centre to the capturing venue. The final phase involved the verification of marks recorded on candidates' scripts against the SACAI NSC standardisation data. The verification of capturing was monitored at the SACAI head office in Garsfontein, Pretoria.

7.2.3   Verification of Datasets and Standardisation Booklets

The SACAI submitted standardisation datasets and electronic booklets as per the Umalusi management plan. The datasets were verified and approved timeously, as a result of which the final standardisation electronic booklets were approved.

7.2.4   Pre-standardisation and Standardisation

The virtual meetings to pre-standardise and standardise the November 2020 examinations were held on 26 and 27 January 2021. In making standardisation decisions, Umalusi considered both the qualitative and quantitative information presented. The qualitative inputs included evidence-based reports presented by the SACAI, research findings from Umalusi's post-examination analyses in a selection of subjects and reports from Umalusi's external moderators, as well as monitors, on the conduct, administration and management of the examinations. As far as quantitative information is concerned, Umalusi considered historical averages, commonly known as the norm, and pairs analysis in association with principles of standardisation.

7.2.5   Post-standardisation

SACAI submitted the adjustments and the statistical moderation and resulting files for approval.

7.3   Summary of Findings

7.3.1   Standardisation and Resulting

a)   Development of historical averages
The historical averages were developed using the previous five examination sittings. The historical averages were submitted for the purposes of verification, in accordance with Umalusi's management plan. Analysis of the submitted datasets showed that there were no subjects with outliers for the November 2020 NSC examinations.

b)   Capturing of marks
The verification of the capturing of examination marks was conducted at the SACAI head office. The process the SACAI followed was found to have met the minimum criteria for the capturing of examination marks.

c)   Electronic datasets and standardisation electronic booklets
The standardisation datasets and electronic booklets for the NSC examinations submitted by the SACAI adhered to the requirements in the Requirements and Specification for Standardisation, Statistical Moderation and Resulting Policy.

7.3.2   Pre-standardisation and Standardisation

The qualitative input reports, i.e., the SACAI evidence-based report, reports by the post-examination analysis teams in selected subjects and external moderators' reports, standardisation principles and the historical averages provided guidance on how to standardise each subject.

7.3.3   Standardisation Decisions

The qualitative reports produced by external moderators and monitors as well as post-examination analysis reports in a selection of subjects, including intervention reports presented by the assessment bodies, and the principles of standardisation were used to inform decisions.

Table 7A: List of standardisation decisions for the November 2020 NSC

Description	Total
Number of subjects presented	25
Raw marks	14
Adjusted (mainly upwards)	5
Adjusted (downwards)	6
Unstandardised	0
Number of subjects standardised:	25

7.3.4 Post-standardisation

SACAI submitted adjustments for approval and statistical moderation and resulting files within the stipulated timeframes. The adjustments were approved during the first submission whilst the statistical moderation and resulting files were approved during the third submission.

7.4   Areas of Improvement

The following areas of improvement and good practice were observed:
   a.   The SACAI submitted all the qualitative input reports as required; and
   b.   The SACAI presented standardisation electronic booklets that were free from errors.

7.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

No areas of non-compliance requiring a directive were noted.

7.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

No directives for compliance and improvement were deemed necessary.

7.7   Conclusion

The standardisation process was conducted in a systematic, objective and transparent manner. The decisions taken on accepting raw marks and adjusting mark distribution upwards or downwards were based on the evidence presented together with adherence to standardisation principles.

CHAPTER 8 CERTIFICATION

8.1 Introduction

Umalusi is mandated by the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (GENFETQA) 2001 (Act No. 58 of 2001) for the certification of learner achievements for South African qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The responsibilities of Umalusi are, furthermore, defined as the development and management of its sub-framework of qualifications, the quality assurance of assessment at exit points and the certification of learner/candidate achievements.

Umalusi upholds the certification mandate by ensuring that assessment bodies adhere to policies and regulations promulgated by the Minister of Basic Education for the National Senior Certificate (NSC): a qualification at Level 4 on the NQF.

The quality assurance processes instituted by Umalusi for certification ensure that the qualification awarded to a learner complies with all the requirements for the qualification, as stipulated in the regulations. The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) is required to submit all learner achievements to Umalusi, the quality council, to quality-assure, verify and check the results before a certificate may be issued. The specifications and requirements for requesting certification are encapsulated in the form of directives for certification to which all assessment bodies must adhere.

Several layers of quality assurance have been instituted over the last few years. This has been done to ensure that the correct results are released to the learners, that all results are approved by Umalusi before release and that the certification of the learners' achievements is done in accordance with the approved results.

This chapter focuses on the overall certification processes and the compliance of the SACAI to the directives for certification, as specified in the regulations for certification.

8.2 Scope and Approach

The period covered in this report is 01 December 2019 to 30 November 2020. All requests for certification received during this period that were finalised, with feedback provided to the assessment body by Umalusi, have been included and addressed. The main examination reported on is the November 2019 NSC.

Certification of learner achievements cannot be pinned to a single period in the year because it is a continuous process, with certificates issued throughout the year. The bulk of the certification usually happens within three months of the release of the results. However, certificates are requested throughout the year, whether as a first issue, a duplicate, a replacement due to a change in status, or a re-issue.

To ensure that the data for certification is valid, reliable and in the correct format, Umalusi publishes directives for certification that must be adhered to by all assessment bodies when they submit candidate data for the certification of a specific qualification and a specific certificate.

This chapter focuses on the shortfalls in terms of compliance to the certification directives by the assessment body; and how this can affect both the quality assurance processes and the certification of learner achievements.

This chapter includes statistics on the number of requests received, in the form of datasets, and an indication of the percentage of applications rejected owing to non-compliance with the directives. The number and types of certificates issued in this period are also provided.

During the processing of requests for certification, a number of findings were made. These are highlighted and expanded on. These should not be regarded as a comprehensive list of findings but, rather, key points that should be addressed.

8.3   Summary of Findings

Every examination cycle starts with the registration of learners for the academic year. The registration of learners must be done according to an approved qualification structure, listing the required subjects, subject components, pass percentages, combination of subjects and the like. The specification of the qualifications is a very important aspect because it lays the foundation for a credible qualification.

Therefore, the first aspect to focus on is the submission of the subject structures for approval and alignment of the IT systems. Any changes in subject structures and/or new subjects must be applied for at least 18 months in advance, to Umalusi. With the submission of the subject structures, the SACAI must ensure that the structures are correctly registered for the new examination cycle and are aligned with that of Umalusi.

Two submissions of the registration data are required, the first three months after registration and the final dataset at the end of October. The first is regarded as preliminary registration while the second as the final set of registrations. For the 2020 cycle, the first submission of learner registration data was received; however, the final datasets were not submitted by the SACAI.

During the desktop evaluation visit, several areas were examined relating to certification, with an emphasis on registration of candidate information, the resulting of candidates and actual certification submissions.

The registration of candidates at schools was captured on spreadsheets and electronically uploaded to the examination system. The examination centres supplied completed registration forms and copies of identification documents, such as a South African identity document, passport or birth certificate.

A schedule of entries was sent to the centre for signature by the candidate, parent and centre manager, to confirm the accuracy of the captured information despite COVID-19 challenges. If it was found that a candidate's information was not correct, an amendment was captured on the system prior to the issuing of the timetable.

After conducting the end-of-year examination, all candidates' raw marks must be submitted to Umalusi for standardisation, statistical moderation and resulting of achievements. Umalusi must approve all candidate records before the results can be released by the SACAI. The approval of results follows after several quality assurance processes and, in terms of certification, the focus is on the final results of the candidates.

The general principle that must be adhered to is that all results must be approved before release and the request for certification submitted to Umalusi. Any changes to marks must also be submitted for approval. Once a certificate has been issued, correction of marks cannot be effected by submitting mop-up datasets. A re-issue has then to be requested to correct marks (on a certificate already issued). The SACAI has adhered to this principle and submitted the data according to requirements.

The recording and finalisation of irregularities are important to ensure that certificates are issued correctly to deserving candidates. The SACAI must continuously inform Umalusi of all irregularities so Umalusi can record such instances. It is of the utmost importance that Umalusi be updated on the status of irregularities (pending, guilty, not guilty) before requests for certification are submitted. If this is not done, the possibility exists that candidates may not receive their certificates, while the issuing of certificates is delayed due to irregularities not being finalised.

The submission of datasets for certification was not done within the requisite three months of the release of results, with the declaration forms as required by Umalusi, as a result of COVID-19 challenges.

Figure 8A shows a summary of certificates issued from 01 December 2019 to 30 November 2020 by the SACAI. Table 8A, reflects datasets and transactions received during the same period.
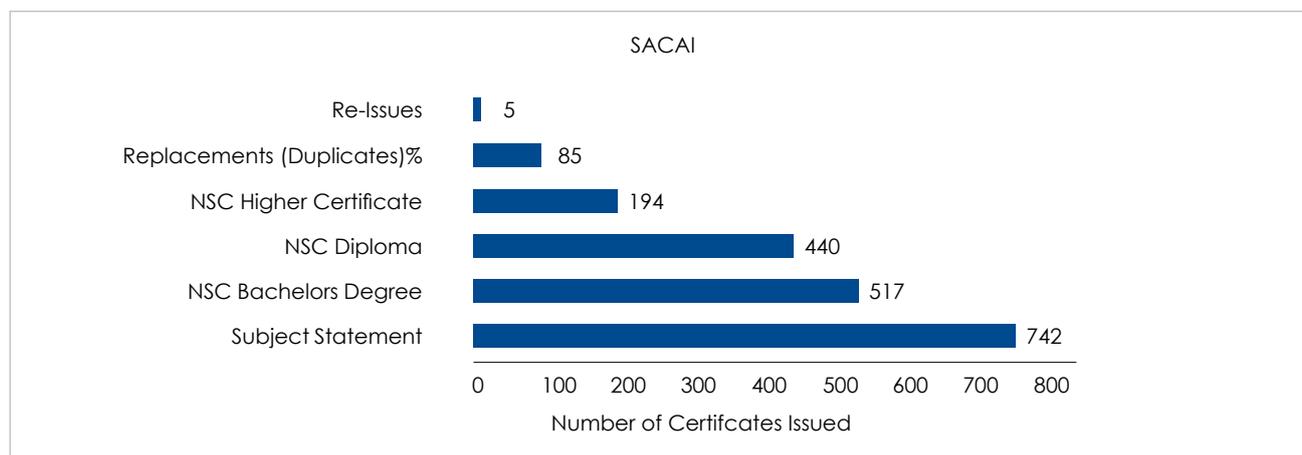
Figure 8A: Certificates issued from 01 December 2019 to 30 November 2020

Table 8A: Number of datasets and transactions received from 01 December 2019 to 30 November 2020

Qualification	Number of datasets	Number datasets accepted	% accepted	Number of records submitted	Number records accepted	% accepted	Number rejected
National Senior Certificate	35	35	100%	9 595	2 171	22.63%	7 424

8.4   Areas of Improvement

The SACAI has adapted and aligned their processes to the quality assurance processes of Umalusi and is submitting the requests for certification accordingly.

8.5   Areas of Non-Compliance

No areas of non-compliance were noted.

8.6   Directives for Compliance and Improvement

The SACAI must ensure that the second and final set of registration data is submitted to Umalusi at the end of October after finalisation of the entries. This submission will confirm that all registrations have been verified and correctly captured on the system.

It must be emphasised that all candidate records are approved by Umalusi prior to extracting certification datasets, to avoid unnecessary rejections and delays in issuing certificates to candidates, especially where candidates were involved in a re-mark or where marks have changed.

8.7   Conclusion

Overall, the SACAI, as a private assessment body, is compliant and executes the directives for certification appropriately. The candidates who are enrolled for the NSC through the SACAI are resulted and certified without any problems.

Annexure 1A: Compliance per criteria at first moderation of each question paper

No	Subject (question paper)	Compliance per criteria at first moderation										Approval level
		TD	IM	CC	CS	TS	L&B	Pre	Con	ARM	OI	
1.	Accounting	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
2.	Afrikaans First Additional Language(FAL) Paper 1	M¹	A	A	A	M³	M¹	A	M²	M³	M⁴	2
3.	Afrikaans FAL Paper 2	M¹	A	A	A	M³	M⁴	A	M¹	M³	M⁴	2
4.	Afrikaans FAL Paper 3	M¹	M¹	A	A	A	A	A	M¹	M²	M³	2
5.	Afrikaans Home Language (HL) Paper 1	M¹	M¹	M¹	M¹	M⁵	M²	A	M²	M³	M⁷	3
6.	Afrikaans HL Paper 2	M²	M¹	M¹	A	M⁴	M⁴	A	M²	M⁶	M⁷	3
7.	Afrikaans HL Paper 3	M¹	M¹	M¹	A	M²	M¹	A	M¹	M¹	M⁶	2
8.	Agricultural Management Practices	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
9.	Agricultural Sciences Paper 1	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
10.	Agricultural Sciences Paper 2	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
11.	Business Studies Paper 1	A	M¹	A	A	M³	M¹	A	A	M¹	M⁴	3
12.	Business Studies Paper 2	A	M¹	M¹	M¹	M⁴	M¹	A	M¹	M³	M²	3
13.	Computer Applications Technology Paper 1	M³	A	A	M¹	A	M¹	A	A	M³	M¹	2
14.	Computer Applications Technology Paper 2	M¹	A	A	A	M³	M¹	A	M¹	M¹	M¹	2
15.	Consumer Studies	A	M	M³	M	M⁴	A	M	M²	M³	M²	2
16.	Dramatic Arts	M⁴	N³	A	M²	M⁴	M²	A	A	M¹	A	2
17.	Economics Paper 1	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
18.	Economics Paper 2	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
19.	Engineering Graphics and Design Paper 1	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
20.	Engineering Graphics and Design Paper 2	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
21.	English FAL Paper 1	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
22.	English FAL Paper 2	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
23.	English FAL Paper 3	M¹	A	A	A	M²	M¹	A	L²	M¹	A	2
24.	English HL Paper 1	M¹	M¹	M	L³	M⁶	A	M¹	A	M²	L⁶	2
25.	English HL Paper 2	M¹	M¹	M¹	L⁴	M⁸	M¹	M¹	M¹	M²	M⁶	3

No	Subject (question paper)	TD	IM	CC	CS	TS	L&B	Pre	Con	ARM	OI	Approval level
26.	English HL Paper 3	M^1	M^1	M^4	L^4	M^5	A	M^1	A	A	M^6	2
27.	Geography Paper 1	M^1	M^1	L^3	L^4	L^5	L^5	A	M^1	L^4	L^5	2
28.	Geography Paper 2	M^1	A	M^2	M^1	L^5	M^3	A	M^1	M^1	A	2
29.	History Paper 1	M	A	A	A	M^3	M^2	A	A	A	A	2
30.	History Paper 2	M^1	A	M^1	A	M^1	A	A	A	A	M^2	2
31.	Hospitality Studies	A	A	A	A	M^1	A	A	A	A	A	1
32.	Information Technology Paper 1	A	A	A	A	M^2	M^2	A	A	A	A	2
33.	Information Technology Paper 2	M^1	A	A	A	M^3	M^2	A	A	M^2	A	2
34.	Life Sciences Paper 1	M^2	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	M^3	A	2
35.	Life Sciences Paper 2	M^3	A	A	A	M^1	A	A	L^2	M^2	A	2
36.	Mathematical Literacy Paper 1	M^2	M^1	M^1	M^2	M^4	M^3	A	A	M1	M^3	2
37.	Mathematical Literacy Paper 2	M^2	M	M	M	M^4	L^4	A	M^1	M^3	L^4	2
38.	Mathematics Paper 1	M^2	A	M^1	M^2	M^1	A	A	A	M^1	M^3	2
39.	Mathematics Paper 2	M^2	M	M^3	M^2	M^2	M^1	A	A	M^1	M^3	3
40.	Physical Sciences Paper 1	M^2	A	A	M^1	M^3	A	A	M^1	M^1	M^3	2
41.	Physical Sciences Paper 2	M^4	A	M^1	M^2	M^1	A	N^3	A	M^3	L^6	2
42.	Religion Studies Paper 1	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
43.	Religion Studies Paper 2	SOURCED FROM THE BANK										
44.	Tourism	A	A	A	A	M^5	M^2	A	A	M^2	A	1
45.	Visual Arts Paper 1	M^1	A	A	M^2	A	M	A	A	M^2	A	2
46.	Visual Arts Paper 2	M^1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	1
47.	Life Orientation CAT	M^5	M^1	A	M^2	M^2	M^2	A	M^2	M^2	M^2	2

KEY:

TD = Technical Details; IM = Internal Moderation; CC = Content Coverage; CS = Cognitive Skills; TS = Text Selection, Types and Quality of Questions; L&B = Language and Bias; Pre = Predictability; Con = Conformity with Question Paper; ARM = Accuracy and Reliability of Marking Guideline; OI = Overall Impression

A = compliance in ALL respects; M = compliance in MOST respects; L = LIMITED compliance; N = NO compliance

M^x, L^x, N^x: x = number of quality indicators not complied with.

Annexure 2A: Subject portfolios and centres/schools verified for SBA

Subject	Centre/school
Afrikaans Home Language (HL)	Bet-El Christelike Akademie Didaskos Akademie Edu-Funda Learning Centre Elroi Academy Excelsior Akademie Impaq Nukleus Onderwys Think Digital College
Business Studies	3D Christian Academy Auxilio Calibre Education Elroi Academy Elsen Academy Mindscape Education Pierre van Ryneveld Christian School Robertson Logos Christian School Teneo Education
Economics	Boost Centre Johannesburg Cadmus Mindscape Education Pretium Private School Pierre van Ryneveld Christian Academy
English HL	DawnCroft Education Elroi Academy Mindscape Education Pierre van Ryneveld Christian School Pretium Private School School of Transformation
Geography	Advanced College Elroi Academy MTTC Teneo Education Teach Them Christian
Life Orientation	3D Christian Academy Advanced College Boost Centre Johannesburg Elroi Academy School of Transformation
Life Sciences	3D Christian Academy Auxilio Bet-El Christelike Akademie Didaskos Akademie Entheos Christian School Excelsior Akademie My Tutor and Teaching Centre Linden Pretium Private School Teneo Education Think Digital College

Subject	Centre/school
Mathematics	3D Christian Academy Advanced College Excelsior Akademie Impaq Mindscape Education Morester School School of Transformation
Mathematical Literacy	Advanced College Auxilio Calibre Education Elroi Academy Mindscape Education Pierre van Ryneveld Christian Academy School of Transformation Teneo Education Think Digital College
Physical Sciences	Elroi Academy Entheos Christian School Impaq Mindscape Education Moore House Academy Pierre van Ryneveld Christian School Robertson Logos Christian School Think Digital College Tomorrow's People College

Annexure 2B: Subject portfolios and centres/schools verified for PAT

Subject	Centre/school
Consumer Studies (Practical)	Impaq School of Transformation Think Digital College
Computer Applications Technology	Advanced College Auxilio Excelsior Akademie Impaq Mindscape Education Nukleus Onderwys Phoenix Teneo Education

Annexure 4A: Subjects audited for selection and appointment of markers

No	Subject	Question paper
1.	English Home Language (HL)	Paper 2
2.	Afrikaans HL	Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 3
3.	Business Studies	Paper 2
4.	Computer Applications Technology	Paper 1 and Paper 2
5.	Engineering Graphics and Design	Paper 1 and Paper 2
6.	Geography	Paper 1 and Paper 2
7.	History	Paper 1 and Paper 2
8.	Life Sciences	Paper 1 and Paper 2
9.	Mathematics	Paper 1 and Paper 2
10.	Visual Arts	Paper 1 and Paper 2

Annexure 5A: Examination centres visited during the writing of the examinations

No.	Province	Centre	Date	Subject written
1.	Gauteng	3D Christelike Akademie	21 October 2020	Information Technology Paper 1
2.	Gauteng	SACAI East Rand	21 October 2020	Information Technology Paper 1
3.	Gauteng	Life Ministries Christian School	04 November 2020	Mathematics Paper 1
4.	Gauteng	SACAI Krugersdorp East	25 November 2020	Business Studies Paper 1
5.	Gauteng	SACAI Moregloed	27 November 2020	Physical Science Paper 1
6.	Gauteng	SACAI Bel-El Pretoria North	27 November 2020	Physical Science Paper 1
7.	Gauteng	SACAI Boksburg	05 November 2020	Mathematical Literacy Paper 2
8.	Gauteng	Khairos Private School	17 November 2020	Afrikaans Home Language (HL) Paper 1
9.	Gauteng	Dera Distance Education	24 November 2020	English HL Paper 1
10.	Gauteng	SACAI Vanderbijlpark	14 December 2020	Economics Paper 2
11.	Limpopo	Ben Viljoen High School	20 October 2020	Computer Applications Technology Paper 1
12.	Limpopo	Ben Viljoen High School	09 December 2020	Tourism
13.	Limpopo	Graceland Combined School	14 December 2020	Economics Paper 2
14.	Limpopo	SACAI Polokwane	14 December 2020	Economics Paper 2
15.	Limpopo	SACAI Mokopane	10 December 2020	Engineering Graphics and Design Paper 1
16.	Mpumalanga	Purpose College	17 November 2020	Afrikaans First Additional Language (FAL) Paper 1
17.	Mpumalanga	SACAI Secunda	14 December 2020	Economics Paper 2
18.	Mpumalanga	Patriot High School	20 October 2020	Computer Applications Technology Paper 1

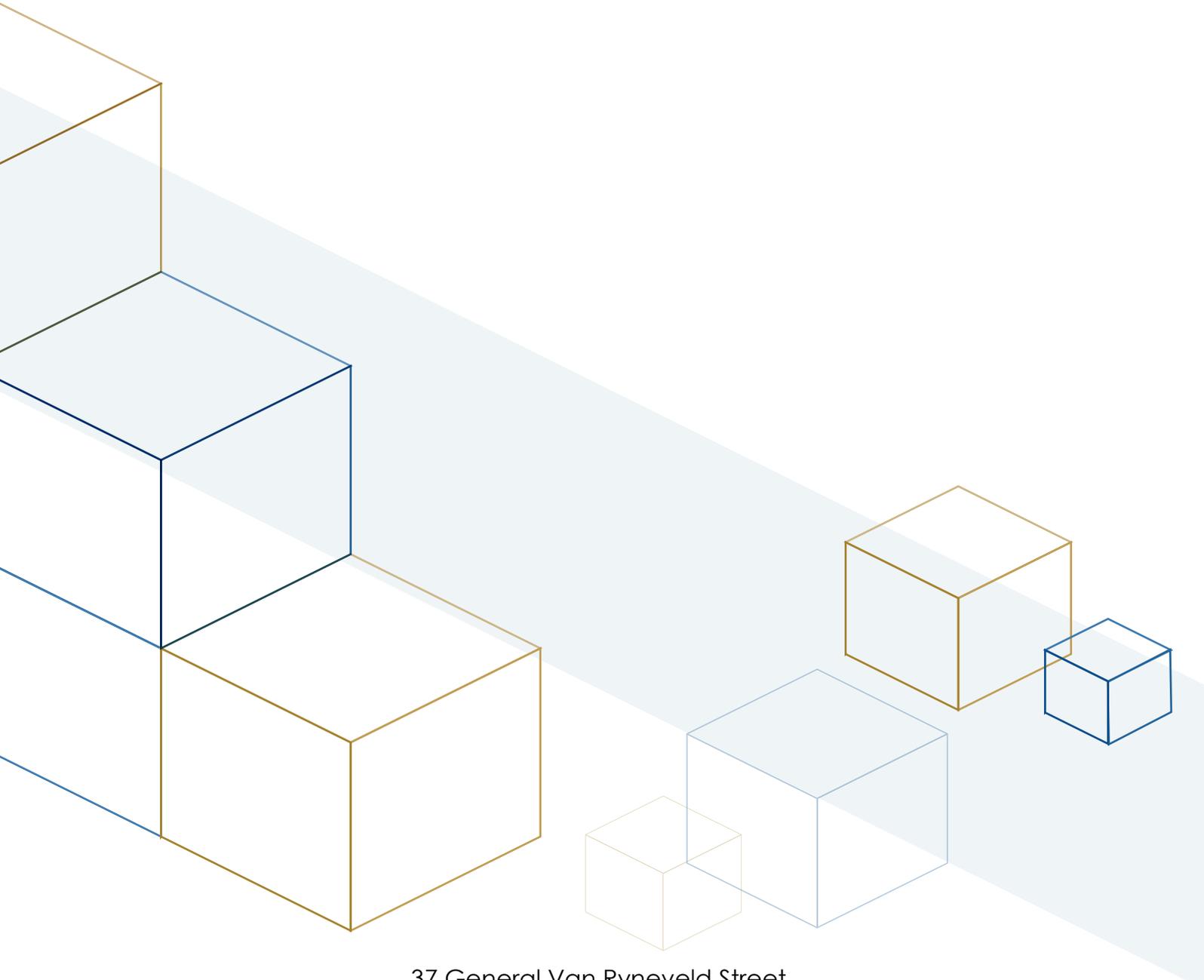| No.	Province	Centre	Date	Subject written
19.	KwaZulu-Natal	SACAI Richards Bay	27 November 2020	Physical Sciences Paper 1
20.	KwaZulu-Natal	His Church School	04 December 2020	Business Studies Paper 2
21.	KwaZulu-Natal	Morning Star Education Centre	12 November 2020	Life Sciences Paper 1
22.	KwaZulu-Natal	Amanzimtoti High School	12 November 2020	Life Sciences Paper 1
23.	Western Cape	SACAI Brackenfell	05 November 2020	Mathematical Literacy Paper 2
24.	Western Cape	Robertson Logos Christian School	17 November 2020	Afrikaans HL Paper 1
25.	Western Cape	Platinum College of Progress	23 November 2020	Accounting
26.	Northern Cape	Volkskool Orania	12 November 2020	Life Sciences Paper 1
27.	North West	Study Xpress	04 December 2020	Business Studies Paper 2
28.	North West	SACAI Zeerust	07 December 2020	Geography Paper 1
29.	Eastern Cape	Elsen Bridging School	03 November 2020	Mathematical Literacy Paper 1
30.	Free State	ICALC Training Centre	25 November 2020	Business Studies Paper 1

Annexure 5B: List centres implicated in Non-compliance areas.

Criteria	Nature of non-compliance	Centre implicated
Security and supply of question papers	The English Home Language (HL) Paper 1 question papers were observed to be in a room occupied by other personnel at the centre.	Dera Distance Education Centre
Admission of candidates into the examination centre	One candidate was found in possession of a cell phone.	Morning Star Education Centre
Conduciveness of the examination centre	There was some noise in the area around the examination centre.	Amanzimtoti High School
Administration of the writing session	Candidates were not given the regulated 10 minutes' reading time before the commencement of writing.	Patriot High School and Platinum College of Progress
Management of question papers	Information Technology question papers were opened in error on 20 October 2020, instead of the Computer Applications Technology question papers for that examination session.	SACAI East Rand