

Class of 2021 disadvantaged by reduced teaching time in Grade 11

The matric class of 2021 was disrupted in their schooling over the last two years, and the impact of the loss of more than 50% of their Grade 11 year presented serious consequences for the class.



Image source: Julia McCameron from [Pexels](#)

Speaking at the Umalusi standardisation meeting held on Thursday in Pretoria, the Department of Basic Education Director-General, Mathanzima Mveli, said the important foundation that Grade 11 work builds in preparation for Grade 12 was weakened.

“We will therefore see the deleterious effect of lost teaching time, in particular on those subjects that are time intensive such as the languages, and subjects that are heavily dependent on language for utility, such as Mathematical Literacy,” he said.

The Director-General said the standardisation of the 2021 NSC examinations is a special meeting that deserves distinctive attention for a number of reasons.

“These learners not only had to deal with a reduced exposure to face-to-face teaching and learning but they also had to contend with the anxieties and trauma of Covid-19. Countless families have been pushed to the limits of financial endurance from lost jobs and income.

“Not only this but also many families have lost family members and friends due to the pandemic,” Mveli said.

He said when looking at the principles of the science of how pupils learn, the cohort of 2021 was heavily impacted during their Grade 11 year due to reduced teaching time.

Mveli emphasised that learning is strengthened through the retrieval practice, which must be done multiple times and over time, including revisiting subject content across multiple sessions with good, specific and focused feedback from teachers and others, such as peers.

“The class of 2021 was deprived of this advantage. The unique learning context necessitated a robust, targeted and differentiated learner support programme for this cohort. The sector increased not only the learner beneficiaries and scope of the interventions but also the number and type of interventions offered to this class,” he said.

CAPS amendments

Mveli said the class of 2021 is also the first class to be presented with amendments to Section 4 of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), which impacted on 20 of the 67 subjects of this class.

“A further unanticipated hurdle that confronted this class was the load shedding that would have adversely affected their final preparations for the examinations.

“A total of 733,746 full-time candidates registered to write the 2021 NSC examination - the largest full time cohort over the last few years. A total of 123,487 more full-time candidates and 46,942 more part-time candidates registered to write the examination,” he said.

The Director-General said of the 733,746 candidates that registered for the examination, 700,604 candidates wrote the examination, which reflects the lowest percentage of “no shows” (4.5%) over the last few years.

“The increase in the number of full-time candidates can be attributed to a number of factors and one of the key factors is the change in the assessment regime, in Grade 10 and 11, which was prompted by the need to create maximum time for teaching and learning,” he said.

He added that the school based assessment in Grade 11 was increased from 25% to 60% and examinations were replaced by controlled tests.

“Hence, the change in assessment practices resulted in a different outcome. These learners would therefore have written their first fully-fledged examination in their Grade 12 year, which was part of the preparatory examination,” Mveli said.

Mveli said one of the purposes of standardisation is to ensure fairness from year to year and the disadvantages suffered by the class of 2021 cannot be ignored, as part of “our social justice obligations”.

Meanwhile, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga is expected to announce the outcome of the results of the 2021 NSC examinations on 20 January 2022.