2017

2017

NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE

EXAMINATION REPORT

SHAPING FREEDOM THROUGH EDUCATION

basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Read to Lead
A Reading Nation is a Leading Nation

CELEBRATING
OR TAMBO
100 YEARS


Shaping
Freedom
Through
Education

REPORT ON THE 2017
NATIONAL SENIOR
CERTIFICATE RESULTS

Examination Report

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FOREWORD

The Class of 2017 wrote their National Senior Certificate examination in an extraordinary year, affirmed by South Africans as the year of OR Tambo, a centenary celebration of the birth of a profound struggle hero, peoples' president and astute academic who left an indelible mark on shaping the freedom we enjoy today. The skills and values of Oliver Reginald (OR) Tambo are an enduring and ever present inspiration to the ordinary South African parent and child. He combined traditional rural roots with education expertise, recognised the value of academic excellence, and presented a will to succeed despite a restrictive learning environment. In 1936, Tambo passed the Junior Certificate examination with a first class pass and in 1938 entered for the matriculation examination finishing as one of the top students with a first class pass, before going on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree and become an engaging teacher in Physics and Mathematics.

As we celebrate the Class of 2017 with much fanfare, we are therefore privileged to align our successes to the astounding achievements of past heroes such as OR who have shaped our freedom through excellence in education. I am pleased to release the National Senior Certificate Examination Report for the Class of 2017. While Tambo passed on a year before the dawn of a democratic State, the Class of 2017 entered the education system in 2006, twelve years into our democracy, secure in the context of free citizenry in South Africa and a commitment from government to create better life opportunities for all.

The great gains of the democratic era underscore an improving education system determined to assure quality in basic education, enhance teaching and learning standards and carefully measure progress over time. The cornerstone of this determination has been an impervious goal to profit the children of South Africa with knowledge and skills that translate into economic freedom within a democratically transformed society and to be suitably fit for the modern challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Hence, the Government of the Republic of South Africa esteems the provision of quality basic education free of discrimination as its apex priority and as a national imperative advanced by clearly articulated milestones in the *National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030: Our future – Make it work*. There is a clear mandate to direct that standards of education provision, delivery and performance of learners be monitored and evaluated by the Department annually or at other specified intervals, with the object of assessing progress in complying with the provisions of the

Constitution and with national education policy. In this regard, the outcome of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) has since its introduction in 2008 been regarded as the primary indicator of system progress.

In 2017, we stayed on-course in lifting poverty barriers and our policies and interventions were deliberately geared towards improving the nutrition of learners, building more safe schools and improving school infrastructure in rural areas, ensuring every child in "no-fee" schools has access to workbooks, improving the competency and capacity of school principals to be effective leaders and building more teacher development centres to support the improvement in teacher content knowledge and pedagogical practice. These sector inputs accompanied by high quality educational processes provide a basis for improved results in learner performance. However, noting that the education enterprise is a highly complex activity where the outcome is based on a multiplicity of factors, and improved results can only be cautiously attributed to linear processes, we use the National Senior Certificate examination results, as one of the key barometers to evaluate success.

The improved 2017 NSC result is a celebration of concerted and collective efforts of the educational hierarchy of learner, teacher and system, working as a coherent sector. It was highly welcomed, though not unexpected, that a significant number of schools in provinces with traditional rural locations improved their results. The 2017 results provide further evidence that the intensive support provided to low performing provinces in 2016 have borne fruit and is a testament that Government's pro-poor policies to the most disadvantaged are working. We continue to see significant gains in the margins of improvement among quintiles 1 to 3 schools which point towards an average annual increase in black African high-level achievers since 2008. Many of these learners come from historically disadvantaged schools. Notwithstanding the systemic gains of the NSC, we remain concerned that in urban provinces, the gains in our top-end schools are below expectations.

The noteworthy observations of progress indicated in this Report are aligned to performance patterns observed in recent cycles of international and regional assessment programmes which indicate that our concerted efforts in strengthening these sector inputs have positively contributed to improved learner performance. The recent results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) show that the performance of South African learners is on an upward trajectory. The improved NSC results in Mathematics and Physical Sciences confirm the upward trajectories observed in these international assessments which is important as these subjects provide a gateway for learners to enter career fields where currently there is a skills shortage. Building on the upward system

trajectory patterns observed in TIMSS and SACMEQ, the achievement rate of the 2017 NSC cohort has increased from 72.5% in 2016 to 75.1% in 2017. This indicates that systemic gains at lower levels of the system (e.g. Grade 6 and Grade 9) are being carried through to Grade 12. As in 2016, the results also point towards increasing stability in performance levels where the NSC national achievement rate has consistently remained above 70% for the past six years. The class of 2017 should be commended for their contribution towards a rise in the system performance. Overall, a reconciliation of the international assessment and the NSC results indicates that at key levels of the system, there are encouraging gains that can be built on to strengthen an upward momentum.

The Quality Assurance Council, Umalusi, which plays a critical role in upholding the integrity of the NSC examination, has after rigorous verification of all examination processes, approved the results of the 2017 NSC examination. This achievement has been attributed to an examination and assessment system that has engineered a high degree of precision in its administrative systems and processes, set papers that are internationally comparable, improved its marking processes so that competent markers are appointed and trained, and introduced robust quality assurance measures to improve the quality of marking. The strengthened administration processes saw a reduction in examination irregularities. I am pleased to report that there were no leakages in the 2017 NSC examination. Further, it must be acknowledged that the results are subjected to a rigorous standardisation process conducted by Umalusi prior to the release of results and the Class of 2017 must be congratulated that in more than two thirds of the subjects written, the raw marks of candidates were accepted. This shows that efforts by educators and all official involved in the teaching, learning an assessment process are working. The NSC examination processes have been consistently reviewed and strengthened over the past 20 years and the qualification is therefore trusted by employers, higher education institutions and the South African public.

Typical of "high stakes" public examinations conducted internationally, there are challenges which are not unique to the NSC. Our rates of learners completing twelve years of schooling remain a challenge and the class of 2017 is the tenth cohort to sit for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination since its inception in 2008. In 2017, 629 155 full time candidates entered for the NSC of which 534 484 wrote the examination with the highest proportions coming from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Of these, 2 777 were classified as special need learners. As was observed in 2016, more girls than boys entered for the NSC examination. Due to a strengthening of policy, in 2017, the number of Grade 11 learners that were progressed, decreased by 1 312 from 108 742

learners to 107 430. In 2016, the current policy on progressed learners was amended to streamline its application to ensure that only learners with the potential of succeeding in Grade 12 are progressed from Grade 11.

Congratulations to the Class of 2017! Our great heroes of the past such as OR Tambo and Nelson Mandela would have been proud of your dedication and effort. Your hard work has been justly rewarded. I encourage you to see this achievement as an important milestone to even greater success in furthering your life opportunities in higher education, in the workplace and as valuable citizens in further shaping our democratic freedom through education. I also thank parents, teachers, principals, teacher unions, communities, district and provincial officials, and social partners for supporting the Class of 2017. I therefore invite all education stakeholders and the broader South African public to view the results with a sense of ownership and involvement and to support the projects, programmes and efforts of the Department in our mission to deliver and assure quality basic education to all learners.

"The fight for freedom must go on until it is won; until our country is free and happy and peaceful as part of the community of man, we cannot rest." (OR Tambo)

MRS AM MOTSHEKGA, MP
MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION
04 JANUARY 2018

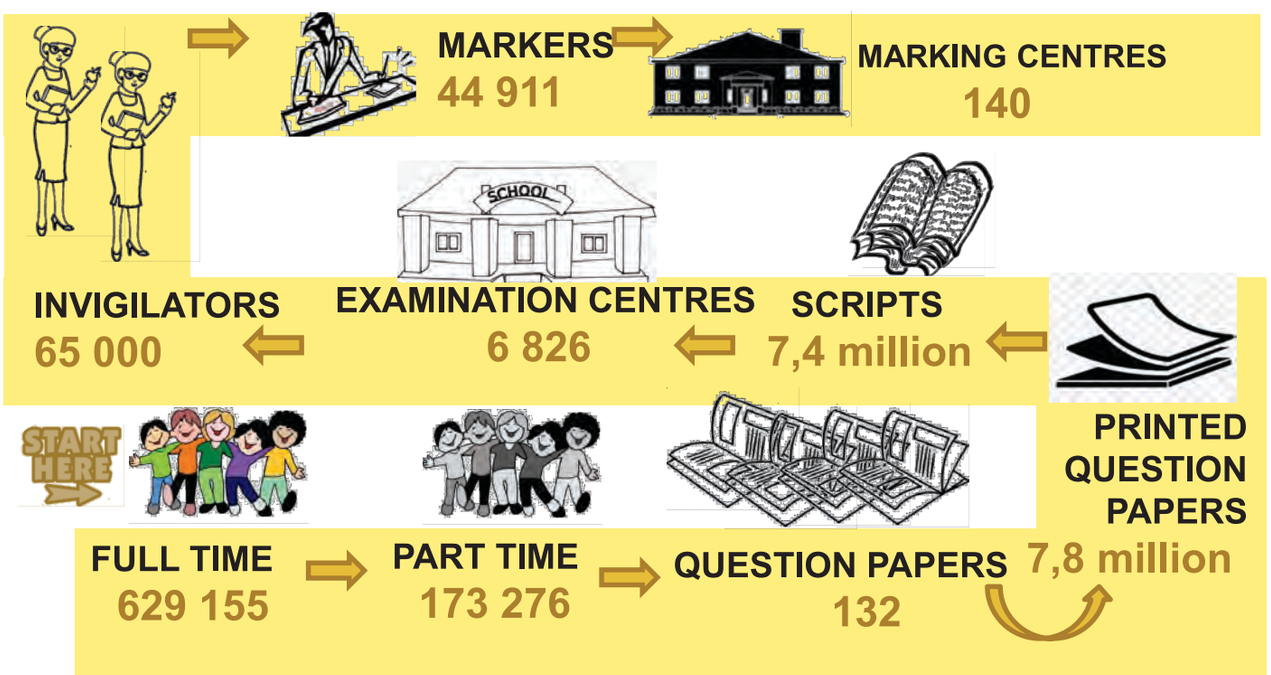
75.1%

A system on the rise

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2017 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination was administered to 629 155 full-time candidates and 173 276 part-time candidates. The Class of 2017 is the fourth cohort of candidates to write the NSC examination that is aligned with the internationally benchmarked national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The 2017 UMALUSI report on the quality assurance of the NSC confirmed that the 2017 NSC Examination was credible with an improved administration process.

Building on the gains of the 2016 cohort, the Department of Basic Education improved its data collection, data analysis and feedback processes. The infographic below summarises the scope of the 2017 NSC Examination.



The achievement rate of this cohort was a marked improvement from 2016 with an increase of 2.6 percentage points from 72.5% in 2016 to 75.1% in 2017. This must be seen in context of greater efficiency in a maturing and stabilising system in which teachers and district officials are now more familiar with the required pedagogical content knowledge of CAPS and the need to expose learners to questions of high cognitive demand. It is also underpinned by systemic gains at lower levels of the system as indicated by higher achievement patterns in the recent cycles of TIMSS and SACMEQ.

The overall performance of the Class of 2017 is indicated in the table below.

2017			
Province	**Total Wrote**	**Total Achieved**	**% Achieved**
Eastern Cape	67,648	43,981	65.0
Free State	25,130	21,631	86.1
Gauteng	97,284	82,826	85.1
Kwazulu-Natal	124,317	90,589	72.9
Limpopo	83,228	54,625	65.6
Mpumalanga	48,483	36,273	74.8
North West	30,792	24,462	79.4
Northern Cape	8,735	6,608	75.6
Western Cape	48,867	40,440	82.8
National	534,484	401,435	75.1

The improved achievement rate shows a system that has consistently achieved above 70% over the last 7 years (see Figure 1 below).

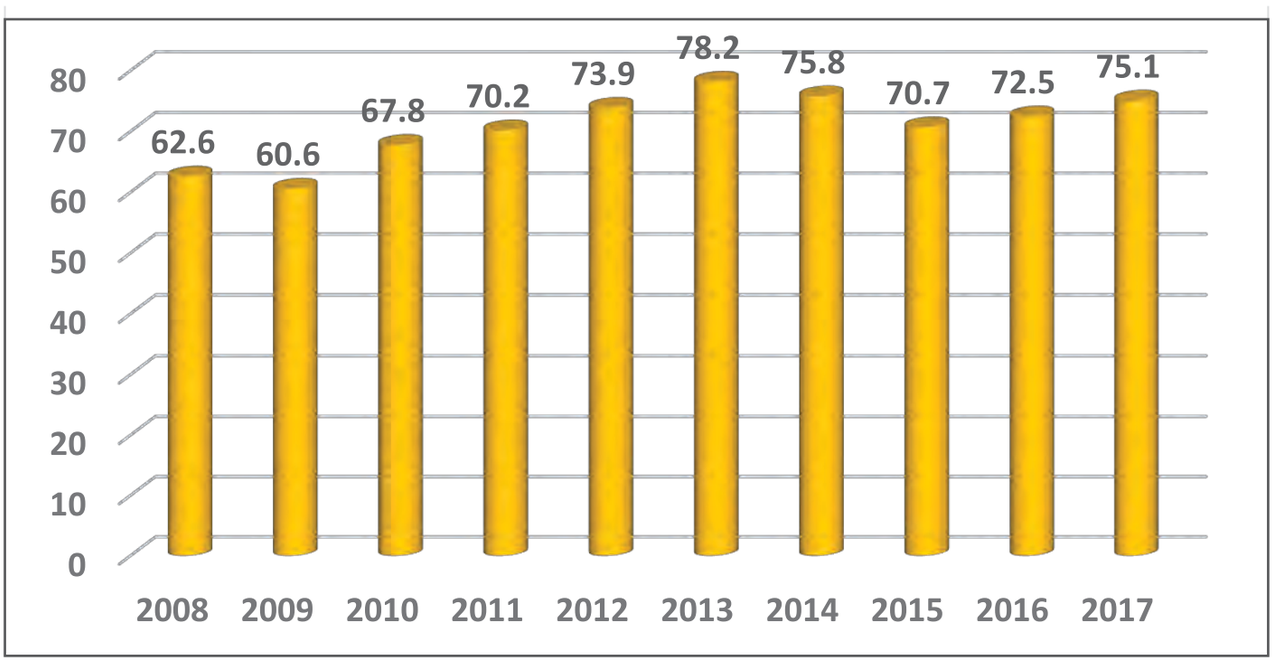


Figure 1: Comparison of NSC performance 2008 to 2017

Against the three indicators articulated in the National Development Plan that are directly linked to the promotion of excellence and scarce skills in Grade 12, the Class of 2017 showed an improvement on:-

(a) The number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelor's Programme at a university;

(b) The number of Grade 12 learners who pass Mathematics; and

(c) The number of Grade 12 learners who pass Physical Science.

The improvements on Bachelor passes is indicated in Figure 2 below

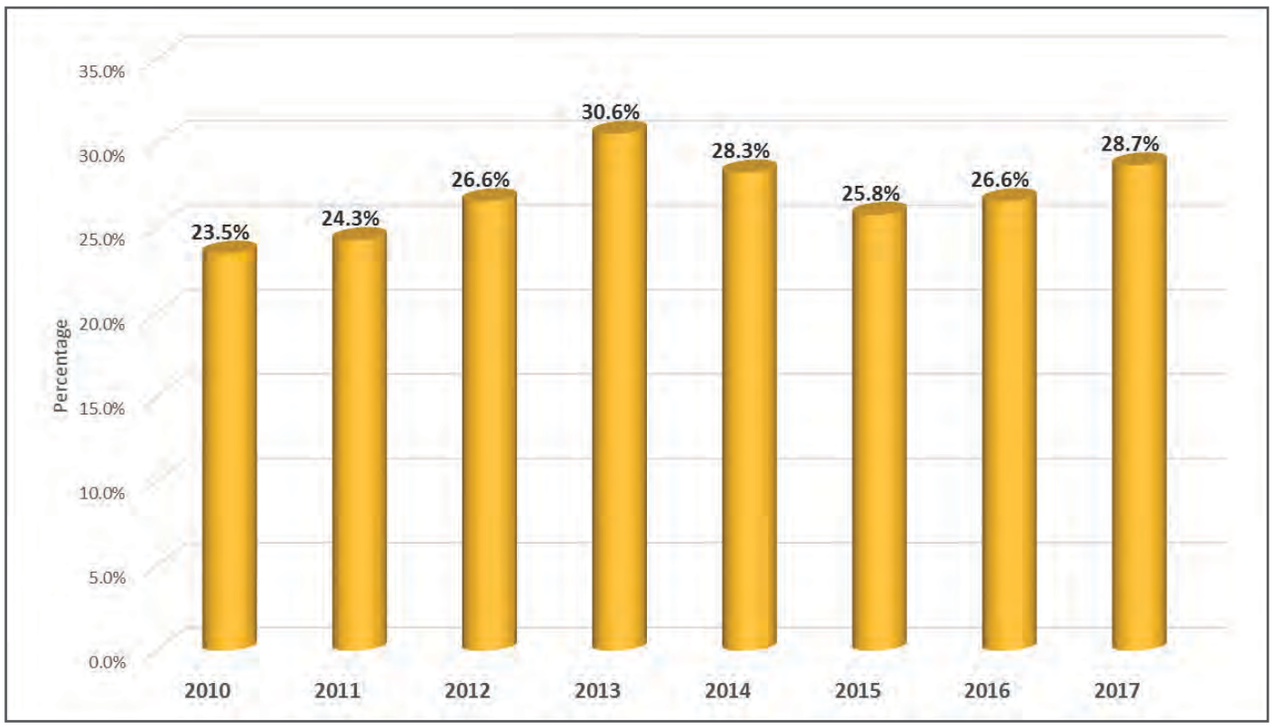


Figure 2: Bachelor Pass Trend (Percentage): 2010 - 2017

Table 2 shows the performance of full time candidates at 30% and above in the 11 key subjects from 2012 and 2017. In Mathematical Literacy the performance of candidates improved by 2.6 percentage points from 2016. In Mathematics, the improvement over the last three years was 2.8 percentage points. In Physical Science, there was a notable improvement of 3.1 percentage points from the scores achieved in 2016.

Table 2: Candidates' performance in selected subjects, 2012 – 2017 at 30% level

Subjects	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Accounting	65.6	65.7	68	59.6	69.5	66.1
Agricultural Sciences	73.7	80.7	82.6	76.9	75.4	70.4
Business Studies	77.4	81.9	77.9	75.7	73.7	68.0
Economics	72.8	73.9	68.9	68.2	65.3	71.0
Geography	75.8	80	81.3	77	76.5	76.9
History	86	87.1	86.3	84	84	86.0
Life Orientation	99.7	99.8	99.6	99.7	99.7	99.8
Life Sciences	69.5	73.7	73.8	70.4	70.5	74.4
Mathematical Literacy	87.4	87.1	84.1	71.4	71.3	73.9
Mathematics	54	59.1	53.5	49.1	51.1	51.9
Physical Sciences	61.3	67.4	61.5	58.6	62	65.1

The notable achievement trends of the 2017 NSC examination include the following:

(a) Improvement in the performance of three rural provinces.

(b) Increase in the percentage of learners achieving Bachelor programmes.

(c) 76 300 of the admission to Bachelor studies come from quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, compared to 67 867 from quintiles 4 and 5 schools.

(d) 1 626 of the quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools achieving above 80% pass rate.

(e) Improvement in the performance of key subjects: Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, and Economics.

(f) 18 751 (55.1%) of the progressed learners that wrote all seven subjects obtained the NSC and 1 801 distinctions were obtained, even in gateway subjects.

(g) 70 districts performing above 50%.

(h) 31 districts performing above 80%

Overall, the performance in 2017 shows that the system remains firmly on an upward trajectory.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Class of 2017 represents the Tenth (10th) cohort of learners to sit for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and forth (4th) cohort to write a Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) aligned NSC Examination. These candidates entered the formal schooling system in January 2006 and the NSC examination is the culmination of twelve years of teaching and learning. The final outcome of this examination, which is captured in this Report, is indicative of one of the most important indicators of performance of the schooling system in the 2017 academic year.

In terms of the Action Plan of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the following three key targets are directly measured through the performance in the NSC:

(a) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelor's Programme at a university;

(b) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who pass Mathematics; and

(c) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who pass Physical Science.

In 2017, a total of 629 155 full time candidates entered for the NSC. The NSC examination is primarily designed for certification i.e. to assess candidates' attainment of expected learning outcomes at the end of twelve years of teaching and learning. However, the NSC examination also provides valuable data to education planners, institutional role players and decision makers in the sector to improve the quality of basic education. Critically, it also has an important diagnostic role in assisting education stakeholders to identify areas of weakness and strength in each of the subjects offered in the qualification.

This report details the profile of the Class of 2017 and the interventions provided to specifically support this cohort. The Report outlines the purpose, noteworthy trends on historical performance, and key challenges confronting the NSC in the national schooling system as the backdrop against which the results of the class of 2017 should be read and understood. Included in this report are pertinent details on the NSC and the underlying methodology of examination processes followed this year. To better understand the methodology of the examination, a detailed account of specific quality controls on question paper development, examination administration, marking, and school based assessment is provided. The analysis of results is presented graphically and in tabular format and covers national, provincial and district contexts. Specific analyses on progressed and special needs learners are included in the results section. The analysis covers the results of both full-time and part-time candidates. A summary of key gains in the system and limitations in the analysis concludes the report.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a credible account of the conduct of the NSC as a high stakes examination and indicate how the Class of 2017 performed. It provides a detailed account of system performance of the system through aggregated learner performance data on the Class of 2017 at the different levels of the system, subject data at national and provincial levels, and presents an analysis of data in terms of the gender of candidates and quintile rankings in which schools are categorised. This report is the first in a compilation of four reports covering the NSC examinations. In addition to the NSC Examination Report, the following three reports have been published:

(a) National Schools Report that presents the overall school results per school over the last three years;

(b) National Subject Report which provides the results of selected subjects per individual school; and,

(c) The National Diagnostic Report (Part 1 and Part 2) which analyses learner performance in the gateway subjects and 11 home languages identifies the areas of poor performance and recommends appropriate remedial measures in each of the subjects.

The reports have been designed to provide the education sector with valuable data on learner performance after 12 years of schooling and empirical evidence on the performance of the basic education system on quality learning outcomes. The key findings are listed in the NSC Examination Report to provide an evaluation of national achievements of the sector and to further assist in understanding existing disparities for future planning.

Finally, this report is intended to assist managers at the national, provincial, district and circuit levels in planning their programmes for the 2018 academic year, and beyond. The data provided, will be used by educational researchers to conduct a deeper analysis of learner performance so as to make recommendations for improved performance.

3. THE ROLE OF THE NSC AS A CRITICAL INDICATOR OF THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM

The Government of the Republic of South Africa esteems the provision of quality basic education, free of discrimination, as its apex priority and as a national imperative advanced by its citizenry and provided for in the Constitution. It duly recognises the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as the authority responsible for guiding this national imperative into reality for more than 12 million learners from reception (Grade R) to matriculation (Grade 12). The Minister directs that standards of education provision, delivery and performance of learners be monitored and evaluated by the Department annually or at other specified intervals, with the object of assessing progress in complying with the provisions of the Constitution and with national education policy.

Improving the quality of basic education has been articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP). Medium term plans and strategies of the Department have been framed by the NDP while it accelerates new strategies that are meant to take our education to greater heights. The Department will, over the next five years, through its *Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030,* speed up planning and implementation of identified projects through Operation Phakisa, a methodology adopted by the Cabinet of Government to fast-track delivery of priorities encompassed in the NDP. In support of sector partnerships advocated by the NDP, the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) launched in 2013, was developed by a range of public-private stakeholders, and takes forward government's commitment to prioritising basic education.

In 2017, the basic education cohort had almost 12 932 565 learners in ordinary public and independent schools in South Africa, who attended 25 574 schools and were served by 418 613 educators. Within this cohort, a total of 802 431 candidates participated in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination. Within the Action Plan, the NSC and our international assessments (TIMSS, PIRLS and SACMEQ) are considered valuable indicators of measuring quality basic education. They provide a snapshot of basic education quality in a range of key performance areas within the DBE and across relevant transversal departments within the public service. The Department uses these results to

mentor poor performing districts with the intention of ensuring that results improve. They also provide evidence for building specific strategies that would transform the basic education sector.

The output goals focusing on improving average performance include improving the access of youth to FET strands beyond Grade 9. A key indicator in the programme performance measures (PPM) for provincial education departments is the total number of secondary schools that has achieved an average pass of 60% and above in the NSC.

The performance against these indicators indicates how well the Department is performing against its aims and objectives in relation to the national imperative. Credible performance information helps identify what policies and processes work and why they work. Therefore, making the best use of available data and knowledge is critical for improving the quality of basic education and for the Department to better understand the issues involved.

Prior to the introduction of the NSC in 2008, there were attempts to standardise the administration of the examinations across the nine PEDs, and to establish a standard in the question papers, by the setting of national question papers in selected gateway subjects. But from 2008, the Department embarked on the standardisation of the exit examination by setting national question papers in all subjects and strengthening the standardisation of the examination administration . It is therefore imperative to reiterate the purpose of the NSC in its current form; namely, to:

(a) represent a planned combination of learning outcomes that has a defined purpose or purposes, and is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning;
(b) enrich the qualifying learner;
(c) provide benefits to society and the economy;
(d) comply with the objectives of the NQF;
(e) where applicable, be internationally comparable;
(f) incorporate integrated assessment; and,
(g) indicate the rules governing the award of the qualification.

Ultimately, we need to acknowledge that the nature and quality of NSC assessment systems should be scrutinized, analysed, revised and improved on a constant basis. Given the current interface, the DBE aims to refine assessment policies and guidelines, streamline the quality of setting and moderation processes and use international benchmarking of question papers to inform future planning. The ultimate aim is to ensure that the NSC prepares candidates adequately to cope with the challenges posed by higher education and the world of work.

It is important to note that making the perceived quality of the NSC the reason for the real or apparent shortcomings of school-leavers and first-year students, will not by itself lead to the envisioned improvement in school-leavers' readiness for higher education and the world of work. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders in education to improve the quality of the outcomes by ensuring synergy between the curricula offered at schools and the undergraduate level, and to improve the quality of the inputs into the basic education and higher education systems so as to produce South African graduates, entrepreneurs and self-starters who can participate in growing the job market.

4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE

4.1 General Requirements

In order to pass the NSC, a candidate must offer seven approved subjects and comply with the requirements of school based assessment (SBA) for each of the subjects. The minimum duration of the NSC qualification, is three years, namely Grades 10, 11 and 12.

For a candidate to obtain a National Senior Certificate qualification, he or she must:

(a) Complete the programme requirements for Grades 10, 11 and 12 separately, and obtain the stipulated outcomes and associated assessment requirements of all three years; and

(b) Comply with the internal and external assessment requirements for Grades 10, 11 and 12.

The qualification is structured according to specific categories of subjects and rules of combination. The minimum requirements for a candidate to obtain the NSC are that a candidate should:

(a) Achieve at least 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level and 30% in three other subjects; and

(b) Have complied with all the SBA requirements in the subjects offered.

4.2 Admission to Higher Education Institutions

The NSC is accepted internationally as a qualification of a high standard. It is also the gateway for further study at higher education institutions. For this purpose, Universities South Africa, formerly known as Higher Education South Africa (HESA), has developed minimum requirements for admission to higher education institutions, namely, studies leading to a Higher Certificate, Diploma or Bachelor's Degree.

(a) Higher Certificate

The minimum admission requirement is a NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi. Institutional and programme needs may require additional combinations or recognised NSC subjects

and levels of achievement.

(b) Diploma

The minimum admission requirement is the NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi, coupled with an achievement rating of 3 (moderate achievement, 40% - 49%) or better in four (4) recognised 20-credit subjects. Institutional and programme needs may require additional combinations of recognised NSC subjects and levels of achievement.

(c) Bachelor's Degree

To meet the minimum admission requirements to a Bachelor's Degree study at a higher education institution, a candidate must obtain, in addition to the NSC, an achievement rating of 4 (Adequate Achievement, 50% - 59%) or better in four designated subjects chosen from the following recognised 20-credit bearing subjects:

- Accounting
- Information Technology
- Agricultural
- Sciences
- Languages
- Business Studies
- Life Sciences
- Consumer Studies
- Mathematics
- Dramatic Arts
- Mathematical Literacy
- Economics
- Music
- Engineering, Graphics and Design
- Physical Sciences
- Geography
- Religion Studies
- History Visual
- Arts

4.3 Minimum promotion requirements for awarding the NSC to candidates with Special Needs FET learners who experience barriers to learning enrolled in Grade 10-12 are allowed to follow alternative pathways to obtain the NSC.

The Endorsed NSC is for candidates who cannot, despite the concessions granted in the policy, meet the stipulated requirements. Barriers to learning identified in the policy include visual, aural and hearing impairment, aphasia, dyslexia, and mathematical disorders such as dyscalculia. Candidates registered for the Endorsed NSC only need to offer five subjects, namely, First Additional Language, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation and two other subjects. A candidate is expected to achieve a minimum of 30% in the five subjects to be awarded the Endorsed NSC.

5. THE CREDIBILITY OF THE 2017 NSC EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Preparations for the National Senior Certificate examinations commence 18 months prior to the start of the examinations. This advance planning ensures the efficient administration of the examinations. The preparations include a sequence of processes that begin with the registration of examination centres and candidates and concludes with the certification of candidates.

The key examination processes that warrant precise planning, preparation and implementation include the following:

- Registration of Examination Centres and Candidates
- Development of National Question Papers
- Writing of the NSC Examination
- Marking of the NSC Examination Scripts
- Management of examination irregularities.
- Managing Resulting and Certification processes
- Quality assurance of School Based Assessment

5.1 Registration

The registration of candidates and the registration of examination centres determine the accuracy of all subsequent examination processes. The DBE and the PEDs have improved the verification measures relating to the registration process. After the learner registration data was captured on the Integrated Examination Computer System (IECS), at least two preliminary schedules with the candidate data were printed. These printed schedules were given to individual candidates for verification and approval. Corrections were effected and a final examination schedule was printed and forwarded to schools for another verification.

In terms of examination centre registration, only independent schools that are accredited with Umalusi were allowed to be registered as examination centres. However, a number of examination centres that were administering the NSC examinations, but were not accredited with Umalusi, were identified and in all such centres, the PED either took over the management of the examinations at these independent schools or alternatively, relocated these candidates to designated centres established by the PED.

The pre-conditions for progression, promulgated by the minister in 2016, were fully implemented for the first time in 2017. This implies that candidates that qualified for progression in Grade 11 had to satisfy these additional pre-conditions, before they could progress to Grade 12. A total of 107 430 progressed learners entered to sit for the 2017 NSC examinations. This totals 1 312 fewer candidates than the 108 742 candidates that registered for the 2016 NSC examinations.

The DBE promotes access for all learners, irrespective of their circumstances. This includes learners with special needs. Special concessions are allowed to accommodate learners with special needs. Such learners were evaluated and verified by the relevant professional experts and approved by the provincial Head of Education. These candidates are accommodated, in that their question papers are adapted according to their special needs and in some cases a scribe or Amanuensis is appointed for candidates who require such assistance. Provisions are made for the candidates who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, physically impaired, dyslexic etc. These candidates are also granted extra time to complete their examinations. Learners with severe barriers to learning may also qualify to write the Endorsed National Senior Certificate, which comprises a five subject NSC. A total of 2777 learners with special needs (LSEN) enrolled for the 2017 NSC examinations and 121 candidates enrolled for the Endorsed NSC.

5.2 Development of National Question Papers

The question paper remains the de facto standard of the curriculum, therefore setting a question paper that accurately reflects the standard and the intended outcomes of the curriculum is of paramount importance. To ensure this, the DBE appointed and trained panels of examiners and internal moderators per subject. Each panel comprises a minimum of three examiners, a chief examiner and one or two internal moderators, based on their expertise and experience. Prior to the commencement of setting of the November 2017 examinations the panels reviewed and considered the feedback received from the 2016 marking processes, the standardisation of the November 2016 results, public and professional bodies as well as the feedback from the Evaluation of the 2016 question papers by Universities South Africa (USAf). This feedback fulfilled a cardinal role in improving the quality of the 2017 question papers.

A total of **132** question papers was set by the DBE for the November 2017 NSC examination. The November 2017 question papers were developed following the format of the November 2016 and Supplementary 2017 examinations. In addition, based on a contractual arrangement with the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), **44** question

papers for non-official Languages were set by the IEB. Fifty seven **(57)** question papers were adapted for the blind learners and **40** question papers were adapted for deaf learners. The adaptation of the question papers for the blind and deaf was done by special examiners, who are mainly subject specialists with proven experience in the education of the blind and deaf, together with the chief examiners or internal moderators from the national panel.

All question papers were internally moderated by independent DBE-appointed internal moderators to ensure that the question paper was of the appropriate quality and standard. Once the question papers were approved by the internal moderators, Umalusi's external moderators verified, evaluated and approved all the question papers for the November 2017 and March 2018 NSC examinations concurrently, to ensure comparable standards. The rigorous external moderation process ensured that the question papers were of a high quality and an appropriate standard for Grade 12 learners.

The final quality assurance of the 2017 NSC question papers was conducted at the DBE in collaboration with PEDs. The quality assurance process comprises editing, correlation, proofreading and quality control. After the DBE's editing team has completed the editing and correlation, a team of selected editors from different provinces are used to conduct another round of editing and proofreading of the question papers.

The external and internal moderators also proofread and sign off, the final print-ready copies of each question paper and the marking guidelines. The DBE subsequently conducted an additional layer of quality assurance that focuses mainly on the fairness of the November 2017 question papers in relation to bias, language accessibility, and relevance of the tests for Grade 12 learners, as well as the overall technical aspects of the papers. The fairness review was conducted by two independent subject specialists, comprising subject experts and language editors.

Question papers were released to the PEDs, based on their printing plans and in seven of the nine PEDs, a 'Just in time', printing approach was adopted. This minimised the exposure of the question papers and thus enhanced the security of the question papers.

5.3 The writing of the examination

In order to ensure uniformity in the conduct, administration and management of examinations in all nine PEDs, the Norms and Standards covering the key aspects relating to the writing of the examination, were reviewed and amended in line with developments over the past three years. These were also mediated with participants from the PEDs to ensure a common understanding and implementation of these standards.

The training of chief invigilators and invigilators

was rigorous and most PEDs adopted a cluster training approach. Chief invigilators were trained by the provincial training team, and invigilators were clustered together in circuits and trained by a district training team. This ensured better standardisation and ensured that the training of invigilators in any school was not left to a single chief invigilator.

On 13 October 2017 all learners from the various provinces signed a pledge which was a commitment to comply with the examination code of conduct. The signing of the pledge was done at a pledge signing ceremony conducted by the school, which was done on the same day in all schools in the country. In 2017 the DBE also developed a commitment agreement which all candidates and parents/legal guardians of candidates were requested to sign prior to the examination. The agreement highlights key rules and regulations which candidates and parents/guardians should be aware of and also ensure are complied with by candidates. The possible sanctions that could be imposed by the DBE in the event of a contravention, are also outlined in the Commitment Agreement. It is assumed that the increased awareness regarding examination malpractices has dissuaded candidates from getting involved in such acts.

Examination centres were audited by PEDs and categorised according to their risk profiles based on previous irregularities. All schools/centres with a previous history of irregularities were classified as high risk centres and such centres had to be closely monitored during the examinations. All independent centres were also audited by the PEDs and in cases where the integrity of the examination was questionable, a resident monitor was placed at that centre or alternatively, the management of examinations at the centre was taken over by the provincial or district officials. Medium risk centres were assigned a roving monitor who covered a group of centres. In addition, all the nodal, distribution and storage points were audited by DBE to confirm their level of compliance with the security protocol of the DBE. Only storage points that complied with the security protocol were allowed to store question papers.

The DBE engaged the State Security Services and requested intelligence support from National Intelligence Agency (NIA) during the writing of the 2017 NSC examinations. In addition the collaborative structure which was established with SAPs, Crime Intelligence and Disaster Management services through National Joint

Operations and Intelligence Structures (NATJOINTS) and Provincial Joint Committees (PROVJOINTS) were briefed and they all supported the DBE and PEDs in conducting the examinations.

The DBE embarked on a series of monitoring activities to ensure that PEDs comply with the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the NSC examinations*. Intensive monitoring was conducted by both PEDs and DBE. The DBE appointed **50** part-time monitors who monitored all processes in the examination cycle across the nine PEDs. In addition, the DBE employed the services of **30** School Improvement Support Coordinators (SISCO) and a number of DBE officials from directorates across the Department were deployed to assist with the monitoring of the writing of the examinations.

5.4 Marking

Valid and reliable marking is crucial to the credibility of examination outcomes. The DBE has in recent years implemented a range of interventions to build and to sustain public confidence in the quality, reliability and validity of the marking of the NSC. These interventions include the standardization of marking systems and processes, and the introduction of a range of quality enhancements. Some of the quality enhancements are:

a) Audit of marker appointments
b) Strengthening the marking standardisation meetings
c) Implementation of the tolerance range
d) Authorisation of chief markers and internal moderators
e) Training of markers across all PEDs
f) Centralised marking of subjects with small enrolments.

(a) Audit of Marker Appointments

The reliability of the marking system is to a large extent dependent on the competency and calibre of markers. Therefore, the DBE once again conducted an audit of the marker appointments in key subjects in all PEDs. The audit was undertaken to ensure that PEDs comply with the criteria for appointments. It was found that markers have been appointed based on the criteria articulated

in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) and most PEDs have added learner performance as an additional criterion. In cases where there were discrepancies, these were brought to the attention of the PED and they were corrected.

(b) Strengthening Marking Standardisation Meetings

National marking standardization meetings were hosted in Pretoria for all subjects to ensure the standardisation of marking in all PEDs. These meetings were convened from **23 October 2017** to **30 November 2017.** The purpose of these meetings was multifold and they included the following:

- to allow for the question paper to be scrutinised by chief markers and internal moderators and to identify questions that were unfair, so that they could be appropriately addressed during the marking process;
- to allow for inputs into the marking guideline so that all possible alternative responses can be accommodated; and
- to allow for the training of chief markers and internal moderators with a view to allowing for a uniform application of the marking guideline.

The marking standardisation meetings were chaired by a senior official from the DBE or the PED, who is at the level of a director or above. The aim of this introduction is to ensure that the integrity of the marking standardisation process is upheld by all stakeholders. The chairperson ensured that the standardisation meeting was carried out in an objective manner, and that all participants were given an equal opportunity to contribute to the final marking guideline. The final decisions relating to the inclusion or exclusion of a response on the marking guideline was approved by the Umalusi external moderator.

(c) Implementation of a Tolerance Range in the moderation of marking

A tolerance range is an agreed degree of deviation between marked and moderated marks. Marking is not an exact science, therefore it is expected that differences will exist between a marker and a moderator in terms of their mark allocations. In 2017 a tolerance range of between 2% to 3% was allowed in the marking of each question paper. The quality and accuracy of marking was maintained by ensuring that a marker does not deviate from the accepted tolerance range.

(d) Authorisation of Chief Markers and Internal Moderators by DBE

Chief markers and internal moderators were authorised by the DBE before they were allowed to participate in the marking

processes. At the national training session held after the marking guideline discussions, the chief marker and internal moderator were provided with a sample of scripts to mark. Only after each chief marker and internal moderator complied with the Tolerance Range were they officially authorised to lead the marking process as internal moderator or chief marker for the current examination.

(e) Training of Markers at PEDs

To sustain the standardisation of the marking of the 2017 NSC examinations, the PEDs' chief markers and internal moderators were required to replicate the standardised marker training done at the DBE, with their marking teams. After the training, markers were provided with batches of scripts to mark and only allowed to commence with full marking after the scripts have been moderated and have been found to be marked within the Tolerance Range. Markers were offered multiple opportunities and support to ensure that they reach the desired level of accuracy and are able to mark within the Tolerance Range. Those who were unable to comply with the Tolerance Range were redeployed to the marking of less challenging questions.

(f) Centralised marking of subjects with low enrolments and the marking of scripts for the blind and deaf.

In the case of subjects with low enrolments, the marking of these scripts was centralised in Pretoria and managed by the DBE. These are subjects where fewer than 1000 candidates sat for the examination. Given the low enrolment numbers, it did not justify the appointment of the different levels of moderators for the quality assurance, hence the quality assurance of the marking is compromised. Therefore, the markers from across the country were pooled centrally, and from this pool senior markers and deputy chief markers were appointed, where the numbers justify such appointments. Furthermore, this ensured that moderation was conducted at the different levels. The reliability of marking of these small enrolment subjects has improved by:

(a) Optimising the utilisation of the available marking expertise in the identified subjects from the nine provinces.

(b) Ensuring that all scripts from across the nine PEDs, were subjected to controlled and standardised marking procedures.

(c) Ensuring the implementation of the marking enhancements in a centralised marking environment and lessons could be extracted to improve the overall NSC marking management.

The subjects that were centrally marked by the DBE in 2017 include: Agricultural Management Practices, Dance Studies, Music and Agricultural Technology, selected First Additional Languages (FAL) and six Second Additional Languages (SAL).

The marking of scripts for the blind and the

deaf candidates was also centralised in Gauteng and Western Cape to ensure consistency in the marking which is achieved by making sure that only practitioners in this field are allowed to mark these scripts.

In addition to the above marking enhancements, the quality of marking is ensured through monitoring and moderation. Marking was conducted at 141 marking centres in the country.

(g) Monitoring of Marking

The DBE deployed provincially-based monitors that were trained centrally at the DBE to marking centres in the nine PEDs to monitor the management of marking. It was observed that in all provinces, the management of the marking centres was commendable and security was also strengthened.

Overall the following improvements were observed:

- Marking centres were well-equipped and centre managers were observed to be managing the centres efficiently.
- Hierarchical organisation of marking adhered to in all marking centres monitored.
- Improved focus on security at the marking centres – a more consistent approach to the application of the required security standards at marking centres, was observed.
- PED compliance in respect of standardised training approach and the use of training materials to train markers.
- Markers were trained to identify irregularities during marking and to follow set procedures to report. Clear procedures were put in place to report identified irregularities.
- Improved implementation of the Marking norms and standards at marking centres.
- There was better management of the recommended 10 hour marking day this year.

(h) Onsite Moderation of Marking

The DBE trained and deployed a team of onsite moderators to quality assure the marking of the 10 gateway subjects. These subjects are: Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, English First Additional Language, Geography, History, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. The on-site moderators were able to evaluate the following:

- organisation of marking in terms of the ratio of markers to senior markers, and senior markers to deputy chief markers

- quality of moderation conducted by the deputy chief marker, chief marker and internal moderator;
- adherence by the markers to the established Tolerance Ranges per paper;
- consistent and correct application of, and adherence to, the marking guideline by the markers;
- adherence to the technical marking principles that underpinned the marking within each subject;
- frequency and quality of feedback to markers within the hierarchical line function in the marking teams;
- sustainability of marking quality throughout the marking session;
- the management and leadership of the chief marker and internal moderator as the custodians of the marking quality.

Their onsite moderation reports have provided the DBE with qualitative and quantitative information on the quality assurance of the marking of the 2017 NSC examinations. In general it was observed that the quality of marking has improved and most markers were able to mark within the required tolerance range. The information provided will form part of the critical reflection on the 2017 marking systems, and will inform areas of priority in the DBE's 2018 Marking Implementation Plan to improve marking reliability in the next examination cycle.

5.5. Resulting and release of results

(a) Data Capturing and Processing of Results

After the marking process is completed, marks from the answer scripts are transferred on to the mark sheets. Examination Assistants (Eas), appointed mainly for quality assurance purposes, verify and check that the marks have been accurately transferred to the mark sheet, before the mark sheets are captured on the Integrated Examination Computer System (IECS).

In terms of the capturing process, all SBA, oral marks, practical examination marks and written examination marks are subjected to a double capture process. This double capture entails that every mark is captured independently by two separate individuals and if the mark captured by the second individual is different from the first, the system disallows the mark. A third official then verifies the captured mark before it is finally accepted onto the system. The verification of marks by three independent persons ensures that there is high accuracy in the capture of marks.

Final marks are computed from the combining of the different components of the subject. It is a requirement that all components of the subject are aggregated to obtain a final score. A subject will therefore not be resulted if a component is missing.

(b) Standardization of Results

Standardization is a process used in large scale public examinations to mitigate the fluctuations in learner performance caused by factors outside the learners' knowledge and aptitude. Undesirable fluctuations in examination processes such as variations in the standard of question papers and variations in the standard of the marking are addressed during the process of standardisation.

Standardisation therefore ensures that a cohort of learners is not unduly advantaged or disadvantaged by undesirable fluctuations in the examination processes, and the system produces a relatively constant quality of output from one year to the next. Historical data on learner performance for a period of five years is used to determine the norm to which current performance is compared. Umalusi makes adjustments where there are anomalies in the performance trends. Qualitative input from the marking process in terms of reports from marking is also considered in making recommendations for adjustments.

Umalusi hosted the 2017 NSC standardisation meeting on 22 December 2017. The process was observed key stakeholders in the Basic Education Sector, including the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), teacher unions and representatives from the Botswana and Lesotho examinations councils.

(c) Final Approval of Results

As mandated by the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, final approval and declaration on the credibility of the results is the prerogative of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in the General and Further Education and Training bands.

The Umalusi Council approved the 2017 National Senior Certificate examinations on Thursday, 28 December 2017 based on the fact that the 2017 NSC examinations were administered in line with the applicable policies and regulations and according to Umalusi, the evidence provided to Umalusi suggests that there are no systemic irregularities that could have jeopardised the credibility and integrity of the 2017 NSC examinations administered by the DBE.

5.6. School Based Assessment

School Based Assessment (SBA) provides opportunities for teachers to integrate the assessment of learning and the assessment for learning in an effort to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. SBA ensures that learners develop the range of generic skills that prepare and enable them to participate in a variety of real world contexts. This involves the generation and collection of evidence of achievement, the evaluation of this achievement, the recording of the marks and use of the data to assist the learners' development. In essence, SBA improves teaching and learning. Teachers play the vital role of facilitating learning and assessing what has been taught. This dual role enables teachers to continuously evaluate and adjust their teaching to match the learning goals of the learners as they progress through the FET phase.

For NSC candidates, SBA comprises 25% of the final examination mark. This mark provides information about candidates' achievement in a range of designated assessment tasks that are administered to assess knowledge and skills that are not tested in the written examination.

Since the introduction of a national moderation system, steady progress has been observed in the implementation of SBA in the FET phase. However, the system is mindful that the contextual realities of implementation still varies across provinces, districts and schools. In response to these concerns about the variation in the quality of SBA implementation in provinces, the DBE has taken a decision to migrate from a narrow focus on only the provincial moderation of SBA to an all-encompassing focus on the quality assurance of SBA. As part of this intervention, the following focus areas were prioritised in 2017:

i. The publication of the Draft Policy on the Quality Assurance of SBA in grade 10-12
ii. The setting of a Common Assessment Task for Life Orientation
iii. The quality Assurance of PED Moderation of Grade12 SBA and PATs in selected subjects

(a) Draft Policy on the Quality Assurance of SBA in grade 10-12

The Draft Policy on the Quality Assurance of SBA in Grade 10-12 was published for public comment in 2017. This policy aims to strengthen the legislative framework to improve the standardised implementation of SBA in all schools, The stated policy provides directives for the moderation of SBA, PATs and Oral assessments as well as moderation at each of the four levels of the system namely school, district/cluster, provincial and national levels. The policy will assist in standardising PED moderation systems and the frequency thereof, align approaches to sampling of districts, schools and learner portfolios, and stipulate the conditions under which SBA marks can be adjusted to improve the overall reliability of learners' SBA marks. The dissemination and mediation of this

policy will be done in 2018 as after the policy is promulgated.

(b) Setting of a Common Assessment Task for Life Orientation

For the 2017 NSC, the DBE developed a national Common Assessment Task (CAT) for Life Orientation (LO)and this task was administered on 8 September 2017 by all Grade 12 candidates who registered for the 2017 NSC examinations. Candidates who could not sit for the CAT in LO on 8 September due to illness or family circumstances, were afforded a rewrite opportunity on 10 October 2017.

In order to facilitate reliable and valid marking of the LO CAT, the DBE hosted a centralised marking standardization meeting on 13 and14 September 2017.Life Orientation subject specialists from the nine provinces participated in the standardisation of the marking guideline. Amendments were accommodated to include a range of alternative responses recommended by the provincial representatives. The marking guideline standardisation meetings were replicated in all PEDs with teachers prior to marking. With the exception of the Northern Cape where the marking was centralised, the LO CAT was marked by teachers at school level under the supervision of the school principal.

(c) Quality Assurance of PED Moderation of Grade12 SBA and PATs in selected subjects

(I) Quality assurance of school based assessment

In July and October 2017, the DBE deployed teams of national moderators to the nine provinces to audit the provincial and district SBA systems and moderate a sample of assessment tasks and learner evidence for the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) 2017.

The focus of this quality assurance was on the inputs, processes and output components of the PED SBA system. Qualitative information was collected through the review of PED SBA systems and processes, moderation of assessment tasks and moderation of learner evidence.

The DBE purposively sampled two districts

per province for the quality assurance process. The districts were selected according to the highest number of rejected 2016 NSC SBA moderation records. Furthermore, 10 schools per district were stratified according to their having a combination of SBA moderation records spanning the following categories:

- SBA moderation records that were rejected in selected gateway subjects;
- SBA moderation records that were greater than 15% above the examination mark in selected gateway subjects;
- SBA moderation records that were in the acceptable range of 5 to10% above the examination mark in selected gateway subjects.

As part of the moderation programme, the DBE included a full day of training and capacity building workshops for subject advisors from the sampled districts. The training focused specifically on development of non-test type assessment tasks.

A general improvement was observed in the conduct of SBA in the sampled districts, the quality of assessment tasks including the district based common assessment task and moderation processes. However, there are still some areas that require intervention to improve the quality of SBA. These areas of weakness include:

a) Most tasks set at school level did not cover all cognitive levels and were still not accompanied by assessment rubrics;

b) There is still an overdependence on common tasks set by districts or provinces and on past national question papers. This inhibits the opportunity for teachers to develop their own assessment tasks and stifles professional development in the development of assessment tasks.

c) In general the development of alternative assessment tasks is still a challenge for many teachers. In Life Sciences and Physical Sciences specifically teachers still need development in the setting of original practical tasks.

(ii) Quality assurance of Practical/Performance Assessment Tasks

Sixteen (16) NCS subjects offer a compulsory practical component which counts 25% of the final examination mark. All PATs for Grade 12 NSC examinations were nationally set by the DBE for administration by PEDs. The DBE conducted a moderation of a sample of subjects that offer PATs, namely: Agricultural Management Practice, Dramatic Arts, Music, Visual Arts, Tourism, Consumer Studies, Engineering Graphics and Design, Mechanical Technology and Electrical Technology. The national moderators supported provincial moderators and observed provincial moderation at centralised venues.

The DBE PAT moderation teams observed

that schools with experienced and specialist teachers were able to mediate and implement the PAT components in a reliable and valid manner. However, the following areas were identified as impacting negatively on the standard and quality of implementation in all sampled subjects and therefore need improvement:

a) Inadequate assessment systems, monitoring and resourcing to support the implementation of PATs at school, district and provincial levels
b) The shortage of subject advisory services to support teachers and monitor compliance in the implementation of the PATS.
c) Non-standardisation of moderation tools and approaches and tools within each subject in provinces.
d) Inadequate funding to all schools offering subjects with a practical component to enable them purchase the resources.
(e) The general lack of training and professional development opportunities for all teachers in subjects with PAT components.

5.7 The management of examination irregularities

The credibility of NSC examinations is determined by the compliance of the administration of the examinations with the Examination Regulations and by the ability of the system to identify examination malpractices. Furthermore, the credibility of the examinations is measured by the extent to which these malpractices are managed to ensure that they do not compromise the examination as a whole. To this end, the consistent management and adjudication of irregularities in all Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) is of cardinal importance in ensuring the fairness and the credibility of the examinations.

Over the past few years the DBE has established appropriate structures across the different levels of the system to manage irregularities. Examination officials were trained in the identification and management of irregularities, and there was a dedicated focus on the inculcation of high morals and values among candidates and officials to ensure examinations of the highest integrity. This has paid dividends as observed in the significant reduction in the number of malpractices reported in the 2017 NSC examinations. Moreover, this has once again confirmed that the national examination system in South Africa has matured and has attained a high level of efficiency and credibility.

The public examinations system as a whole has also developed an excellent detection and identification system that ensures that all examination irregularities are addressed. These systems include efficient structures and processes to monitor the conduct of the examinations and deal with

examination irregularities swiftly and decisively to ensure that the examination's integrity remains intact. The high level of public interest in the NSC examinations further ensures that information that emerges on possible examination compromises is brought to the attention of the authorities.

The National Examination Irregularities Committee (NEIC) is a ministerial committee established in line with the *Regulations on the Conduct, Administration and Management of the NSC Examinations* This committee oversees that the all irregularities are handled in a consistent manner in PEDs. In September 2017, as a further enhancement to the credibility of this committee and the work that it does, the Minister appointed a 'neutral person' with a credible legal background to chair the committee. The NEIC met on 19 December 2017 to discuss the preliminary reports on the examination irregularities submitted by the Provincial Examinations Irregularities Committees (PEICs). The Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) managed their examination irregularities through the oversight of the Provincial Examination Irregularities Committee (PEIC). The reports compiled from the investigations that were conducted by the PED outlined in detail all the administrative errors/omissions, the behavioral offences and acts of dishonesty that were reported in each province.

While the significant reduction in administrative errors/omissions, the behavioural offences and acts of dishonesty in the 2017 NSC examination is acknowledged, the challenges relating to strike actions and community protests in some provinces need to be addressed. A pivotal part of the integrity of these examinations is that there were no incidents of major examination compromise such as the leakage of a question paper. All irregularities that were identified were managed in accordance with the *Regulations on the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate*.

6. CHALLENGES TO THE NSC

In this report three of the more serious challenges which relate to throughput of learners, progression of learners and standards of the NSC examination will be discussed and the measures taken by the DBE to limit these constraints will be discussed.

6.1 Throughput

In South Africa, the NSC is regarded as a vital barometer of successful completion of 12 years of schooling. The term throughput is commonly used in discussions on the ability of the schooling system to ensure that learners stay on in school at the secondary level and do not drop out. A good throughput rate improves the chances that youth will eventually obtain the NSC. Throughput can be difficult to measure, in particular because grade repetition can complicate comparisons of enrolment statistics. One relatively simple way of determining the throughput rate is to use Statistics South Africa household data reflecting the highest level of education achieved amongst all young South Africans. This data reveals that progress has been made in getting more learners to successfully complete grades 9, 10 and 11. The percentage of youth successfully completing Grade 10, for instance, improved from 73% to 80% between 2007 and 2016. For completion of Grade 11, the improvement was from 61% to 67% over the same period. Clearly, more learners are successfully moving from one grade to the next grade in schools.

One matter that is often overlooked is that different schools, districts and provinces can display rather different throughput rates. If one does not take this into account, traditional Grade 12 pass rates (examination candidates obtaining the NSC divided by all candidates) may be misinterpreted. For example, a province which permits high levels of dropping out after grades 10 and 11 can end up with a higher Grade 12 pass rate than another similar province which ensures that learners do not drop out. Provinces which have displayed particularly high throughput rates in recent years are Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Western Cape. In 2016, the percentage of youths completing Grade 11 for these four provinces was 83%, 73%, 73% and 71% respectively (according to Stats SA household data). Eastern Cape, on the other hand, displayed a worryingly low figure for Grade 11 completion in 2016 of just 52%.

Figure 6.1 displays the successful completion of Grade 12 by province and age. Given Gauteng's high throughput up to Grade 11, it is not surprising that Gauteng should also do well in relation to the successful completion of Grade 12 (or the achievement of the NSC). What is also noteworthy is that despite KwaZulu-Natal's relatively low pass rate in recent years, a high percentage of youths in this province have obtained the NSC. This would be

an example of a province which would be 'under-appreciated' if one looks only at the pass rate. KwaZulu-Natal's pass rate must be read together with the fact that the throughput rate is good.

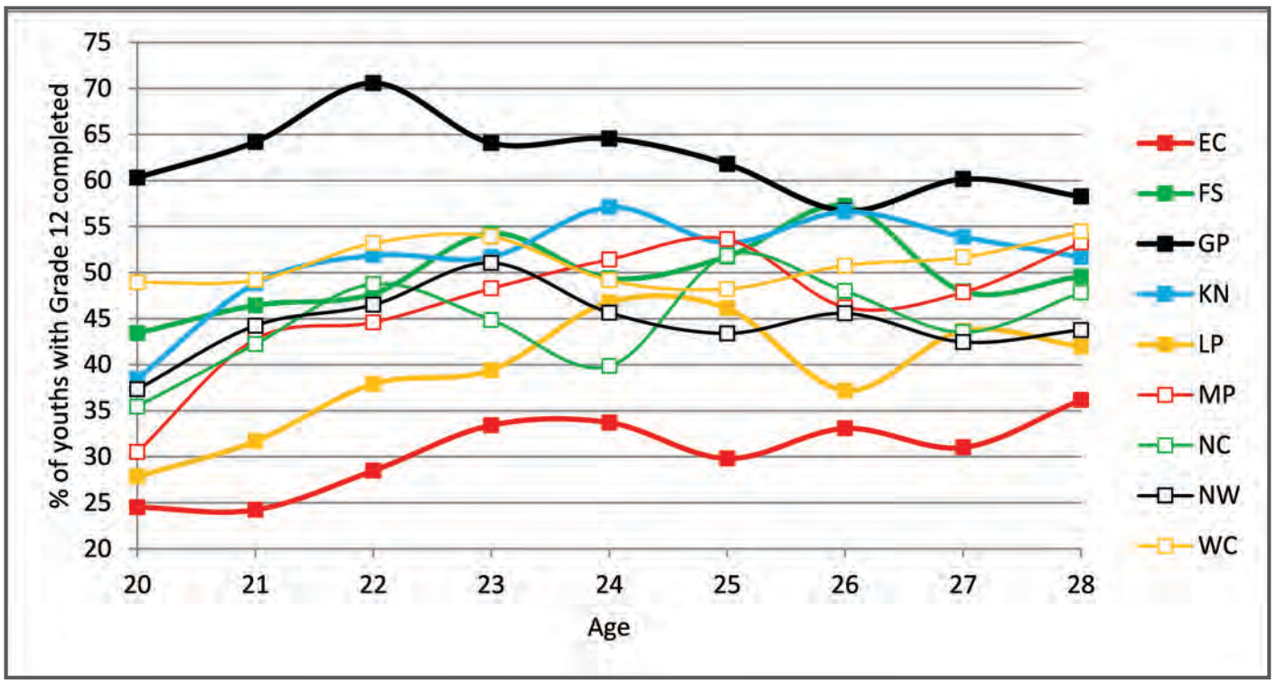


Figure 6.1: Youths having completed Grade 12 by province and age (2014-2016)

6.2 Progression

The Minister promulgated policy on progression for the FET in 2012. In accordance with this policy, a learner may not spend more than four years in the phase. This Policy was implemented for the first time in 2013 in the FET band. As with implementation of all policies, the policy on progression presented a number of challenges including different interpretation which presented varying implementation of the policy across the system. To standardise the application of progression, the criteria to limit progression in the FET was gazetted in 2016 as follows:

The learner must have:

(a) failed to satisfy the promotion requirements of either Grade 10 or Grade 11;

(b) passed four of the seven subjects, offered for the National Senior Certificate, comprising:
- Competency in the language of Learning and Teaching; and
- Three other approved subjects, including Life Orientation.

(c) attended school on a regular basis. Absenteeism in excess of 20 days, without a

valid reason, will disqualify the learner from being progressed; and

(f) complied with the prescribed School-Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for all subjects offered.

Further to the above criteria, progressed learners in Grade 12 were allowed to choose the Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) option, which implies that the learner writes a limited number of subjects in the first sitting of the National Senior Certificate examination and will write the remaining subjects in the subsequent examination. Schools were requested to make this decision in consultation with the parents and the decision of the parent was regarded as final. The Council of Education Ministers (CEM) of 9 March 2017 approved the following criteria for MEO learners:

In order for a learner to be classified as a Multiple Examination Opportunity (MEO) learner, the learner must::

(a) be a progressed learner;

(b) have completed all his/her SBA requirements in all seven subjects;

(c) have attended school regularly (not be absent for more than 20 days);

(d) have written the Preparatory examination in all subjects; and

(e) have failed a minimum of three subjects.

The learner selecting the Multiple Examination Option must write a minimum of three subjects (excluding LO) in the first year and must have written all seven subjects by the second year. The other directive from CEM which was implemented in 2017 is that the decision to modularise will be made by the school principal, on the basis of the performance in the preparatory examination and after having consulted the parent.

To advocate the changes on management of progression in the FET, ***Circular E28 of 2017*** was released. The legislation's intent is to uphold the best interest of the learner and to minimise unnecessary school dropout in the schooling system so that every learner has the opportunity to achieve an exit qualification such as the National Senior Certificate. However, progression in Grades 10-11 does not guarantee the final certification of a learner in Grade 12. Such a learner must still comply with the certification requirements as contemplated in paragraph 37(1) (a) of the policy document, ***National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*** to enable him or her to obtain a National Senior Certificate. This implies that the learner will be allowed to repeat the writing of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination, in order to ensure that he he/she satisfies the requirements of the NSC, which is conditional to the shelf life of the school based assessment.

The comparison of progressed learners that enrolled for the NSC Examination in the last three years per province is indicated in the table below.

Table 5.1: The number of progressed learners that enrolled for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 NSC

Province	Progressed 2015	Progressed 2016	Progressed 2017
Eastern Cape	12 304	14 289	10 937
Free State	8 187	6 990	5 288
Gauteng	5 198	11 596	13 574
KwaZulu-Natal	10 633	26 046	27 653
Limpopo	13 227	22 256	23 254
Mpumalanga	5 228	14 068	13 698
North West	3 767	7 588	7 432
Northern Cape	2 280	2 506	2 314
Western Cape	4 847	3 403	3 280
National	65 671	108 742	107 430

The Class of 2016, registered the highest number of progressed learners, up from 65 673 progressed learners in 2015. Of the 108 742 progressed learners, 67 510 progressed learners wrote the requisite seven subjects during the 2016 NSC examinations. Of the progressed learners who wrote the 2016 NSC examinations, 29 384 passed; which represents 43.5% of all progressed learners. The significance of this achievement, is that the 29 384 progressed learners who passed the 2016 NSC examinations *would have been high-school dropouts if they were not progressed*. These learners now have the opportunity to either go to university or TVET College.

To mitigate the possible negative impact on the final NSC results, and to offer each learner the best possible opportunity to obtain an NSC in 2017, provinces embarked on a rigorous support programme for progressed learners in addition to the normal programme offered to all learners. The programme for progressed learners was developed and implemented for the high-enrolment subjects across provinces.

6.3 Standard of the National Senior Certificate

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) views standards as being able to provide agreed-upon descriptions of the outcomes which students must achieve and the criteria by which they must be assessed. There have been concerns in certain quarters that there has been a lowering of standards with the introduction of the National Senior Certificate.

It needs to be stated categorically that the requirements for the NSC are on par with, and in some cases, higher than the requirements of the old Senior Certificate (SC). Furthermore, the new curriculum was introduced with the explicit purpose of moving away from the old curriculum that focused on rote learning. The National Curriculum Statement is based on higher-order knowledge and skills that allow learners to demonstrate the ability to think logically, analytically, holistically and laterally.

Moreover, the NSC is not an elitist qualification that caters only for those who wish to gain access to institutions of higher learning. It needs to be

understood that the National Senior Certificate has been designed to serve multiple purposes. These include being a requirement for admission to higher education studies; the provision of a school-leaving certificate which reflects the credits obtained by the learner and which may then be used to gain entry

into the workplace or to pursue a vocational stream at a Further Education and Training College. Therefore the NSC cannot be judged solely in terms of its role in serving the higher education sector. The NSC allows for four types of qualification endorsements: the straight NSC; a certificate which allows for admission to higher certificate studies; entry into diploma studies and access to bachelor studies. Each of these categories has its own requirements to suit the designated purpose.

The standard of the NSC is often measured against the quality of question papers. In view of this, the DBE has benchmarked the NSC question papers and the qualification has also been benchmarked against international institutions. In 2007, the DBE benchmarked ten NSC subjects with the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the Board of Studies New South Wales (BSNSW) (Australia). In 2011, the DBE benchmarked seven (7) NSC subjects with the SQA, CIE, BSNSW and Higher Education South Africa (HESA). In 2016, the DBE benchmarked 10 subjects with Universities of South Africa (USAF) and in 2017, six (6) subjects were benchmarked with Cambridge International Examinations. There is consensus among these institutions that the question papers are well designed by international standards and assess what they purport to assess.

They adequately measure the learning outcomes that are articulated in the CAPs. There is also agreement that the question papers assess analytical, application and evaluative skills and that some question papers reflect the latest developments in their subject. The three international assessment bodies confirmed that the content assessed by these question papers is, in the main, comparable to the CIE, SQA and BSNSW. It was also indicated that the skills that are assessed by the curriculum are of international standard and prepare learners appropriately for the global community.

In addition, the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) benchmarked the NSC with UK NARIC. Their findings included the following:

(a) Features of the NSC indicate a qualification with an underlying level that is both robust and fit for the purpose of examining at senior secondary school levels; and

(b) The NSC at the Grade 12 level is broadly comparable to the GCE AS-level.

Ultimately, the DBE encourages excellence in the school system. In this regard, it is our priority to focus on what actually happens in the classroom. Measures are in place to raise the fundamental quality of learning and teaching rather than fiddle with the pass mark. In view of this, the DBE constantly aims to raise aspirations and strengthen accountability for learning outcomes in the primary school phase, so as to improve the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills. This is where the real battle for educational opportunity is won or lost.

7. PERFORMANCE TRENDS IN GRADE 12

7.1 The Grade 12 examinations – 20 years of educational improvement

The 2017 Grade 12 examination results mark yet another point in a long-term trajectory which has seen far more youth having access to a school qualification and acquiring the skills they require to participate meaningfully in society and the country's economy. There is still much progress which must be made before we can say that all of South Africa's youth are offered the best available school education. Substantial progress has been made, but this momentum needs to be sustained and strengthened.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South African schools have become more inclusive. More learners remain in school up to Grade 12. In this regard, South Africa does well relative to other middle-income countries. Virtually all children remain in school up to the year in which they turn 15, in line with the compulsory schooling policies embodied in the South African Schools Act.

By 2016, around 58% of youth were successfully completing twelve years of education in the sense that they were obtaining the NSC or an equivalent qualification from a college. The figure becomes 56% if one counts only the NSC.

With respect to the successful completion of secondary schooling, South Africa performs roughly on a par with other middle income countries. South Africa outperforms countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Indonesia and Uruguay on this indicator. South Africa has, moreover, made considerable progress in the last twenty years when one considers that in 1995, 39% of youth aged 25 reported having successfully completed Grade 12, against a figure of 50% in 2016.

As seen in the following graph, the number of students obtaining the 'Matric', or what is today formally known as the NSC, increased from around 275 000 in the late 1990s to over 400 000 in recent years. These figures reflect year-end passes among full-time learners in the public examination system. If one were to factor in the results following supplementary examinations, and passes among part-time and Independent Examinations Board candidates, the figures would rise slightly. This would particularly apply to the more recent years. The overall picture of ongoing improvement would remain.

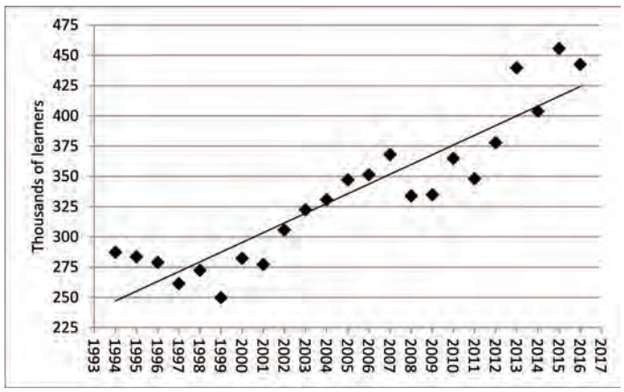


Figure 7.1: The number of students obtaining the ' Matric' 1994 to 2016

Note: *Points in the graph represents annual values. The line is a trend line calculated from the points.*

The following graph shows that the achievement of a 'Bachelors-level pass', previously known as a 'Matric exemption' or an 'endorsement', has also improved, in fact to a greater degree than Grade 12 passes. Whilst the number of basic passes increased by a little over 50% during the 1994 to 2016 period, the number of 'Bachelors-level passes' increased by 94%, or almost doubled.

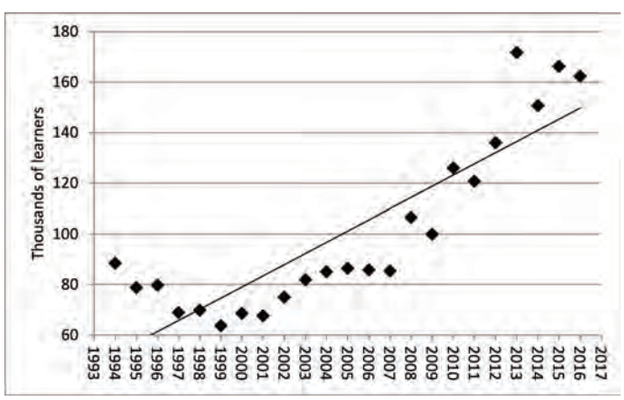


Figure 7.2: Increase in 'Bachelors-level' attainment 1994 to 2016

they can use to navigate post-school education and the labour market. This is especially important given that there is no national qualification below Grade 12 in the schooling system.

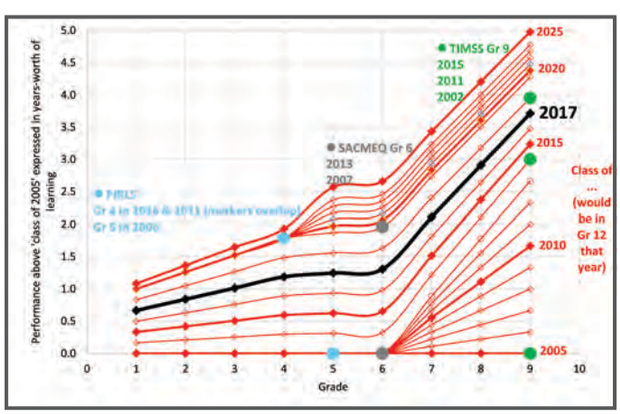
Results in Grade 12 are the outcome of at least twelve years of basic education for each learner. Evidence from South Africa and beyond confirms that competencies displayed at the end of the schooling cycle are highly dependent on what occurs in the lower grades, in particular in the first few years of school. This explains the increasing emphasis placed, for instance in the National Development Plan, on acquiring fundamental reading and numeracy skills in the Foundation Phase.

Figure 7.3 attempts to reconcile eight key aggregate scores achieved by South Africa in three different international testing programmes. These scores are easily the most reliable figures we have that allow for comparison over time, and also comparison across countries. The fact that South Africa has featured at or near the bottom of the rankings of countries participating in TIMSS and PIRLS is often reported in the media. Here it is important to bear in mind that most countries in these programmes are developed ('rich') countries, and that developing countries would tend to fare worse than these countries. A fact that is often missed is that even relative to other countries, South Africa's educational performance has improved over the last 15 or so years. There is no cause for complacency, as South Africa's results are still lower than they should be, yet improvements need to be acknowledged, and lessons should be drawn from them.

The focus here is not on international comparisons, but on improvements over time, and on whether the results from the three different testing programmes 'speak to each other'.

Despite their relative reliability, results from the international programmes are not without problems. In particular, because TIMSS and PIRLS have historically focused on countries that perform relatively well, their tests are not primarily designed to gauge improvements at *lower* levels of performance. SACMEQ, a relatively new programme designed specifically for developing countries in Africa, is not as mature as TIMSS and PIRLS in terms of test design and quality control. These problems mean that individual results should be interpreted with caution. However, if several results point in the same general direction, then more conclusive interpretations are possible.

Figure 7.3: A reconciliation of eight international assessment results



In terms of TIMSS, the above graph focusses on mathematics (and not science), and in terms of SACMEQ its focus is also on mathematics (and not reading). Had the other subjects been taken into account, the picture would not change much. The evidence suggests strongly that educational improvement tends to occur across all key subjects at once, given the inter-relatedness of learning across different subjects.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS):

The green markers in the graph point to the TIMSS Grade 9 results of 2002, 2011 and 2015. It was the TIMSS 2011 results that provided the first clear indication that learning was improving significantly in the schooling system. The 'class of 2005', meaning the cohort of learners reaching Grade 12 in 2005 (assuming no grade repetition), can be considered the pre-improvement baseline. These learners were tested in Grade 9 in 2002 and were almost certainly not performing better than previous cohorts ('classes') – TIMSS *Grade 8* results from 1995, 1999 and 2002 pointed to a flat trend. However, when the 'class of 2014' was tested in Grade 9 in 2011, a different picture emerged. The improvement between Grade 9 in 2002 and Grade 9 in 2011 was around three times the difference between Grade 8 and Grade 9 in 2002. Roughly, one could say that between 2002 and 2011, Grade 9 results improved by as much as three years of learning. These figures should obviously be interpreted with caution. We cannot say that Grade 9 learners in 2011 performed as well as *Grade 12* learners in 2002 (Grade 9 plus

three years equals Grade 12). However, we can say that Grade 9 performance improved substantially. Further improvements occurred between TIMSS 2011 and 2015, though these improvements were a bit slower than the 2002 to 2011 improvements. This explains why the lines are closer together between the two top green markers, compared to the bottom two green markers.

Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ):

The SACMEQ results of 2007 appeared to reflect no improvement. Earlier results from 2000 had been roughly the same. However, results from SACMEQ 2013, released in 2017, pointed to a large improvement between 2007 and 2013. This is reflected by the two grey markers. The 'class of 2019' thus benefits from a foundation in mathematics which is far better than that of the 'class of 2013'. We can see this better foundation in a Grade 6 mathematics score which rose by around two years' worth of learning. Clearly, the 'class of 2017' can be expected to benefit from a part of this ongoing trend.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS):

The PIRLS results released in 2017 were concerning as they pointed to no improvement in Grade 4 reading between 2011 and 2016 – the tested learners would be the 'class of 2019' and the 'class of 2024'. This is why the top blue marker in the graph is in fact two overlapping markers – the two PIRLS results, of 2011 and 2016, were virtually the same. However, PIRLS also shows that *Grade 4* learners in 2011 (and in 2016) perform considerably better than the *Grade 5* learners in 2006. There was thus an improvement during an earlier period and this works out to a gain of approximately 1,8 years-worth of learning. The earlier PIRLS results are thus consistent with the picture of improvement provided by TIMSS and SACMEQ. However, what should worry us is the lack of further improvement between 2011 and 2016. This has limited the scope for improvements in the higher grades for learners beyond the 'class of 2019'. The closeness of the lines at the top of the graph depicts this challenge. One can assume that beyond Grade 4, some systemic improvement is possible, even without recent improvements in Grade 4 reading, through interventions focussing on the higher grades. However, the top priority must be to return to a trajectory of improvements in the Foundation Phase. This, together with better Early Childhood Development (ECD), is by far the most effective means of achieving further improvements over the longer term.

Have Grade 12 results over the years confirmed the general improvements shown in the graph (which only goes as far as Grade 9)? Many Grade 12 indicators, such as the number of learners achieving passes allowing them to pursue Bachelors-level studies at a university, do point to large improvements. These indicators were discussed above. Importantly however, the Grade 12 examinations are not primarily designed to reflect systemic improvement. They are designed to provide learners with qualifications reflecting their achievements. One must thus exercise much caution in interpreting the trends, which can be influenced by factors such as subject selection. A strong indication that Grade 12 qualitative improvements are real is the fact that the attainment of higher marks, such as 60 and 70 per cent, in key subjects considered important by universities has improved.

The Department of Basic Education has analysed these trends carefully, taking into account the possibility of shifts in the difficulty of examinations over time, and the influence of subject participation rates in different years, and has confirmed that the trends are real, and that Grade 12 improvements do in fact mirror improvements seen in the lower grades.

It is vital for researchers and education stakeholders in general to reflect on what has brought about improvements in the past, and what might have contributed to the slowing down of the trend in Grade 4 reading. The consensus seems to be that past improvements were achieved largely through better access to materials in the classroom, greater clarity and better priorities in the curriculum guides that teachers use, and the emphasis on learning outcomes of the Annual National Assessments. These are interventions which are all prioritised in the DBE's plans and in the National Development Plans. The PIRLS reports, which include information on contextual factors, suggest that increases to already large class sizes at the primary level since 2011 should be one key concern. These class size trends have in part been the result of growth in the child population, and in part the result of budget pressures which have made it difficult to employ enough additional teachers. This must inform planning in the coming years. However, other factors have also been emphasised, for instance the need to improve the methods employed to teach reading. Both university-based pre-service training and in-service professional development programmes are currently being revised in this regard.

7.2 Provincial trends since 2009

The first table below shows that, aside from one or two peculiar years, the number of candidates that have written the NSC over the last few years has been relatively stable. The numbers that wrote in 2011 and 2012 were somewhat lower than in 2010 and 2013, and this was because of a change in the policy regarding the age of school-entry in 1999 and 2000. The second peculiarity was the especially large class that wrote the NSC in 2015. This was largely because of the so-called progressed learner policy which led to an increase in the numbers entering Grade 12 in 2015.

The trend with respect to the numbers that have passed the NSC since 2009 has clearly been an upward one. Similarly, the numbers who have passed at the Bachelor level have also increased, peaking in 2013 at 171,755. This trend is important because it indicates that the improvements have consisted not only of lower-end passes but also of increased high-level performance. The basic education sector has therefore improved its output of youth qualifying to enter university. Recent research shows that currently about two thirds of those who obtain a Bachelor pass in fact enter university. This means that there is still scope to increase university enrolments in the years to come.

Table 7.1: NSC candidates, passes and Bachelor passes 2009 – 2017

Year	Number wrote NSC	Number passed NSC	Pass rate	Number of Bachelor passes
2009	552 073	334 716	61	109 697
2010	537 543	364 513	68	126 371
2011	496 090	348 114	70	120 767
2012	511 152	377 829	74	136 047
2013	562 112	439 779	78	171 755
2014	532 860	403 874	76	150 752
2015	644 536	455 825	71	166 263
2016	610 178	442 672	73	162 374
2017	534 484	401 435	75	153 610

The next figure shows pass rates since 2009 by province. The figure shows that the Eastern Cape has consistently had the lowest pass rate, while Gauteng, the Western Cape, Free State, and the North-West province have consistently had the highest pass rates in recent years. Most provinces have experienced a gradual improvement in their pass rates over the period, with Mpumalanga having achieved an exceptionally high rate of improvement since 2009, moving from a pass rate of under 50% to nearly 80% in recent years.

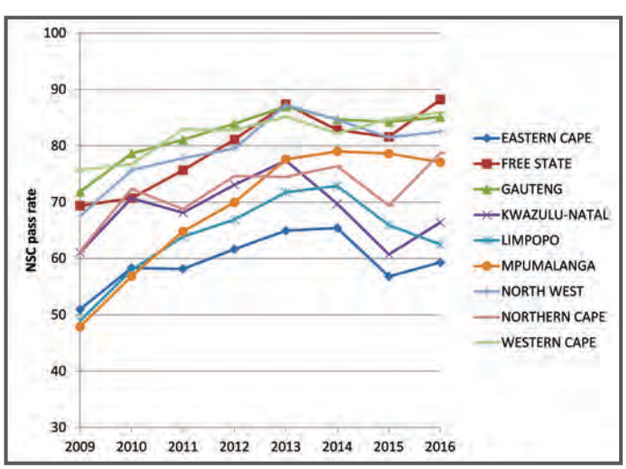


Figure 7.4: NSC pass rate by province since 2009

The next figure shows the number of NSC passes since 2009 by province. Firstly, it indicates that KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng are the provinces that contribute the highest numbers of passes each year. Of course this is largely a reflection of the high populations in those provinces. All provinces have increased the number of NSC passes since 2009, with the highest increases seen in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape with average annual increases of 6,8% and 5.2%, respectively. All the provincial increases exceed the growth in the number of youths aged 18 by far. Nationally, the number of 18 year olds has increased on average by 0.9% a year since 2002, according to Stats SA population statistics. It is significant that Mpumalanga has substantially increased both the number of passes and its pass rate over the period, indicating that there really have been substantial improvements in this province.

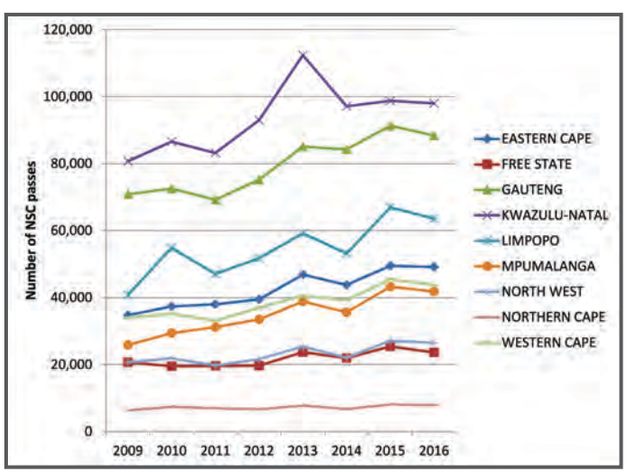
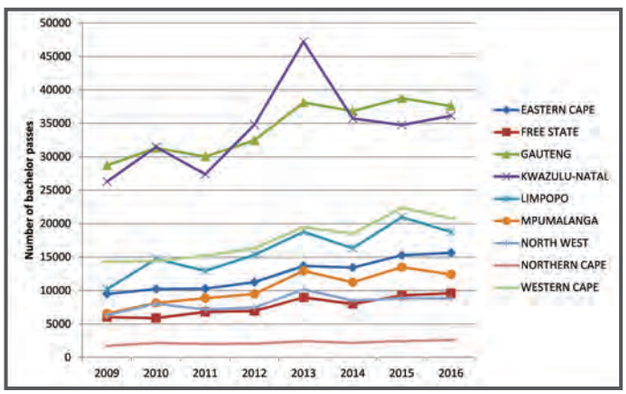


Figure 7.5: Numbers passing NSC by province since 2009

The next figure shows the numbers obtaining a Bachelor pass by province since 2009. Once again, it is KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng that produced the most Bachelor passes. Again, all provinces have increased the numbers of Bachelor passes over the period, with the largest increases in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Eastern Cape.

Figure 7.6: Numbers obtaining a Bachelor pass by province since 2009



The next figure looks at the ratio of Bachelor passes to overall NSC passes, as an indicator of the quality of NSC passes. Here the Western Cape shows the best ratio. Whereas nationally, roughly one in three NSC passes are Bachelor passes, in the Western Cape about one in two passes are Bachelor passes. It is also significant that all provinces have improved on this indicator over the period, suggesting that the improvements in NSC performance since 2009 have also been at the high end of performance.

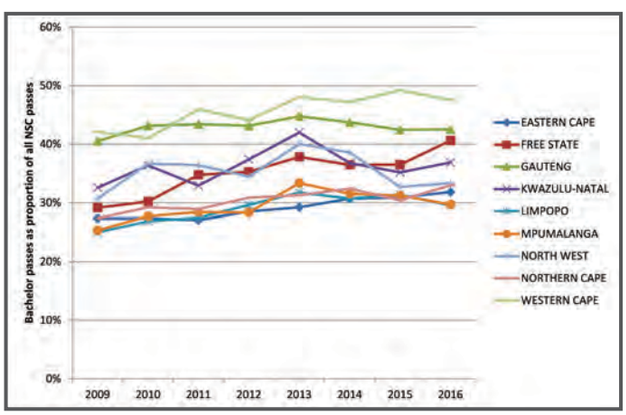


Figure 7.7: Bachelor passes relative to all NSC passes by province since 2009

The next figure shows the number of NSC passes as well as the NSC pass rates by gender, and it reveals some interesting and consistent patterns. Ever since 2009, the pass rate for males has typically been about three percentage points higher than the pass rate for females. This could lead one to believe that females are still at a disadvantage when it comes to educational outcomes in South Africa. However, the number of females that pass Grade 12 is consistently higher than the number of males who pass it, and this gap is widening over time. In the years 2013 to 2016, the number of females passing Grade 12 exceeded the number of males by 27 000 to 34 000 each year. Underlying this pattern is the reality throughout the school system that males are more likely than females to repeat grades and to drop out of school, despite the specific disadvantages faced by females in terms of pregnancies and family responsibilities. The root cause of this is the low levels of learning obtained by males throughout the school system. Whether one looks at achievement at the very start of school or at standardised assessments during primary school or at standardised assessments during secondary school, girls are consistently outperforming boys in both literacy and numeracy. It is interesting, though, that those boys who do reach Grade 12 appear to be a stronger selection than those females who reach Grade 12, as evidenced by the higher NSC pass rates.

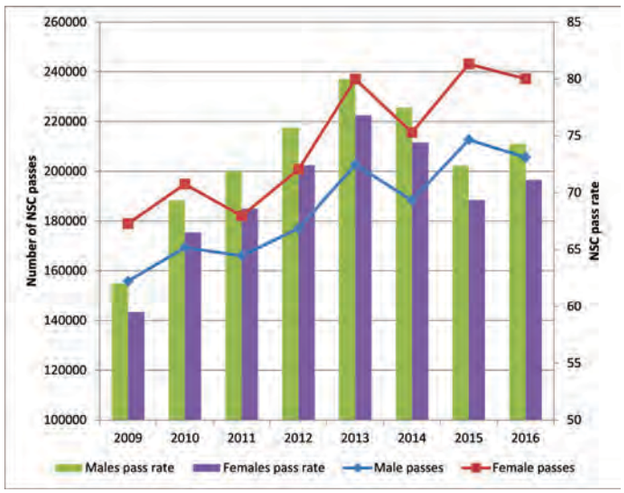
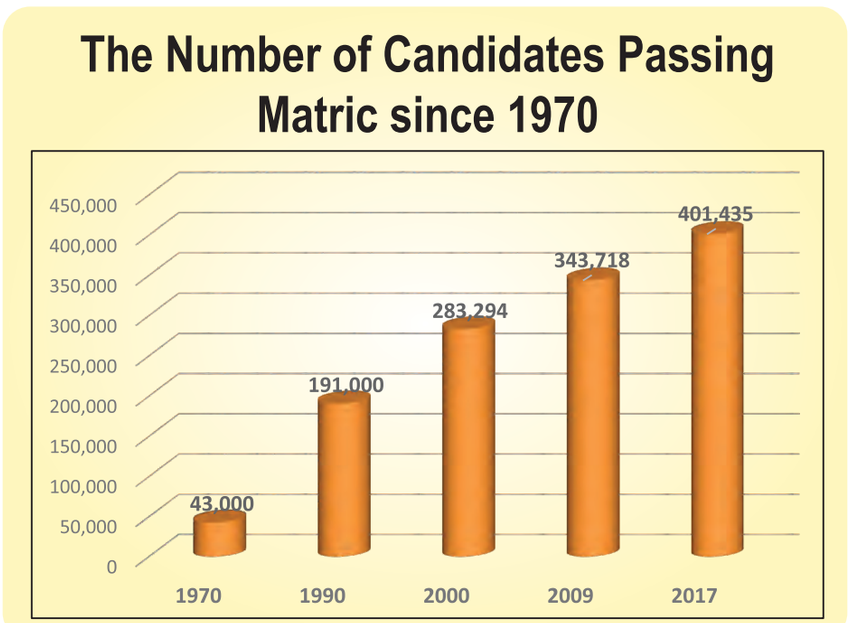


Figure 7.8: Numbers passing NSC and pass rates by gender since 2009



8. THE CLASS OF 2017

8.1 The Profile of the 2017 NSC Class

The Class of 2017 entered the formal schooling system in January 2006, following the implementation of outcomes based (Curriculum 2005). This cohort of learners was the beneficiaries of the educational transformation that heralded the move away from an apartheid era curriculum.

The inherent flaws in Curriculum 2005 were evident in learners' poor reading, writing and numerical skills. By early 2000 a review committee was established to analyse the flaws in the curriculum and make recommendations on the remediation thereof. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for GET (General Education and Training) was borne of the review of Curriculum 2005. The RNCS simplified and clarified Curriculum 2005, and attempted to shift from a skills-based and context-dependent body of knowledge towards a more coherent, explicit and systematic body of knowledge suitable for a national curriculum in the twenty-first century. It specifically set out to develop a high-knowledge, high-skills curriculum, resulting in a fundamental but necessary departure from Curriculum 2005. The RNCS was completed in 2002 and was implemented in January 2004. This implies that the Class of 2017 was introduced to the high-knowledge, high-skills curriculum from Grade 1.

In 2006 the NCS for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase was introduced in 2006, 2007 and 2008 in Grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively. The RNCS and the NCS were further strengthened, streamlined and repackaged as the NCS Grades R–12, which comprises the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*, the *National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 (NPPPPR)* and the *National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12*. The NCS Grades R–12 was implemented in Grade 10 in 2012 and finally in Grade 12 in 2014. Thus the Class of 2017 is the product of the RNCS and the NCS Grades R–12. Furthermore, the Class of 2017 has had the advantage of being the fourth cohort that is exposed to the NCS Grades R–12 (CAPS). This implies that teacher confidence has improved and consequently, improved teacher output is expected. This cohort has written the NSC examinations at a time when the standard and quality of the public examinations system is considered to be maturing and stabilising. The cohort is also the fourth to have benefited through the regulation of progression clause in the FET band.

Moreover, a significant characteristic of the Class of 2017 is that a remarkable percentage of these

learners were part of Government's drive to have learners enrolled in an Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme. The Internal Efficiency of the School System Report (2013) indicates that already in 2002, 40% of five-year-olds were enrolled at an educational institution. According to Age Admission Policy, the majority of these five-year-olds could have been enrolled in the reception year (Grade R). Furthermore, a report on Grade R (DBE, 2011), which excludes community-based sites, indicates that there has been a steady increase in Grade R participation at 15% of the population in schools in 1999–2010. The advantage of being enrolled in an ECD programme is confirmed by the University of Stellenbosch Report (2012), which shows that learners who enrol for Grade R are likely to perform better than those who do not, as they are able to develop foundational skills and school readiness before enrolling in Grade 1.

Given that the majority of learners study in a second language, compensation is learners, who are taught through a medium of instruction which is not their home language. This has been implemented since 2014 and the language compensation to be applied to the Class of 2017 is only 3%.

The phasing out of the language compensation has shown to have a negative impact on the performance of individual learners and on the performance of learners as a collective, because language, and in particular proficiency in the medium of instruction, is one of the largest single factors affecting learner performance at school.

The DBE is devoting significant resources to initiatives to enhance the language proficiency of learners, such as its initiative of English across the Curriculum (EAC) and the introduction of English First Additional Language (FAL) as a subject in Grade 1. However, the latter initiative will only benefit Grade 12 learners from 2023, when the first cohort that was exposed to English FAL at Grade 1 level will be in Grade 12.

8.2 Scope and Size of the Class of 2017

As illustrated in Table 8.1 a total of **629 155** candidates were registered for the 2017 NSC examination. This is a decrease of **45 497** nationally compared to 2016's enrolments for the NSC examination. KwaZulu-Natal has the largest number (**153 125**) of full-time candidate enrolments. This is followed by Gauteng, with **108 522** candidates. In all provinces, there is a reduction in full-time enrolments. Limpopo has registered **100 041** candidates. The Northern Cape has the lowest number of entries, at **10 519**, a decrease of **1 302** candidates on registrations from 2016.

Table 8.1: NSC Enrolments per province

Province	Entered 2014	Entered 2015	Entered 2016	Entered 2017
Eastern Cape	69 306	89 740	92 755	82 257
Free State	26 756	35 209	28 901	27 723
Gauteng	101 212	112 064	112 164	108 522
KwaZulu-Natal	147 355	169 769	169 023	153 125
Limpopo	73 543	102 618	110 639	100 041
Mpumalanga	46 900	55 945	60 794	59 500
North West	26 382	33 845	35 403	35 733
Northern Cape	8 950	12 173	11 821	10 519
Western Cape	48 835	56 562	53 152	51 735
National	549 239	667 925	674 652	629 155

Figure 8.1 below shows that in 2017, the system recorded the highest number of enrolments of part-time candidates. The 2017 part-time enrolment figure shows an 11% increase with **21 804** more candidates compared to 2016. The increase in the number of part-time candidates could be attributed to the Department Second Chance Programme that offers support to adult learners registering for the NSC.

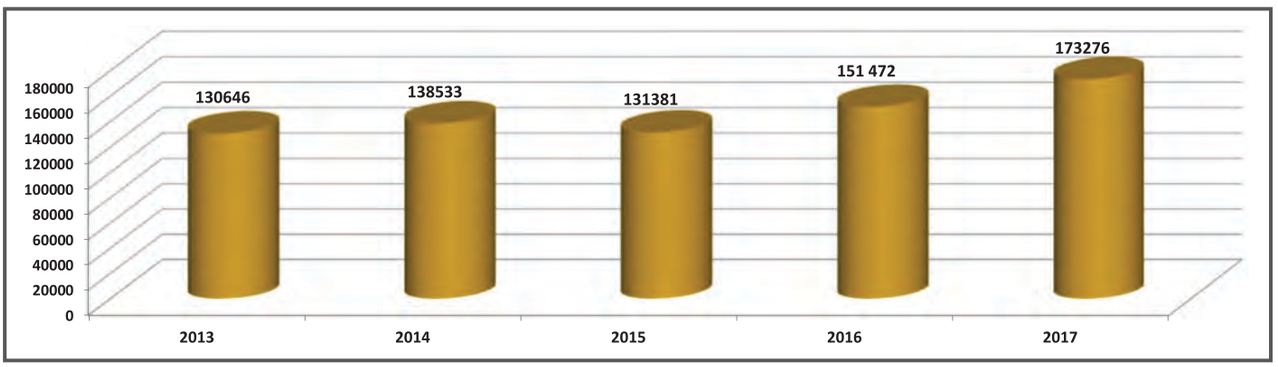


Figure 8.1: Part-time candidates enrolled from 2012 to 2017

8.3 NSC subject enrolment: 2014 to 2017

The DBE has identified 11 key subjects as the main focus for intervention (see table below). These subjects generally have high enrolments of more than 100 000 learners. Performance in these subjects significantly impacts the overall achievement in the NSC results. The following table indicates the number or learners entered in these key subjects from 2014–2017:

Table 8.2: Subject Enrolments- 2014 to 2017

Subjects	Entered 2014	Entered 2015	Entered 2016	Entered 2017
Accounting	128 779	143 962	137 808	116 149
Agricultural Sciences	80 194	106 183	113 119	108 756
Economics	140 860	169 937	165 782	144 793
English FAL	443 145	554 565	564 814	521 306
Geography	241 321	310 300	321 829	306 474
History	118 575	158 451	165 294	159 108
Life Sciences	290 580	355 614	368 191	352 594
Mathematical Literacy	318 994	398 632	389 163	353 019
Mathematics	229 888	269 253	285 406	276 084
Physical Sciences	171 549	197 047	204 695	197 960
Business Studies	212 147	254 188	248 730	225 100

Full-time enrolments in Mathematics have increased steadily since 2014, but decreased slightly in 2017. Since 2014, the number of Mathematics learners has increased by **46 196** learners. A comparison of enrolment figures between 2016 and 2017 indicates that all subject enrolment figures listed in table 8.2 decreased in 2017. Graphical representations of the subject enrolment figures for Mathematics and Physical Sciences for 2013 to 2017 are provided below

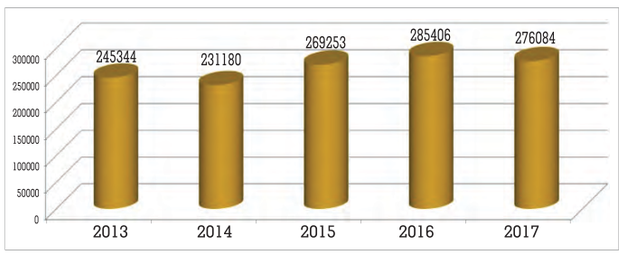


Figure 8.2: Full time enrolments for Mathematics

Full-time enrolments in Mathematics have increased since 2013, but in 2017, a decrease of **9 322** candidates was registered. In 2017, **276 084** full-time candidates enrolled to write the examination.

Figure 8.3 shows that the enrolment in Physical Sciences has decrease by **6 735** compared to 2016, but was still higher than the figure of 2014.

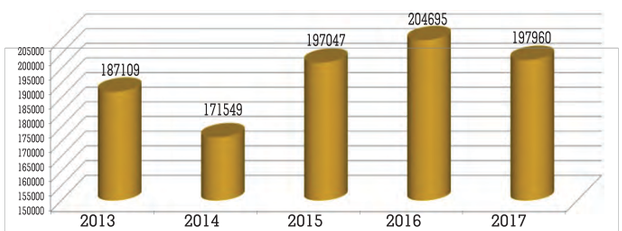


Figure 8.3: Full time enrolments for Physical Science

8.4 Gender Analysis

Table 8.3 shows the enrolment per gender. More females than males complete the NSC examinations.

Table 8.3: Enrolments in terms of Gender

Province	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Eastern Cape	36 603	45 654	44.5	55.5
Free State	12 647	15 076	45.6	54.4
Gauteng	49 057	59 465	45.2	54.8
KwaZulu-Natal	68 187	84 938	44.5	55.5
Limpopo	45 142	54 899	45.1	54.9
Mpumalanga	26 737	32 763	44.9	55.1
North West	16 427	19 306	46.0	54.0
Northern Cape	4 696	5 823	44.6	55.4
Western Cape	22 563	29 172	43.6	56.4
National	282 059	347 096	44.8	55.2

The ratio of male learners and female learners remained constant at 45:55 over the last two years.

8.5 Learners with special education needs

Table 8.5 shows that **3 800** candidates with special education needs sat for the NSC examinations. The Western Cape had the largest number of candidates with special education needs (**1 983**), followed by Gauteng, with **290** candidates.

Table 8.4: Learners with Special Education Needs

Province	Total
Eastern Cape	108
Free State	91
Gauteng	249
KwaZulu-Natal	180
Limpopo	64
Mpumalanga	76
North West	21
Northern Cape	5
Western Cape	1 983
National	2 777

Table 8.5: SNE Learners by Province and Disability

Province	Aphasic/ Dyslectic	Blind	Deaf	Other	Total
Eastern Cape	13	24	10	61	108
Free State	10			81	91
Gauteng	12	22	5	210	249
KwaZulu-Natal	27	50	28	75	180
Limpopo		24		40	64
Mpumalanga	4			72	76
North West				5	5
Northern Cape	4		1	16	21
Western Cape	220	69	73	1621	1983
National	290	189	117	2181	2777

8.6 Age analysis

Most candidates who sat for the 2017 NSC examinations are between 17 and 20 years of age. Table 8.6 indicates that **2 384** candidates who were 16 years old and **774** candidates who were 27 years old sat for the examination.

Table 8.6: Age analysis

Age	No. of Learner
16	2 384
17	83 040
18	197 284
19	131 025
20	92 522
21	59 622
22	32 806
23	16 696
24	7 525
25	3 351
26	1 541
27	766

8.7 Schools by quintile

Table 8.7 shows the number of schools per quintile in each province. Nationally, **4 929** schools are rated as no-fees schools (Quintile 1, Quintile 2 and Quintile 3). The majority of schools in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape fall in these quintile ratings. In Gauteng and the Western Cape, most schools are classified as Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 schools. Only 10.6% of schools in South Africa are classified as Quintile 5.

Table 8.7: Schools by quintile

Province	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5	Quintile 99	Total
Eastern Cape	201	193	378	39	50	50	911
Free State	98	65	65	27	49	20	324
Gauteng	78	83	110	150	214	239	874
KwaZulu-Natal	467	501	397	158	148	83	1754
Limpopo	535	582	192	14	18	55	1396
Mpumalanga	271	156	32	30	21	41	551
North West	110	80	137	59	7	18	411
Northern Cape	27	24	25	29	29	5	139
Western Cape	23	31	68	89	186	48	445
National	1 810	1 715	1 404	595	722	559	6 805

8.8 Repeat candidates

Table 8.8, Table 8.9 and Table 8.10 show the number of repeat candidates who sat for the November 2017 NSC examinations. The Second-Chance Programme is an initiative of the DBE that offers support to repeat candidates. A total of **25 337** full time repeat candidates sat for the examinations and **114 535** part time repeat candidates enrolled for the examinations. Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal collectively registered account for 91 740 repeat candidates .

Table 8.8: Full-time repeat candidates

Province	Number of Learners
Eastern Cape	5 777
Free State	0
Gauteng	2
KwaZulu-Natal	4 021
Limpopo	12 094
Mpumalanga	3 402
North West	39
Northern Cape	0
Western Cape	2
National	25 337

Table 8.9: Part-time repeat candidates

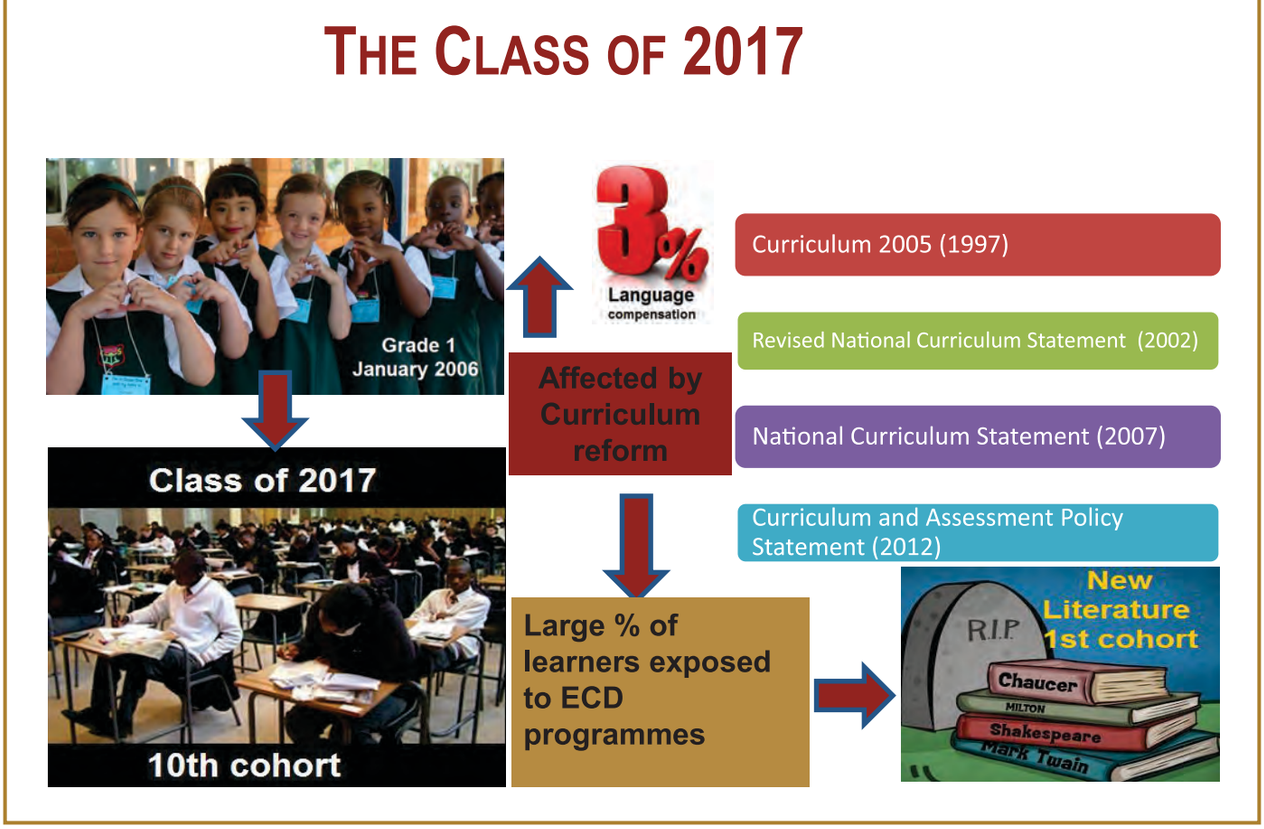
Province	Number of Learners
Eastern Cape	14 311
Free State	3 143
Gauteng	31 647
KwaZulu-Natal	25 571
Limpopo	20 211
Mpumalanga	6 345
North West	3 637
Northern Cape	1 868
Western Cape	7 802
National	114 535

8.10 Immigrant candidates

Table 8.11 shows the number of immigrant candidates per province who sat for the 2017 NSC examinations. A total of **4 871** immigrant candidates registered for the 2017 NSC examinations. Gauteng has the largest number of immigrant candidates (**2 493**), followed by the Western Cape (**1 130**). Limpopo, the Free State and North West had the lowest number of entries.

Table 8.10: Immigrant candidates

Province	Number of Learners
Eastern Cape	102
Free State	8
Gauteng	2 493
KwaZulu-Natal	398
Limpopo	11
Mpumalanga	693
North West	6
Northern Cape	30
Western Cape	1 130
National	4 871



9. INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES TARGETING THE CLASS OF 2017

The following intervention programmes implemented by the Basic Education Sector aimed at supporting and improving the quality of education and ultimately the achievements of the Class of 2017.

9.1 National Strategy for Learner Attainment

One of the key intervention strategies of the DBE is the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA). The NSLA attempts to meet the targets set out in the *Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030*. The action plan has clear measurable-output goals and time frames for each critical deliverable. The objectives of the framework are:

(a) sustained improvement in learner outcomes or performance;
(b) enhanced accountability at all levels of the system;
(c) greater focus on basic functionality of schools;
(d) protecting time for teaching and learning;
(e) improved support for teaching and learning;
(f) increased efforts to time on task; and
(g) resource provisioning.

All provinces have improvement plans linked to the NSLA and aimed at enhancing learner attainment in the NSC (NSC). Provinces report on a quarterly basis to the DBE on the strategic activities identified in the NSLA. The reports are analysed to monitor progress and give constructive feedback and, also on a quarterly basis, recommendations for improvement are made to provinces. Moreover the DBE conducts NSLA oversight visits biannually to each PED and monitoring of learner performance is effected at provincial, district and school levels.

In terms of support for Grade 12 learners, the following trends emerged from the NSLA:

(a) Almost all provinces provided differentiated support programmes in the form of vacation classes and camps for progressed learners, moderate performers and high-performing learners.

(b) All provinces increased their support programmes for moderate to high performing learners, in order to improve the quality of the 2017 learning outcomes.

(c) A growing number of provinces are utilising broadcast solutions (e.g. telematics and IBP (Internet Broadcast Project)) at teacher centres and at individual schools to provide content support to learners;

(d) A noticeable increase in utilising ICTs (DBE channel, websites, radio lessons, etc.) to close content gaps;

(e) Provinces are utilising learners to support other learners through study groups and homework assistance as a means of supporting learners after school hours and;

(f) An increase in partnerships with various stakeholders including universities, as part of the improvement interventions.

9.2 Support for the Languages and History

The national literature catalogue for FET has been implemented incrementally in South African Schools since 2016 in Grade 11. The new Grade 12 literature set-works was implemented in 2017. Although some old literary genres are still part of the new catalogue, a significant number of new literary genres were implemented in 2017. Unavoidably, the focus for interventions meant to improve learner attainment in languages, became the new Grade 12 set-works. Additional resources such as study notes etc. were developed and widely distributed.

In History, a new examination guideline was issued in December 2016, which contains a new section of the content for examination purposes. This content represents a significant proportion of the 2017 NSC examination and thus necessitated dedicated support to learners and teachers. Workshops focused on new topics outlined in the 2017 Examination Guideline for History.

9.3. Vacation Classes (Offered in Autumn, Winter, and Spring)

The vacation school programme is the biggest learner support programme, with a footprint across all nine provinces. These classes are offered during the school holidays and range from 5 – 12 days, depending on the length of the school holidays. In addition to walk in/residential classes at schools, provinces also used universities and other departments (such as DST), NGOs and the private sector to expand the scope and impact of the vacation classes. Differentiated classes were offered to all categories of learners including progressed learners; high achievers and

moderate achievers. The support offered to the class of 2017, focus not only on the 11 high enrolment subjects but was extended to include specific support for all Home Languages. The programmes at residential centres included motivation talks, study skills, career guidance and other psycho-social support. Extra classes take place regularly before and after school hours, during weekends and especially the autumn / winter and spring camps.

9.4 LTSM Provision and Support

Ensuring that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks (one textbook per subject) and workbooks is a critical priority for the DBE. The 2017 cohort of learners were thus beneficiaries of the LTSM provisioning (learning and teaching support material) by the DBE and PEDs in pursuit of this priority. Provision of workbooks to schools is also one of the intervention strategies to ensure that all learners at public schools have access to basic teaching and learning resources.

9.5 Information and Communication Technology

The DBE has developed a repository of electronic curriculum-aligned and enriched content resources, including study guides, interactive workbooks, free core textbooks and videos. Resources are provided to

distribution to schools through ICT initiatives. These high-quality teaching materials include videos and interactive content via the Internet or a local area network (School Connectivity Projects) or through the DBE television channel, broadcasting on OVHD & DSTV). These developments can significantly contribute to the move toward paperless classrooms. In this regard, ICT programmes will:

(a) minimise the negative impact of any shortage of teachers, especially of Mathematics and Physical Sciences;
(b) contribute to the alleviation of the shortage of learning material such as textbooks for teachers and learners;
(c) improve the quality of education by providing improved informational content and learning approaches;
(d) facilitate and promote the development of crucial skills in learners; these include critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, collaboration and creativity; and
(e) provide learners with resources to collaborate with their peers and teachers, and to raise motivation levels and enthusiasm among both learners and teachers.

Furthermore, the internet is a valuable source of information and an effective teaching tool. Schools have access to online curriculum resources (e.g. past papers and study guides) on the DBE website, Thutong and provincial curriculum portals. In addition, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube can be useful, given its popularity.

Moreover, one of the key focus areas of the DBE High School Channel is to support

Grade 12 learners in preparation for their examinations. Teachers discuss strategies and skills required to answer examination questions. Learners are able to interact with the teachers in the studio by completing assessments using mobile devices and by asking questions on social media platforms. These programmes are broadcast on DStv 319, OpenView HD 201 and Star Sat 309.

9.6 Subject Intervention: The 2017 Diagnostic Report

As part of the ongoing initiative by the DBE to improve the use of the NSC results, the Diagnostic Report is a source of information for improving learning and teaching. In this report, a qualitative analysis is undertaken in the 11 key subjects (also known as high-enrolment subjects). It attempts to determine the extent to which the Class of 2016 achieved the learning outcomes and fulfilled the academic requirements of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The report evaluates learner performance in selected subjects by highlighting the areas of weakness in each subject and articulating the remedial measures to be adopted at school level to improve performance in these subjects.

The report is based on qualitative data that is drawn from the subject reports compiled by the chief markers, internal moderators and subject specialists after the marking process. This report therefore serves as a catalyst for improved planning at all levels of the system so that the quality of teaching and learning can be elevated to the next level.

Over the last few years, this report has established itself as a valuable resource for Grade 12 teachers as well as for curriculum planners and curriculum implementers.

9.7 Support for Progressed Learners

Owing to the cumulative deficit in knowledge acquisition of certain learners, the DBE and PEDs provided support to the progressed learners. Provinces identified progressed learners and provided them with additional and differentiated support programmes. To ensure that each learner has the best possible opportunity to obtain an NSC in 2017, provinces embarked on a rigorous support programme for progressed learners in addition to the programme offered to other learners. Intensive support programmes are developed and implemented for high enrolment subjects across provinces.

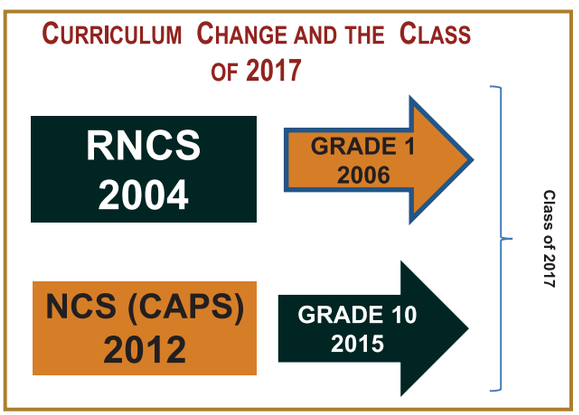
9.8 Support for High Achievers

Provinces identified learners achieving above 70% in a subject, for targeted support in key subjects in order to improve the quality

of performance. Dedicated classes were offered during the spring and winter vacations to support such learners to realise their potential and achieve distinctions in the various subjects.

9.9 Support for Grade 12 second chance learners (including MEO learners)

The Second Chance Matric Programme (SCMP) provided support to learners for the 11 gateway subjects via various platforms including lessons on television (DSTV and HD Openview solutions). The HD OpenView Solution is available in more than 1 million households. The television broadcasts were supported on Facebook on Mindset Learn Xtra with 84 301 impressions and on Mindset TV with 674 970 impressions. In addition radio lessons were broadcast on 27 community, 1 national and 1 online radio stations for the 11 subjects. Six, thirty minute lessons were broadcast prior and during the examinations. The television lessons were supported by teachers on the SCMP Facebook page which has 4 939 followers. Mind the Gap Study Guides, past question papers and memoranda, Mathematics and Science textbooks were also provided to the learners. Study Tips were also developed and provided to learners. All content was available to learners on the DBE website. All grade 12 learners in the sector also have access to these resources provided for Second Chance Learners.



10. PERFORMANCE IN THE 2017 NSC EXAMINATIONS

This section of the report provides the analysis of the data at national, provincial and district levels. The report will focus on full-time candidates that have written seven or more subjects, therefore it will be based on 629 155 candidates listed in Table 10.1.1. The performance of a total of 173 276 part-time candidates will be analysed separately, as these candidates register for one or more subjects, and in most cases these are less than the full package of seven subjects. Therefore, their results cannot be analysed in the same way as those for the full time candidates.

This section will focus on the following analyses:

(a) National pass rates and pass rate trends over the last four years;
(b) Analysis of provincial performance;
(c) Comparison of NSC passes by type of qualification;
(d) Comparison of NSC passes by gender;
(e) Analysis of school pass rates with different percentage categories;
(f) Analysis of subject performance;
(g) Analysis of school performance by quintile ranking;
(h) Subject performance of part-time candidates;
(i) Repeat candidates;
o Full-time repeaters
o Part-time repeaters
(j) Analysis of district performance; and
(k) Performance of learners with special needs.

10.1 Overall Performance in the 2017 NSC Examination

As seen in the Table 10.1.1, of the 534 484 full-time examination candidates who obtained marks in seven or more subjects during the 2017 year-end examinations process, 401 435 candidates, or 75.1% of the total, obtained the NSC. The 'pass rate' varies at the provincial level from 86,1% in the case of Free State, to 65.0% in the case of Eastern Cape. As explained in the earlier section 6, it is important that pass rates be viewed together with 'throughput', or the extent to which learners 'survive' to Grade 12 without dropping out, in particular after grades 10 and 11. Whilst well-performing schools can contribute to a higher provincial pass rate, high levels of dropping out of weaker learners before Grade 12 can have a similar effect.

10.1 Overall Performance in the 2017 NSC Examination

Table 10.1.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2017 NSC examination

Province	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	67 648	43 981	65.0
Free State	25 130	21 631	86.1
Gauteng	97 284	82 826	85.1
KwaZulu-Natal	124 317	90 589	72.9
Limpopo	83 228	54 625	65.6
Mpumalanga	48 483	36 273	74.8
North West	30 792	24 462	79.4
Northern Cape	8 735	6 608	75.6
Western Cape	48 867	40 440	82.8
National	534 484	401 435	75.1

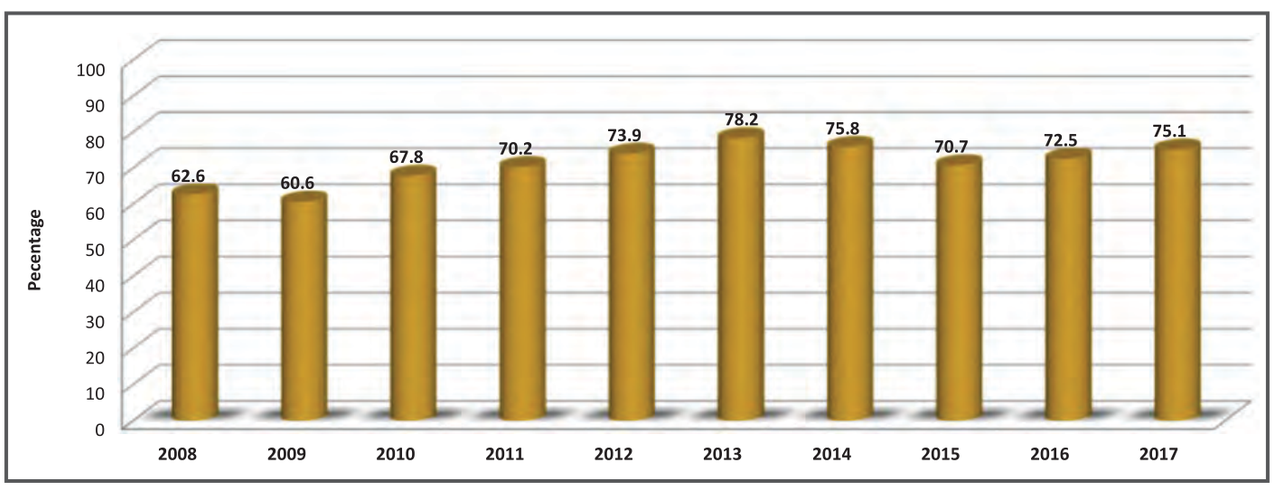


Figure 10.1.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2017 NSC examination

10.2 Comparison of performance

Table 10.2.1: Comparison of NSC passes by province, 2014 to 2017

	2014			2015			2016			2017		
Province	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	66 935	43 777	65.4	87 090	49 475	56.8	82 902	49 168	59.3	67 648	43 981	65.0
Free State	26 440	21 899	82.8	31 161	25 416	81.6	26 786	23 629	88.2	25 130	21 631	86.1
Gauteng	99 478	84 247	84.7	108 442	91 327	84.2	103 829	88 381	85.1	97 284	82 826	85.1
KwaZulu-Natal	139 367	97 144	69.7	162 658	98 761	60.7	147 648	98 032	66.4	124 317	90 589	72.9
Limpopo	72 990	53 179	72.9	101 575	66 946	65.9	101 807	63 595	62.5	83 228	54 625	65.6
Mpumalanga	45 081	35 615	79.0	54 980	43 229	78.6	54 251	41 801	77.1	48 483	36 273	74.8
North West	26 066	22 061	84.6	33 286	27 118	81.5	32 045	26 448	82.5	30 792	24 462	79.4
Northern Cape	8 794	6 715	76.4	11 623	8 064	69.4	10 041	7 902	78.7	8 735	6 608	75.6
Western Cape	47 709	39 237	82.2	53 721	45 489	84.7	50 869	43 716	85.9	48 867	40 440	82.8
National	532 860	403 874	75.8	644 536	455 825	70.7	610 178	442 672	72.5	534 484	401 435	75.1

Table 10.2.2 NSC performance by type of qualification, 2017 (Excluding candidates who qualify for Endorsed certificate)

		Bachelor		Diploma		Higher Certificate		NSC			
Province	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Total Achieved	Achieved
Eastern Cape	67 648	15 380	22.7	17 908	26.5	10 672	15.8	18	0.0	43 978	65.0
Free State	25 130	8 822	35.1	9 076	36.1	3 713	14.8	2	0.0	21 613	86.0
Gauteng	97 284	35 012	36.0	34 444	35.4	13 296	13.7	1	0.0	82 753	85.1
KwaZulu-Natal	124 317	35 687	28.7	36 453	29.3	18 400	14.8	47	0.0	90 587	72.9
Limpopo	83 228	17 790	21.4	20 011	24.0	16 809	20.2	11	0.0	54 621	65.6
Mpumalanga	48 483	11 335	23.4	15 628	32.2	9 291	19.2	19	0.0	36 273	74.8
North West	30 792	8 278	26.9	9 968	32.4	6 216	20.2	0	0.0	24 462	79.4
Northern Cape	8 735	2 205	25.2	2 815	32.2	1 587	18.2	0	0.0	6 607	75.6
Western Cape	48 867	19 101	39.1	15 030	30.8	6 281	12.9	1	0.0	40 413	82.7
National	534 484	153 610	28.7	161 333	30.2	86 265	16.1	99	0.0	401 307	75.1

There are 128 candidates who qualify for the endorsed certificate as follows:

- 3 from Eastern Cape;
- 18 from Free State;
- 73 from Gauteng;
- 2 from KwaZulu-Natal
- 4 from Limpopo;
- 1 from Northern Cape; and
- 27 from Western Cape.

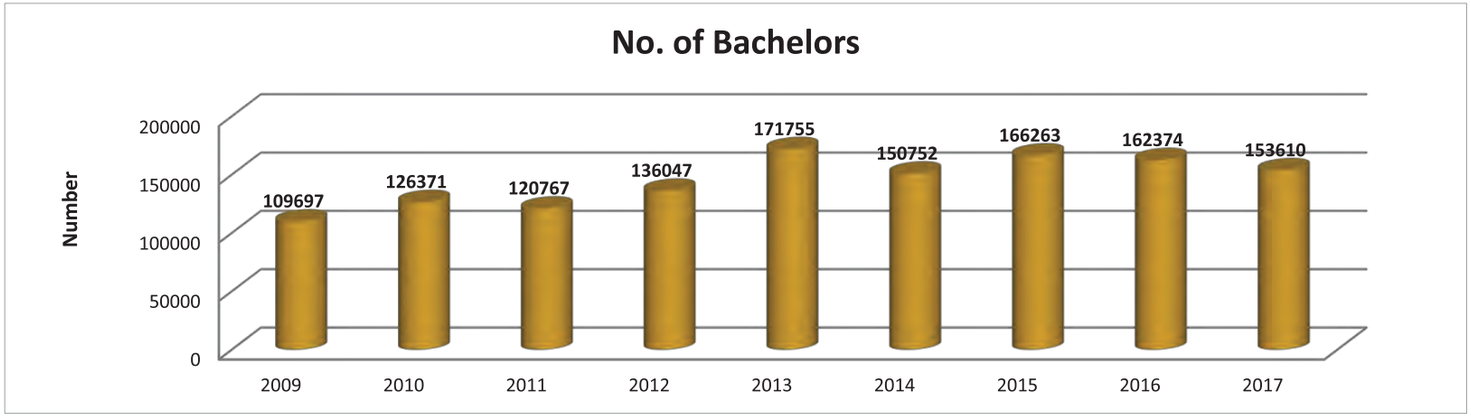
Table 10.2.3: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2017 (Excluding Endorsed)

Province	Year	Wrote	Bachelor		Diploma		Higher Certificate		NSC		Total Achieved	% Achieved
			Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved		
Eastern Cape	2012	63 989	11 246	17.6	16 148	25.2	11 998	18.8	51	0.1	39 443	61.6
	2013	72 138	13 686	19.0	19 179	26.6	13 950	19.3	25	0.0	46 840	64.9
	2014	66 935	13 435	20.1	18 339	27.4	11 958	17.9	45	0.1	43 777	65.4
	2015	87 090	15 291	17.6	20 055	23.0	14 119	16.2	10	0.0	49 475	56.8
	2016	82 902	15 645	18.9	19 996	24.1	13 520	16.3	5	0.0	49 166	59.3
	2017	**67 648**	**15 380**	**22.7**	**17 908**	**26.5**	**10 672**	**15.8**	**18**	**0.0**	**43 978**	**65.0**
Free State	2012	24 265	6 937	28.6	8 553	35.2	4 181	17.2	5	0.0	19 676	81.1
	2013	27 105	8 961	33.1	10 089	37.2	4 636	17.1	3	0.0	23 689	87.4
	2014	26 440	7 987	30.2	9 754	36.9	4 107	15.5	51	0.2	21 899	82.8
	2015	31 161	9 277	29.8	11 026	35.4	5 102	16.4	11	0.0	25 416	81.6
	2016	26 786	9 596	35.8	10 244	38.2	3 767	14.1	1	0.0	23 608	88.1
	2017	**25 130**	**8 822**	**35.1**	**9 076**	**36.1**	**3 713**	**14.8**	**2**	**0.0**	**21 613**	**86.0**
Gauteng	2012	89 627	32 449	36.2	30 422	33.9	12 335	13.8	8	0.0	75 214	83.9
	2013	97 897	38 104	38.9	33 716	34.4	13 295	13.6	7	0.0	85 122	87.0
	2014	99 478	36 843	37.0	35 034	35.2	12 295	12.4	75	0.1	84 247	84.7
	2015	108 442	38 760	35.7	37 375	34.5	15 191	14.0	1	0.0	91 327	84.2
	2016	103 829	37 582	36.2	37 121	35.8	13 615	13.1	0	0.0	88 318	85.1
	2017	**97 284**	**35 012**	**36.0**	**34 444**	**35.4**	**13 296**	**13.7**	**1**	**0.0**	**82 753**	**85.1**
Kwazulu-Natal	2012	127 253	34 779	27.3	36 841	29.0	21 274	16.7	109	0.1	93 003	73.1
	2013	145 278	47 202	32.5	42 760	29.4	22 328	15.4	113	0.1	112 403	77.4
	2014	139 367	35 724	25.6	39 751	28.5	21 544	15.5	125	0.1	97 144	69.7
	2015	162 658	34 751	21.4	39 799	24.5	24 180	14.9	31	0.0	98 761	60.7
	2016	147 648	36 139	24.5	39 507	26.8	22 347	15.1	39	0.0	98 032	66.4
	2017	**124 317**	**35 687**	**28.7**	**36 453**	**29.3**	**18 400**	**14.8**	**47**	**0.0**	**90 587**	**72.9**
Limpopo	2012	77 360	15 324	19.8	20 103	26.0	16 301	21.1	17	0.0	51 745	66.9
	2013	82 483	18 781	22.8	22 694	27.5	17 695	21.5	14	0.0	59 184	71.8
	2014	72 990	16 325	22.4	20 927	28.7	15 912	21.8	15	0.0	53 179	72.9
	2015	101 575	20 992	20.7	25 434	25.0	20 513	20.2	7	0.0	66 946	65.9
	2016	101 807	18 762	18.4	23 544	23.1	21 281	20.9	7	0.0	63 594	62.5
	2017	**83 228**	**17 790**	**21.4**	**20 011**	**24.0**	**16 809**	**20.2**	**11**	**0.0**	**54 621**	**65.6**

Table 10.2.3: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2017 (Excluding Endorsed)

Mpumalanga	2012	47 889	9 495	19.8	14 277	29.8	9 633	20.1	99	0.2	33 504	70.0
	2013	50 053	12 954	25.9	16 366	32.7	9 507	19.0	9	0.0	38 836	77.6
	2014	45 081	11 229	24.9	15 898	35.3	8 423	18.7	65	0.1	35 615	79.0
	2015	54 980	13 497	24.5	18 675	34.0	11 046	20.1	11	0.0	43 229	78.6
	2016	54 251	12 420	22.9	18 447	34.0	10 918	20.1	16	0.0	41 801	77.1
	2017	**48 483**	**11 335**	**23.4**	**15 628**	**32.2**	**9 291**	**19.2**	**19**	**0.0**	**36 273**	**74.8**
North West	2012	27 174	7 445	27.4	9 151	33.7	5 010	18.4	3	0.0	21 609	79.5
	2013	29 140	10 166	34.9	10 249	35.2	4 998	17.2	1	0.0	25 414	87.2
	2014	26 066	8 509	32.6	9 472	36.3	4 079	15.6	1	0.0	22 061	84.6
	2015	33 286	8 865	26.6	11 554	34.7	6 699	20.1	0	0.0	27 118	81.5
	2016	32 045	8 820	27.5	11 177	34.9	6 450	20.1	0	0.0	26 447	82.5
	2017	**30 792**	**8 278**	**26.9**	**9 968**	**32.4**	**6 216**	**20.2**	**0**	**0.0**	**24 462**	**79.4**
Northern Cape	2012	8 925	2 055	23.0	2 787	31.2	1 819	20.4	0	0.0	6 661	74.6
	2013	10 403	2 424	23.3	3 207	30.8	2 118	20.4	0	0.0	7 749	74.5
	2014	8 794	2 176	24.7	2 941	33.4	1 596	18.1	2	0.0	6 715	76.4
	2015	11 623	2 451	21.1	3 306	28.4	2 306	19.8	1	0.0	8 064	69.4
	2016	10 041	2 606	26.0	3 278	32.6	2 015	20.1	0	0.0	7 899	78.7
	2017	**8 735**	**2 205**	**25.2**	**2 815**	**32.2**	**1 587**	**18.2**	**0**	**0.0**	**6 607**	**75.6**
Western Cape	2012	44 670	16 317	36.5	14 599	32.7	6 053	13.6	5	0.0	36 974	82.8
	2013	47 615	19 477	40.9	15 032	31.6	6 029	12.7	4	0.0	40 542	85.1
	2014	47 709	18 524	38.8	14 573	30.5	6 108	12.8	32	0.1	39 237	82.2
	2015	53 721	22 379	41.7	16 496	30.7	6 614	12.3	0	0.0	45 489	84.7
	2016	50 869	20 804	40.9	16 305	32.1	6 573	12.9	0	0.0	43 682	85.9
	2017	**48 867**	**19 101**	**39.1**	**15 030**	**30.8**	**6 281**	**12.9**	**1**	**0.0**	**40 413**	**82.7**
National	**2012**	**511 152**	**136 047**	**26.6**	**152 881**	29.9	**88 604**	17.3	**297**	0.1	377 829	73.9
	2013	**562 112**	**171 755**	**30.6**	**173 292**	30.8	**94 556**	16.8	**176**	0.0	439 779	78.2
	2014	**532 860**	**150 752**	**28.3**	**166 689**	31.3	**86 022**	16.1	**411**	0.1	403 874	75.8
	2015	**644 536**	**166 263**	25.8	**183 720**	28.5	**105 770**	16.4	**72**	0.0	455 825	70.7
	2016	**610 178**	**162 374**	26.6	**179 619**	29.4	**100 486**	16.5	**68**	0.0	442 547	72.5
	2017	**534 484**	**153 610**	**28.7**	**161 333**	**30.2**	**86 265**	**16.1**	**99**	**0.0**	**401 307**	**75.1**

The percentage of learners achieving Bachelor passes improved from 26.6% in 2016 to 28.7% in 2017. 153 610 candidates qualified for Bachelor Studies at Higher Education Institutions with the most number of distinctions recorded in the Western Cape. As in 2016, the Western Cape had the highest percentage of Bachelor passes (39.1%) and Free State had the highest percentage of Diploma passes. It should be noted that Gauteng had the highest combined percentage of Bachelor and Diploma passes (71.4%). It was significant to note that Kwa-Zulu had the highest percentage increase in Bachelor passes of 4.2% as well as the highest number of Bachelor passes (35 687).



10.2.4: Comparison of Bachelor's passes by provinces between 2014 to 2017

Province	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor
Eastern Cape	66 923	13 435	**20.1**	87 090	15 291	**17.6**	82 902	15 645	18.9	67 648	15 380	22.7
Free State	26 382	7 987	**30.3**	31 161	9 277	**29.8**	26 786	9 596	35.8	25 130	8 822	35.1
Gauteng	99 321	36 843	**37.1**	108 442	38 760	**35.7**	103 829	37 582	36.2	97 284	35 012	36.0
Kwazulu-Natal	139 365	35 724	**25.6**	162 658	34 751	**21.4**	147 648	36 139	24.5	124 317	35 687	28.7
Limpopo	72 973	16 325	**22.4**	101 575	20 992	**20.7**	101 807	18 762	18.4	83 228	17 790	21.4
Mpumalanga	45 081	11 229	**24.9**	54 980	13 497	**24.5**	54 251	12 420	22.9	48 483	11 335	23.4
North West	26 069	8 509	**32.6**	33 286	8 865	**26.6**	32 045	8 820	27.5	30 792	8 278	26.9
Northern Cape	8 794	2 176	**24.7**	11 623	2 451	**21.1**	10 041	2 606	26.0	8 735	2 205	25.2
Western Cape	47 679	18 524	**38.9**	53 721	22 379	**41.7**	50 869	20 804	40.9	48 867	19 101	39.1
National	**532 587**	**150 752**	**28.3**	**644 536**	**166 263**	**25.8**	**610 178**	**162 374**	**26.6**	**534 484**	**153 610**	**28.7**

Table 10.2.5:Bachelor's passes by gender 2015 - 2017

Province Name	Gender	2015			2016			2017		
		Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors	Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors	Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors
Eastern Cape	Male	39 644	7 307	18.4	37 116	7 337	19.8	29 816	7 066	23.7
	Female	47 446	7 984	16.8	45 786	8 308	18.1	37 832	8 314	22.0
Free State	Male	14 474	4 277	29.5	12 114	4 467	36.9	11 526	4 105	35.6
	Female	16 687	5 000	30.0	14 672	5 129	35.0	13 604	4 717	34.7
Gauteng	Male	48 812	16 738	34.3	47 016	16 152	34.4	43 623	14 927	34.2
	Female	59 630	22 022	36.9	56 813	21 430	37.7	53 661	20 085	37.4
Kwazulu-Natal	Male	76 725	16 061	20.9	68 028	16 446	24.2	54 602	15 924	29.2
	Female	85 933	18 690	21.7	79 620	19 693	24.7	69 715	19 763	28.3
Limpopo	Male	46 013	10 608	23.1	46 292	9 520	20.6	37 489	8 691	23.2
	Female	55 562	10 384	18.7	55 515	9 242	16.6	45 739	9 099	19.9
Mpumalanga	Male	24 682	6 527	26.4	24 350	6 083	25.0	21 781	5 423	24.9
	Female	30 298	6,970	23.0	29 901	6 337	21.2	26 702	5 912	22.1
North West	Male	15 148	4 126	27.2	14 963	4 207	28.1	14 297	3 853	26.9
	Female	18 138	4 739	26.1	17 082	4 613	27.0	16 495	4 425	26.8
Northern Cape	Male	5 352	1 114	20.8	4 552	1 162	25.5	3 843	936	24.4
	Female	6 271	1 337	21.3	5 489	1 444	26.3	4 892	1 269	25.9
Western Cape	Male	23 099	9 478	41.0	22 195	9 026	40.7	21 306	8 169	38.3
	Female	30 622	12 901	42.1	28 674	11 778	41.1	27 561	10 932	39.7
National	**Male**	**293 949**	**76 236**	**25.9**	**276 626**	**74 400**	**26.9**	**238 283**	**69 094**	**29.0**
	Female	**350 587**	**90 027**	**25.7**	**333 552**	**87 974**	**26.4**	**296 201**	**84 516**	**28.5**
	Both	**644 536**	**166 263**	**25.8**	**610 178**	**162 374**	**26.6**	**534 484**	**153 610**	**28.7**

In 2017, there were more Bachelor passes from female candidates but the performance of male candidates were marginally better (29%) compared to girls (28%).

Table 10.2.6: Comparison of number of NSC passes by province and gender from 2014 to 2017

Province	Gender	Total Wrote				Total Achieved				% Achieved			
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
Eastern Cape	Male	30,106	39,644	37,116	29,816	20,397	23,634	22,955	20,081	67.8	78.5	57.9	67.3
	Female	36,829	47,446	45,786	37,832	23,380	25,841	26,213	23,900	63.5	70.2	55.2	63.2
Free State	Male	12,320	14,474	12,114	11,526	10,404	11,883	10,875	10,079	84.4	96.5	75.1	87.4
	Female	14,120	16,687	14,672	13,604	11,495	13,533	12,754	11,552	81.4	95.8	76.4	84.9
Gauteng	Male	44,700	48,812	47,016	43,623	38,218	41,709	40,479	37,650	85.5	93.3	82.9	86.3
	Female	54,778	59,630	56,813	53,661	46,029	49,618	47,902	45,176	84.0	90.6	80.3	84.2
Kwazulu-Natal	Male	64,647	76,725	68,028	54,602	45,648	47,056	45,468	40,823	70.6	72.8	59.3	74.8
	Female	74,720	85,933	79,620	69,715	51,496	51,705	52,564	49,766	68.9	69.2	61.2	71.4
Limpopo	Male	33,737	46,013	46,292	37,489	25,855	32,196	30,580	26,033	76.6	95.4	66.5	69.4
	Female	39,253	55,562	55,515	45,739	27,324	34,750	33,015	28,592	69.6	88.5	59.4	62.5
Mpumalanga	Male	20,511	24,682	24,350	21,781	16,668	20,048	19,442	16,784	81.3	97.7	78.8	77.1
	Female	24,570	30,298	29,901	26,702	18,947	23,181	22,359	19,489	77.1	94.3	73.8	73.0
North West	Male	12,111	15,148	14,963	14,297	10,575	12,719	12,676	11,681	87.3	105.0	83.7	81.7
	Female	13,955	18,138	17,082	16,495	11,486	14,399	13,772	12,781	82.3	103.2	75.9	77.5
Northern Cape	Male	3,983	5,352	4,552	3,843	3,059	3,749	3,639	2,956	76.8	94.1	68.0	76.9
	Female	4,811	6,271	5,489	4,892	3,656	4,315	4,263	3,652	76.0	89.7	68.0	74.7
Western Cape	Male	20,950	23,099	22,195	21,306	17,433	19,723	19,428	17,961	83.2	94.1	84.1	84.3
	Female	26,759	30,622	28,674	27,561	21,804	25,766	24,288	22,479	81.5	96.3	79.3	81.6
National	**Male**	**243,065**	**293,949**	**276,626**	**238,283**	**188,257**	**212,717**	**205,542**	**184,048**	**77.5**	**72.4**	**74.3**	**77.2**
	Female	**289,795**	**350,587**	**333,552**	**296,201**	**215,617**	**243,108**	**237,130**	**217,387**	**74.4**	**69.3**	**71.1**	**73.4**
	Both	**532,860**	**644,536**	**610,178**	**534,484**	**403,874**	**455,825**	**442,672**	**401,435**	**75.8**	**70.7**	**72.5**	**75.1**

Male candidates have been performing better than female candidates over the last 4 years.

Table 10.2.7: Number of schools within different pass rate categories (2016 and 2017)

PROVINCES		Total Number of Schools		0 - 19.9%		20 - 39.9%		40 to 59.9%		60 to 79.9%		80 to 100%		Exactly 0%		Exactly 100%	
		2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
EASTERN CAPE	Number	925	911	43	28	183	135	276	225	231	285	192	238	2	2	44	34
	%			4.6	3.1	19.8	14.8	29.8	24.7	25.0	31.3	20.8	26.1	0.2	0.2	4.8	3.7
FREE STATE	Number	328	324	0	0	1	2	4	10	58	57	265	255	0	0	65	48
	%			0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6	1.2	3.1	17.7	17.6	80.8	78.7	0.0	0.0	19.8	14.8
GAUTENG	Number	875	874	3	2	6	2	47	35	207	217	612	618	2	1	144	138
	%			0.3	0.2	0.7	0.2	5.4	4.0	23.7	24.8	69.9	70.7	0.2	0.1	16.5	15.8
KWAZULU-NATAL	Number	1,745	1 754	105	42	240	153	388	336	486	565	526	658	10	5	85	109
	%			6.0	2.4	13.8	8.7	22.2	19.2	27.9	32.2	30.1	37.5	0.6	0.3	4.9	6.2
LIMPOPO	Number	1,413	1 396	43	35	217	164	382	383	444	434	327	380	4	1	40	36
	%			3.0	2.5	15.4	11.7	27.0	27.4	31.4	31.1	23.1	27.2	0.3	0.1	2.8	2.6
MPUMALANGA	Number	551	551	1	0	14	18	64	88	189	203	283	242	0	0	22	18
	%			0.2	0.0	2.5	3.3	11.6	16.0	34.3	36.8	51.4	43.9	0.0	0.0	4.0	3.3
NORTH WEST	Number	400	411	1	1	3	6	26	40	121	139	249	225	0	0	40	30
	%			0.3	0.2	0.8	1.5	6.5	9.7	30.3	33.8	62.3	54.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	7.3
NORTHERN CAPE	Number	136	139	0	1	4	2	16	22	38	53	78	61	0	0	19	9
	%			0.0	0.7	2.9	1.4	11.8	15.8	27.9	38.1	57.4	43.9	0.0	0.0	14.0	6.5
WESTERN CAPE	Number	441	445	0	0	3	6	18	27	99	130	321	282	0	0	89	75
	%			0.0	0.0	0.7	1.3	4.1	6.1	22.4	29.2	72.8	63.4	0.0	0.0	20.2	16.9
NATIONAL	Number	6 814	6 805	196	109	671	488	1221	1 166	1 873	2 083	2 853	2 959	18	9	548	497
	%			2.9	1.6	9.8	7.2	17.9	17.1	27.5	30.6	41.9	43.5	0.3	0.1	8.0	7.3

Western Cape has the highest percentage of schools with a 100% pass rate. Kwazulu-Natal has 5 schools with a 0% pass rate down from 10 in 2016. There has been a 50% reduction in the number of schools who had 0% pass rate (from 18 in 2016 to 9 in 2017).

Table 10.2.8: Number of schools within different pass percentage categories by Quintile

Quintiles	0 - 19.9%	20 - 39.9%	40 - 59.9%	60 - 79.9%	80 - 100%	Total
Quintile 1	53	207	412	568	570	1 810
Quintile 2	34	144	356	602	579	1 715
Quintile 3	16	109	286	517	476	1 404
Quintile 4	1	5	55	207	327	595
Quintile 5	0	2	18	107	595	722
Total	104	467	1 127	2 001	2 547	6 246

1 625 of the quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools achieved above an 80% pass rate.

Table 10.2.9: Number of candidates who wrote in schools per quintile (2016 and 2017)

% Interval (Schools)	2016						2017					
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Total	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Total
No with 0 to 19.9%	5 700	2 026	2 050	119	0	**9,895**	1 984	1 118	507	1	0	**3 610**
No with 20 to 39.9%	20 282	13 120	13 183	1 511	495	**48 591**	11 009	7 349	7 364	474	93	**26 289**
No with 40 to 59.9%	31 810	28 846	28 883	7 669	2 339	**99 547**	23 764	22 964	23 333	6 220	1 847	**78 128**
No with 60 to 79.9%	39 581	49 810	53 821	23 740	10 192	**177 144**	37 653	44 587	48 541	24 479	12 914	**168 174**
No with 80 to 100%	37 036	39 788	47 026	41 089	83 507	**248 446**	37 350	40 749	42 752	35 728	78 760	**235 339**
Grand Total	**134 409**	**133 590**	**144 963**	**74 128**	**96 533**	**583 623**	**111 760**	**116 767**	**122 497**	**66 902**	**93 614**	**511 540**

Table 10.2.10: NSC passes by type of qualification per Quintile (2016 and 2017) (Excluding candidates who qualify for the Endorsed Certificate)

Achievement Status	2016							2017						
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 99	Totals	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 99	Totals
Achieved Bachelor	23 016	25 926	29 936	21 529	51 389	10 578	**162 374**	23 039	25 121	28 140	19 837	48 030	9 443	**153 610**
Achieved Diploma	34 658	37 405	42 765	26 332	30 090	8 369	**179 619**	30 477	34 042	36 572	23 351	29 547	7 344	**161 333**
Achieved H-Certificate	26 249	26 268	26 392	11 092	7 488	2 997	**100 486**	21 706	22 469	21 694	9 885	7 875	2 636	**86 265**
Achieved NSC	31	30	5	2	0	0	**68**	50	32	12	1	2	2	**99**
Total Achieved	**83 954**	**89 629**	**99 098**	**58 955**	**88 967**	**21 944**	**442 547**	**75 272**	**81 664**	**86 418**	**53 074**	**85 454**	**19 425**	**401 307**

10.3 Subject performance

There were improvements in the performance of key subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, and Economics. The number of candidates that passed Physical Science increased by 3.1% from 62% to 65.1% while in Life Sciences, the pass rate improved from 70.5% to 74.4%.

Table 10.3.1: Candidates' Performance in Home Language (Official Languages) 2014 to 2017 at 40%

Subject Name (Home Languages)	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved
Afrikaans Home Language	48 885	47 363	96.9	53 799	52 366	97.3	50 019	48 338	96.6	46 847	44 271	94.5
English Home Language	105 480	100 279	95.1	111 785	104 875	93.8	107 967	101 610	94.1	105 705	98 362	93.1
IsiNdebele Home Language	3 363	3 360	99.9	4 869	4 861	99.8	5 649	5 640	99.8	5 240	5 217	99.6
IsiXhosa Home Language	74 925	74 788	99.8	95 694	95 356	99.6	97 164	96 952	99.8	87 934	87 731	99.8
IsiZulu Home Language	138 004	137 194	99.4	166 403	165 487	99.4	165 572	163 632	98.8	151 559	149 925	98.9
Sepedi Home Language	58 042	57 643	99.3	79 021	78 508	99.4	83 570	82 611	98.9	76 786	75 745	98.6
Sesotho Home Language	27 794	27 657	99.5	36 555	36 351	99.4	32 198	32 002	99.4	30 776	30 583	99.4
Setswana Home Language	35 939	35 863	99.8	47 206	47 020	99.6	48 730	48 560	99.7	46 169	46 016	99.7
SiSwati Home Language	15 545	15 478	99.6	18 589	18 474	99.4	19 649	19 501	99.2	18 123	17 981	99.2
Tshivenda Home Language	13 952	13 947	100.0	20 301	20 281	99.9	22 049	22 032	99.9	18 733	18 704	99.8
Xitsonga Home Language	19 577	19 471	99.5	24 473	24 349	99.5	26 681	26 556	99.5	25 937	25 690	99.0

Table 10.3.2: Candidates' performance in First Additional Language (2014 to 2017 at 30%)

Subject Name (1st Additional Language	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Afrikaans First Additional Language	82 649	76 855	93.0	86 987	79 882	91.8	83 883	75,530	90.0	82 017	76,222	92.9
English First Additional Language	432 933	423 134	97.7	543 941	528 157	97.1	547,292	533 235	97.4	503 151	488,572	97.1
IsiNdebele First Additional Language	26	26	100.0	32	32	100.0	36	36	100.0	30	30	100.0
IsiXhosa First Additional Language	2 043	2 040	99.9	2 369	2 362	99.7	2,220	2 215	99.8	2 272	2,264	99.6
IsiZulu First Additional Language	15 381	15 316	99.6	17 204	17 069	99.2	16,425	16 359	99.6	15 871	15,808	99.6
Sepedi First Additional Language	421	418	99.3	545	539	98.9	455	451	99.1	538	533	99.1
Sesotho First Additional Language	702	702	100.0	618	616	99.7	484	483	99.8	514	513	99.8
Setswana First Additional Language	217	217	100.0	162	162	100.0	169	169	100.0	235	235	100.0
SiSwati First Additional Language	362	359	99.2	366	359	98.1	356	350	98.3	356	347	97.5
Tshivenda First Additional Language	21	21	100.0	20	20	100.0	16	16	100.0	38	38	100.0
Xitsonga First Additional Language	13	12	92.3	24	24	100.0	23	23	100.0	32	32	100.0

Table 10.3.3: Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects (Full-Time - 2014 to 2017)

Subjects (Full-Time)	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Accounting	125 987	85 681	68.0	140 474	83 747	59.6	128 853	89 507	69.5	103 427	68 318	66.1
Agricultural Science	78 063	64 486	82.6	104 251	80 125	76.9	106 386	80 184	75.4	98 522	69 360	70.4
Business Studies	207 659	161 723	77.9	247 822	187 485	75.7	234 894	173 195	73.7	204 849	139 386	68.0
Economics	137 478	94 779	68.9	165 642	112 922	68.2	155 908	101 787	65.3	128 796	91 488	71.0
Geography	236 051	191 966	81.3	303 985	234 209	77.0	302 600	231 588	76.5	276 771	212 954	76.9
History	115 686	99 823	86.3	154 398	129 643	84.0	157 594	132 457	84.0	147 668	127 031	86.0
Life Orientation	542 956	540 810	99.6	660 202	658 308	99.7	663 975	661 903	99.7	620 626	619 336	99.8
Life Sciences	284 298	209 783	73.8	348 076	245 164	70.4	347 662	245 070	70.5	318 474	236 809	74.4
Mathematical Literacy	312 054	262 495	84.1	388 845	277 594	71.4	361 865	257 881	71.3	313 030	231 230	73.9
Mathematics	225 458	120 523	53.5	263 903	129 481	49.1	265 810	135 958	51.1	245 103	127 197	51.9
Physical Science	167 997	103 348	61.5	193 189	113 121	58.6	192 618	119 427	62.0	179 561	116 862	65.1

Table 10.3.4: Candidates' performance in non-language subjects (2014 to 2017)

Subjects	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved
Accounting	125 987	85 681	68.0	140 474	83 747	59.6	128,853	89 507	69.5	103 427	68 318	66.1
Agricultural Management Practices	1 615	1 599	99.0	2 040	2 011	98.6	2,631	2 586	98.3	2 511	2 424	96.5
Agricultural Sciences	78 063	64 486	82.6	104 251	80 125	76.9	106,386	80 184	75.4	98 522	69 360	70.4
Agricultural Technology	705	700	99.3	777	763	98.2	944	923	97.8	914	906	99.1
Business Studies	207 659	161 723	77.9	247 822	187 485	75.7	234,894	173 195	73.7	204 849	139 386	68.0
Civil Technology	9 210	8 961	97.3	10 446	10 085	96.5	10,613	10 303	97.1	9 158	8 846	96.6
Computer Applications Technology	40 910	37 379	91.4	41 026	36 778	89.6	38,359	34 927	91.1	36 460	33 810	92.7
Consumer Studies	38 511	37 820	98.2	46 063	45 019	97.7	43,214	42 048	97.3	40 049	38 909	97.2
Dance Studies	544	543	99.8	528	525	99.4	461	461	100.0	561	559	99.6
Design	2 135	2 097	98.2	2 170	2 132	98.2	2,031	1 993	98.1	2 158	2 097	97.2
Dramatic Arts	8 214	8 149	99.2	8 735	8 597	98.4	9,198	9 041	98.3	9 147	8 979	98.2
Economics	137 478	94 779	68.9	165 642	112 922	68.2	155,908	101 787	65.3	128 796	91 488	71.0
Electrical Technology	5 332	5 143	96.5	6 092	5 780	94.9	6 487	6 166	95.1	6 125	5 808	94.8
Engineering Graphics and Design	26 540	24 934	93.9	29 014	27 706	95.5	30 182	28 416	94.1	29 226	27 446	93.9
Geography	236 051	191 966	81.3	303 985	234 209	77.0	302 600	231 588	76.5	276 771	212 954	76.9
History	115 686	99 823	86.3	154 398	129 643	84.0	157 594	132 457	84.0	147 668	127 031	86.0
Hospitality Studies	8 428	8 298	98.5	8 902	8 769	98.5	8 032	7 867	97.9	7 321	7 132	97.4
Information Technology	4 820	4 464	92.6	4 326	4 028	93.1	4 346	3 926	90.3	4 095	3 596	87.8
Life Orientation	542 956	540 810	99.6	660 202	658 308	99.7	663 975	661 903	99.7	620 626	619 336	99.8
Life Sciences	284 298	209 783	73.8	348 076	245 164	70.4	347 662	245 070	70.5	318 474	236 809	74.4
Mathematical Literacy	312 054	262 495	84.1	388 845	277 594	71.4	361 865	257 881	71.3	313 030	231 230	73.9
Mathematics	225 458	120 523	53.5	263 903	129 481	49.1	265 810	135 958	51.1	245 103	127 197	51.9
Mechanical Technology	6 375	6 108	95.8	6 950	6 523	93.9	7 218	6 761	93.7	6 853	6 491	94.7
Music	1 744	1 659	95.1	1 874	1 769	94.4	1 845	1 788	96.9	1 699	1 674	98.5
Physical Sciences	167 997	103 348	61.5	193 189	113 121	58.6	192 618	119 427	62.0	179 561	116 862	65.1
Religion Studies	5 802	5 325	91.8	7 037	6 330	90.0	8 272	7 496	90.6	8 425	7 721	91.6
Tourism	116 179	113 251	97.5	144 643	139 447	96.4	143 650	139 293	97.0	131 644	128 386	97.5
Visual Arts	6 892	6 814	98.9	6 611	6 459	97.7	6 292	6 182	98.3	6 434	6 295	97.8

Table 10.3.5: Candidates' performance in Mathematics and Physical Science by gender (2012 to 2017)

Subject		Mathematics			Physical Science		
Years	Gender	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
2012	Total Wrote	122 620	103 254	225 874	94 279	84 915	179 194
	Achieved at 30% &	60 322	61 648	121 970	55 575	54 343	109 918
	% Achieved	**49.2**	**59.7**	**54.0**	**58.9**	**64.0**	**61.3**
2013	Total Wrote	132 784	108 725	241 509	97 995	86 388	184 383
	Achieved at 30% &	72 069	70 597	142 666	64 376	59 830	124 206
	% Achieved	**54.3**	**64.9**	**59.1**	**65.7**	**69.3**	**67.4**
2014	Total Wrote	123 045	102 413	225 458	88 729	79 268	167 997
	Achieved at 30% &	59 814	60 709	120 523	52 449	50 899	103 348
	% Achieved	**48.6**	**59.3**	**53.5**	**59.1**	**64.2**	**61.5**
2015	Total Wrote	144 405	119 498	263 903	102 983	90 206	193 189
	Achieved at 30% &	63 898	65 583	129 481	58 036	55 085	113 121
	% Achieved	**44.2**	**54.9**	**49.1**	**56.4**	**61.1**	**58.6**
2016	Total Wrote	146 270	119 540	265 810	103 010	89 608	192 618
	Achieved at 30% &	67 830	68 128	135 958	61 438	57 989	119 427
	% Achieved	**46.4**	**57.0**	**51.1**	**59.6**	**64.7**	**62.0**
2017	Total Wrote	137 483	107 620	245 103	97 873	81 688	179 561
	Achieved at 30% &	64 782	62 415	127 197	61 122	55 740	116 862
	% Achieved	**47.1**	**58.0**	**51.9**	**62.5**	**68.2**	**65.1**

As in 2016, in both subjects males performed better than females.

The following two tables (and the previous table) provide important details relating to Mathematics and Physical Science. These are priority subjects in terms of the sector plan for basic education government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) and the National Development Plan. In both Mathematics and Physical Science the number of learners achieving 40% and above increased between 2015 and 2017. Analysis of achievement above this mark threshold reveals that at levels of performance considered important for mathematically-oriented programmes at university there has been progress too. This would be in line with the positive trends seen in a reconciliation of South Africa's performance on recently released national assessments (see section 7).

Table 10.3.6: Candidates' performance in Mathematics by province and level of achievement (2015 to 2017)

Mathematics															
Province	Total Wrote			Total achieved at 30% and above			% achieved at 30% and above			Total achieved at 40% and above			chieved at 40% and a		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Eastern Cape	39 084	39 628	35 994	14 597	14 858	15 221	37.3	37.5	42.3	8 526	8 781	9 541	21.8	22.2	26.5
Free State	11 066	10 366	10 134	7 646	7 387	7 156	69.1	71.3	70.6	5 089	5 037	4 993	46.0	48.6	49.3
Gauteng	37 053	38 639	36 937	25 789	26 542	25 022	69.6	68.7	67.7	18 450	19 164	18 320	49.8	49.6	49.6
Kwazulu-Natal	85 057	81 323	68 463	28 265	30 827	28 472	33.2	37.9	41.6	17 025	18 699	18 667	20.0	23.0	27.3
Limpopo	40 673	43 589	40 723	21 188	23 498	20 382	52.1	53.9	50.1	13 185	14 633	13 051	32.4	33.6	32.0
Mpumalanga	20 596	23 316	24 327	11 441	12 494	11 618	55.5	53.6	47.8	7 423	7 973	7 538	36.0	34.2	31.0
North West	10 761	10 596	10 232	6 416	6 647	6 266	59.6	62.7	61.2	4 016	4 291	4 097	37.3	40.5	40.0
Northern Cape	3 054	2 789	2 796	1 742	1 694	1 604	57.0	60.7	57.4	1 101	1 116	1 058	36.1	40.0	37.8
Western Cape	16 559	15 564	15 497	12 397	12 011	11 456	74.9	77.2	73.9	9 482	9 390	8 833	57.3	60.3	57.0
National	**263 903**	**265 810**	**245 103**	**129 481**	**135 958**	**127 197**	**49.1**	**51.1**	**51.9**	**84 297**	**89 084**	**86 098**	**31.9**	**33.5**	**35.1**

Table 10.3.7: Candidates' performance in Business Studies by province and level of achievement (2016-2017)

Business Studies										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	28 400	18 376	11 207	64.7	39.5	23 585	14 039	8 187	59.5	34.7
Free State	11 520	9 937	6 918	86.3	60.1	10 812	8 482	5 671	78.4	52.5
Gauteng	45 593	39 715	29 440	87.1	64.6	43 084	34 186	22 745	79.3	52.8
Kwazulu-Natal	65 390	44 346	30 007	67.8	45.9	55 772	35 199	21 662	63.1	38.8
Limpopo	27 787	16 396	8 890	59.0	32.0	20 188	12 722	7 708	63.0	38.2
Mpumalanga	20 097	14 422	8 668	71.8	43.1	17 127	10 135	5 500	59.2	32.1
North West	10 959	9 406	6 445	85.8	58.8	10 791	8 149	5 142	75.5	47.7
Northern Cape	3 685	2 894	1 815	78.5	49.3	3 121	1 931	1 086	61.9	34.8
Western Cape	21 463	17 703	12 835	82.5	59.8	20 369	14 543	9 834	71.4	48.3
Total	**234 894**	**173 195**	**116 225**	**73.7**	**49.5**	**204 849**	**139 386**	**87 535**	**68.0**	**42.7**

Table 10.3.8: Candidates' performance in Economics by province and level of achievement (2016-2017)

Economics										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	21 948	11 966	5 631	54.5	25.7	17 324	10 412	5 530	60.1	31.9
Free State	7 112	4 885	2 413	68.7	33.9	6 441	4 814	2 783	74.7	43.2
Gauteng	26 242	20 984	13 577	80.0	51.7	23 778	19 847	13 029	83.5	54.8
Kwazulu-Natal	37 911	24 812	14 512	65.4	38.3	31 177	22 305	14 043	71.5	45.0
Limpopo	31 928	17 048	8 335	53.4	26.1	23 650	14 192	7 409	60.0	31.3
Mpumalanga	13 102	9 001	4 673	68.7	35.7	10 317	7 332	4 122	71.1	40.0
North West	6 729	5 209	2 942	77.4	43.7	6 314	4 890	2 897	77.4	45.9
Northern Cape	1 712	1 270	681	74.2	39.8	1 445	1 112	663	77.0	45.9
Western Cape	9 224	6 612	4 030	71.7	43.7	8 350	6 584	4 538	78.9	54.3
Total	**155 908**	**101 787**	**56 794**	**65.3**	**36.4**	**128 796**	**91 488**	**55,014**	**71.0**	**42.7**

Table 10.3.9: Candidates' performance in Geography by province and level of achievement (2016-2017)

Geography										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	34 928	24 226	14 584	69.4	41.8	29 894	20 867	13 139	69.8	44.0
Free State	10 550	9 561	7 171	90.6	68.0	10 657	9 623	7 301	90.3	68.5
Gauteng	50 006	43 058	29 221	86.1	58.4	47 299	40 754	27 946	86.2	59.1
Kwazulu-Natal	76 277	54 988	34 723	72.1	45.5	67 017	49 621	32 706	74.0	48.8
Limpopo	58 745	41 642	24 561	70.9	41.8	52 217	36 490	21 709	69.9	41.6
Mpumalanga	26 454	20 384	12 374	77.1	46.8	24 741	18 597	11 759	75.2	47.5
North West	19 425	15 494	8 753	79.8	45.1	19 458	15 445	9 321	79.4	47.9
Northern Cape	5 963	4 764	2 617	79.9	43.9	5 277	4 532	3 030	85.9	57.4
Western Cape	20 252	17 471	11 692	86.3	57.7	20 211	17 025	11,793	84.2	58.3
Total	**302 600**	**231 588**	**145 696**	**76.5**	**48.1**	**276 771**	**212,954**	**138,704**	**76.9**	**50.1**

Table 10.3.10: Candidates' performance in History by province and level of achievement (2016-2017)

History										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	23 297	17 428	12 116	74.8	52.0	20 566	16 328	12 201	79.4	59.3
Free State	4 654	4 380	3 735	94.1	80.3	4 469	3 968	3 090	88.8	69.1
Gauteng	30 574	29 036	25 047	95.0	81.9	30 687	28 994	25 249	94.5	82.3
Kwazulu-Natal	41 818	34 107	25 624	81.6	61.3	37 533	31 535	24 491	84.0	65.3
Limpopo	19 812	13 229	7 129	66.8	36.0	16 191	12 611	8 667	77.9	53.5
Mpumalanga	7 942	6 548	4 737	82.4	59.6	8 210	6 654	4 939	81.0	60.2
North West	8 067	7 446	5 968	92.3	74.0	8 637	7 394	5 372	85.6	62.2
Northern Cape	3 713	3 322	2 402	89.5	64.7	3 450	2 777	1 686	80.5	48.9
Western Cape	17 717	16 961	14 589	95.7	82.3	17 925	16 770	13 974	93.6	78.0
Total	**157 594**	**132 457**	**101 347**	**84.0**	**64.3**	**147 668**	**127 031**	**99 669**	**86.0**	**67.5**

Table 10.3.11: Candidates' performance in Life Science by province and level of achievement (2016-2017)

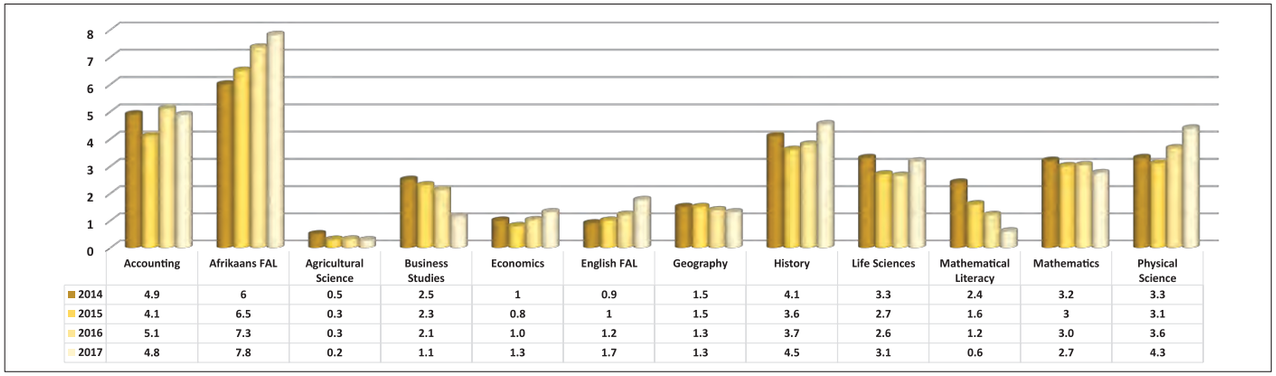
Life Science										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	50 281	31 054	18 886	61.8	37.6	44 386	30 412	20 766	68.5	46.8
Free State	13 067	11 150	8 213	85.3	62.9	12 467	10 886	8 421	87.3	67.5
Gauteng	50 868	42 229	29 937	83.0	58.9	47 991	40 347	30 581	84.1	63.7
Kwazulu-Natal	85 943	58 294	37 697	67.8	43.9	74 132	56 086	40 396	75.7	54.5
Limpopo	65 349	41 304	23 679	63.2	36.2	58 719	40 474	26 034	68.9	44.3
Mpumalanga	31 409	22 901	13 774	72.9	43.9	31 410	22 574	14 918	71.9	47.5
North West	17 745	13 311	8 177	75.0	46.1	17 638	12 854	8 510	72.9	48.2
Northern Cape	6 458	4 388	2 529	67.9	39.2	5 698	3 786	2 280	66.4	40.0
Western Cape	26 542	20 439	14 285	77.0	53.8	26 033	19 390	14,165	74.5	54.4
Total	**347 662**	**245 070**	**157 177**	**70.5**	**45.2**	**318,474**	**236,809**	**166,071**	**74.4**	**52.1**

Table 10.3.12: Candidates' performance in Mathematical Literacy by province and level of achievement (2016–2017)

Mathematical Literacy										
Province	2016					2017				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	44 924	25 194	14 240	56.1	31.7	34 609	22 274	12 572	64.4	36.3
Free State	17 262	15 291	11 506	88.6	66.7	16 106	13 582	9 140	84.3	56.7
Gauteng	67 597	58 253	43 375	86.2	64.2	63 721	54 093	37 900	84.9	59.5
Kwazulu-Natal	71 430	43 060	25 729	60.3	36.0	61 226	41 457	23 673	67.7	38.7
Limpopo	60 824	37 940	20 379	62.4	33.5	46 613	31 171	15 791	66.9	33.9
Mpumalanga	33 128	22 977	14 040	69.4	42.4	27 352	18 040	9 563	66.0	35.0
North West	22 483	17 872	11 234	79.5	50.0	22 335	17 322	9 903	77.6	44.3
Northern Cape	8 107	6 294	3 982	77.6	49.1	6 608	5 087	3 027	77.0	45.8
Western Cape	36 110	31 000	23 300	85.8	64.5	34 460	28 204	19 422	81.8	56.4
Total	**361 865**	**257 881**	**167 785**	**71.3**	**46.4**	**313 030**	**231 230**	**140 991**	**73.9**	**45.0**

Table 10.3.13: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)

Subject	2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved with distinctions	% with Distinction	Wrote	Achieved with distinctions	% with Distinction	Wrote	Achieved with distinctions	% with Distinction
Accounting	140 474	5 820	4.1	128 853	6 576	5.1	103 427	5 040	4.9
Afrikaans First Additional Language	86 987	5,629	6.5	83 883	6 167	7.4	82 017	6 406	7.8
Agricultural Sciences	104 251	305	0.3	106 386	326	0.3	98 522	272	0.3
Business Studies	247 822	5 783	2.3	234 894	4 999	2.1	204 849	2 343	1.1
Economics	165 642	1 309	0.8	155 908	1 586	1.0	128 796	1 683	1.3
English First Additional Language	543 941	5 178	1.0	547 292	6 664	1.2	503 151	8 829	1.8
Geography	303 985	4 635	1.5	302 600	4 183	1.4	276 771	3 608	1.3
History	154 398	5 540	3.6	157 594	5 973	3.8	147 668	6 696	4.5
Life Sciences	348 075	9 325	2.7	347 662	9 203	2.6	318 474	10 102	3.2
Mathematical Literacy	388 845	6 130	1.6	361 865	4 364	1.2	313 030	1 882	0.6
Mathematics	263 903	7 791	3.0	265 810	8 070	3.0	245 103	6 726	2.7
Physical Sciences	193 189	5 903	3.1	192 618	7 043	3.7	179 561	7 861	4.4



10.4 Performance of learners with special needs

Table 10.4.1: Special Needs Education (SNE) candidates (including concession candidates) - Full-Time 2014 - 2017

SNE Learners by Qualification Type and Disability					
SNE Learners by Qualification Type					
Province	**Aphasic/Dyslectic**	**Blind**	**Deaf**	**Other**	**Total**
Achieved -Bachelors	150	54	17	685	**906**
Achieved -Diploma	90	42	41	616	**789**
Achieved -Higher Certificate	20	22	16	249	**307**
Achieved -NSC	0	0	1	1	**2**
Achieved -Endorsed NSC	3	6	7	105	121
Total	**263**	**124**	**82**	**1656**	**2125**

Distinctions attained by SNE Learners by Province & Disability					
Province	**Aphasic/Dyslectic**	**Blind**	**Deaf**	**Other**	**Total**
Eastern Cape	2	9		34	**45**
Free State	15			23	**38**
Gauteng	7	4		50	**61**
KwaZulu-Natal	5	12	12	31	**60**
Limpopo		8		8	**16**
Mpumalanga				42	**42**
Northern Cape	1			3	**4**
Western Cape	170	57	16	651	**894**
Total	**200**	**90**	**28**	**842**	**1160**

SNE Learners by Province and Disability					
Province	**Aphasic/Dyslectic**	**Blind**	**Deaf**	**Other**	**Total**
Eastern Cape	13	24	10	61	**108**
Free State	10			81	**91**
Gauteng	12	22	5	210	**249**
KwaZulu-Natal	27	50	28	75	**180**
Limpopo		24		40	**64**
Mpumalanga	4			72	**76**
North West				5	**5**
Northern Cape	4		1	16	**21**
Western Cape	220	69	73	1621	**1983**
Total	**290**	**189**	**117**	**2181**	**2777**

10.5 Performance of repeat candidates

Table 10.5.1: Overall performance of Repeat candidates (Full Time) in the 2017 NSC examination

Provinces	2017			
	Total Enrolled	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	6 080	5 777	4 055	70.2
Free State	0	0	0	0.0
Gauteng	3	2	1	50.0
Kwazulu-Natal	4 457	4 021	3 120	77.6
Limpopo	12 430	12 094	7 342	60.7
Mpumalanga	3 510	3 402	2 741	80.6
North West	46	39	31	79.5
Northern Cape	0	0	0	0.0
Western Cape	8	2	2	100.0
National	**26 534**	**25 337**	**17 292**	**68.2**

10.6 Performance of part-time candidates

Table 10.6.1: Candidates Enrolled / Wrote (Part-time) (2014 – 2017)

Province Name	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Total Entered	Total Wrote	Total Entered	Total Wrote	Total Entered	Total Wrote	Total Entered	Total Wrote
Eastern Cape	21 503	11 909	19 312	12 618	20 847	13 819	22 754	14 335
Free State	3 101	2 023	3 470	2 118	3 775	2 430	4 653	3 150
Gauteng	42 538	32 491	39 181	28 837	42 025	32 675	42 066	32 060
KwaZulu-Natal	26 666	18 181	31 176	21 247	37 915	25 862	44 198	27 677
Limpopo	19 673	14 373	16 137	11 951	21 124	15 421	27 853	20 251
Mpumalanga	8 008	5 142	5 569	3 871	7 189	4 996	9 462	6 363
North West	3 794	2 802	3 386	2 711	1 988	1 132	4 597	3 655
Northern Cape	2 583	1 335	1 838	1 157	3 976	2 264	3 678	1 912
Western Cape	11 842	6 628	11 312	6 553	12 633	7 162	14 015	7 820
National	**139 708**	**94 884**	**131 381**	**91 063**	**151 472**	**105 761**	**173 276**	**117 223**

Table 10.6.2: Part-Time Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects. Part-Time (2014 to 2017)

Subjects (Part-Time)	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Accounting	15 274	4 410	**28.9**	13 362	4 480	**33.5**	15 328	6 142	**40.1**	14 899	4 373	**29.4**
Agricultural Sciences	6 340	2 893	**45.6**	4 820	2 635	**54.7**	6 713	3 596	**53.6**	8 135	3 276	**40.3**
Business Studies	16 905	6 687	**39.6**	16 231	8 052	**49.6**	17 942	8 016	**44.7**	20 735	6 603	**31.8**
Economics	14 894	4 217	**28.3**	15 309	6 065	**39.6**	17 257	6 293	**36.5**	19 650	6 938	**35.3**
Geography	18,272	8 005	**43.8**	17 541	9 026	**51.5**	21 245	10 404	**49.0**	25 782	10 671	**41.4**
History	4,312	1 609	**37.3**	4 643	2 768	**59.6**	5 459	3 122	**57.2**	6 195	2 767	**44.7**
Life Orientation	1 416	1 343	**94.8**	2 480	2 430	**98.0**	1 879	1 860	**99.0**	1 029	1 014	**98.5**
Life Sciences	34,688	15 651	**45.1**	32 114	17 774	**55.3**	39 008	20 092	**51.5**	46 098	22 755	**49.4**
Mathematical Literacy	19,265	10 382	**53.9**	19 868	10 484	**52.8**	27 575	13 083	**47.4**	32 018	12 960	**40.5**
Mathematics	45,114	12 421	**27.5**	44 376	15 695	**35.4**	50 925	19 273	**37.8**	54 138	18 228	**33.7**
Physical Sciences	36,862	11 703	**31.7**	35 219	13 726	**39.0**	39 801	17 315	**43.5**	41 337	15 562	**37.6**

10.7 Performance on progressed learners

18 751 (55.1%) of the progressed learners that wrote all seven subjects obtained the NSC. 1 801 of these learners obtained distinctions, even in gateway subjects.

Table 10.7.1: Number wrote and achieved NSC as Progressed Candidates per Province (2017)

Provinces	Progressed Candidates			
	Entered	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	10 937	2 853	1 373	48.1
Free State	5 288	3 502	2 213	63.2
Gauteng	13 574	4 901	3 367	68.7
Kwazulu-Natal	27 653	5 356	3 026	56.5
Limpopo	23 254	7 681	3 670	47.8
Mpumalanga	13 698	4 315	2 433	56.4
North West	7 432	2 850	1 516	53.2
Northern Cape	2 314	691	365	52.8
Western Cape	3 280	1 862	788	42.3
National	**107 430**	**34 011**	**18 751**	**55.1**

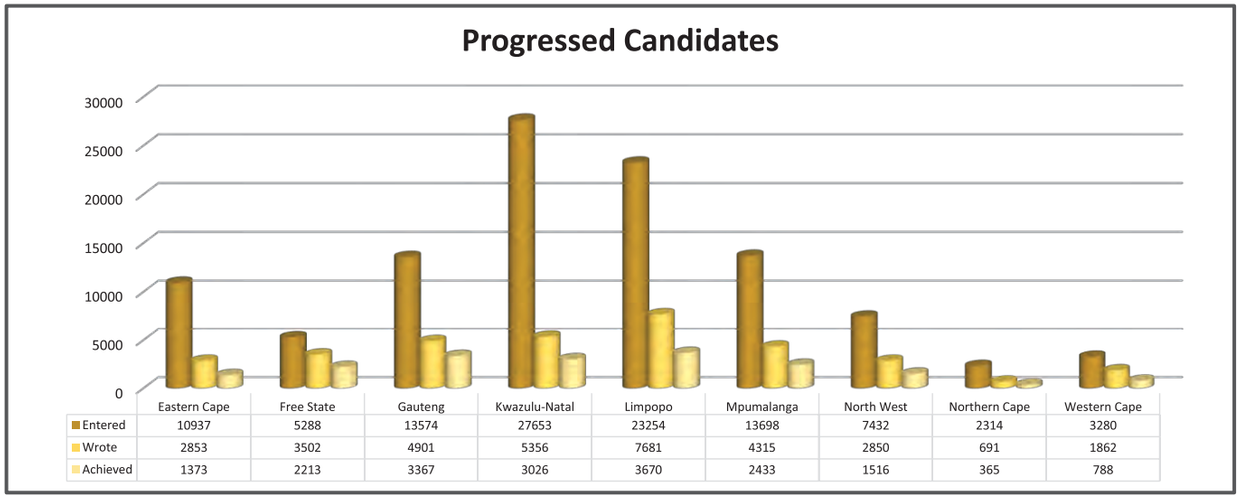


Table 10.7.2: Performance of Progressed and Non Progressed Candidates per Province. 2017

Provinces	Total Entered	Progressed			Non-Progressed		
		Entered	Achieved	% Achieved	Entered	Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	**82,257**	10,937	1,373	48.1	71,320	42,608	65.8
Free State	**27,723**	5,288	2,213	63.2	22,435	19,418	89.8
Gauteng	**108,522**	13,574	3,367	68.7	94,948	79,459	86.0
Kwazulu-Natal	**153,125**	27,653	3,026	56.5	125,472	87,563	73.6
Limpopo	**100,041**	23,254	3,670	47.8	76,787	50,955	67.4
Mpumalanga	**59,500**	13,698	2,433	56.4	45,802	33,840	76.6
North West	**35,733**	7,432	1,516	53.2	28,301	22,946	82.1
Northern Cape	**10,519**	2,314	365	52.8	8,205	6,243	77.6
Western Cape	**51,735**	3,280	788	42.3	48,455	39,652	84.4
National	**629,155**	**107,430**	**18,751**	**55.1**	**521,725**	**382,684**	**76.5**

10.8 District Performance

In 2017, the number of education districts was reduced from 81 to 70 and all of them had an achievement rate above 50%. Thirty one (31) of the 70 districts had achievement rates above 80%.

Table 10.8.1: District Performance in the National Senior Certificate (2014 to 2017)

(A) EASTERN CAPE DISTRICTS

EASTERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	66 935	**43 777**	**65.4**	**87 090**	**49,475**	**56.8**	**82,902**	**49 168**	**59.3**	**67,648**	**43,981**	**65.0**
Alfred Nzo East	3 068	1 845	60.1	4 078	2 178	53.4	4 816	2 654	55.1	3 674	2 294	62.4
Alfred Nzo West	5 397	3 101	57.5	7 359	4 075	55.4	7 351	4 551	61.9	6 125	4 125	67.3
Amathole East	7 037	4 046	57.5	9 186	4 906	53.4	9 016	4 726	52.4	7 533	4 274	56.7
Amathole West	6 687	4 156	62.2	7 805	4 412	56.5	7 761	4 446	57.3	4 049	2 172	53.6
Bafallo City	5 922	4 434	74.9	7 470	4 619	61.8	6 807	4 547	66.8	7 830	5 186	66.2
Chris Hani East	3 457	2 292	66.3	4 505	2 424	53.8	4 689	2 508	53.5	4 262	2 649	62.2
Chris Hani West	5 071	3 189	62.9	6 072	3 392	55.9	5 193	3 207	61.8	4 526	3 073	67.9
Joe Gqabi	3 863	2 409	62.4	5 221	2 735	52.4	3 718	2 344	63.0	3 075	2 061	67.0
Nelson Mandela Metro	2 959	2 235	75.5	3 459	2 387	69.0	3 232	2 467	76.3	8 534	6 195	72.6
OR Tambo Coastal	7 239	4 485	62.0	10 795	5 190	48.1	11 424	5 334	46.7	7 981	4 923	61.7
OR Tambo Inland	6 826	4 713	69.0	9 731	5 745	59.0	8 560	5 663	66.2	7 560	5 234	69.2
Sara Baartman	9 409	6 872	73.0	11 409	7 412	65.0	10 335	6 721	65.0	2 499	1 795	71.8

(B) FREE STATE DISTRICTS

FREE STATE DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	26 440	21 899	82.8	31 161	25 416	81.6	26 786	23 629	88.2	25 130	21 631	86.1
Fezile Dabi	4 316	3 611	**83.7**	4 957	4 271	**86.2**	4 660	4 277	**91.8**	3 990	3 598	**90.2**
Lejweleputswa	5 554	4 489	**80.8**	6 307	5 210	**82.6**	5 462	4 711	**86.3**	5 037	4 258	**84.5**
Motheo	8 913	7 196	**80.7**	10 862	8 147	**75.0**	8 613	7 378	**85.7**	8 676	7 153	**82.4**
Thabo Mofutsanyana	6 563	5 747	**87.6**	7 907	6 904	**87.3**	7 104	6 392	**90.0**	6 541	5 889	**90.0**
Xhariep	1 094	856	**78.2**	1 128	884	**78.4**	947	871	**92.0**	886	733	**82.7**

(C) GAUTENG DISTRICTS

GAUTENG DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	99 478	84,247	84.7	108,442	91,327	84.2	103,829	88,381	85.1	97,284	82,826	85.1
Ekurhuleni North	8 767	7 780	**88.7**	9 731	8 447	**86.8**	9 820	8 549	**87.1**	8 712	7 758	**89.0**
Ekurhuleni South	11 134	8 878	**79.7**	11 237	9 337	**83.1**	10 290	8 893	**86.4**	10 480	8 458	**80.7**
Gauteng East	6 898	5 599	**81.2**	7 958	6 518	**81.9**	7 658	6 110	**79.8**	7 005	5 806	**82.9**
Gauteng North	1 836	1 591	**86.7**	2 129	1 800	**84.5**	2 304	1 822	**79.1**	1 913	1 442	**75.4**
Gauteng West	5 904	5 471	**92.7**	7 169	6 463	**90.2**	7 204	6 571	**91.2**	6 577	5 830	**88.6**
Johannesburg Central	8 344	6 775	**81.2**	9 195	7 087	**77.1**	7 464	6 241	**83.6**	7 740	6 194	**80.0**
Johannesburg East	7 689	6 452	**83.9**	7 913	6 638	**83.9**	6 802	5 918	**87.0**	6 838	6 003	**87.8**
Johannesburg North	6 644	5 686	**85.6**	7 414	6 213	**83.8**	7 007	6 012	**85.8**	6 878	5 777	**84.0**
Johannesburg South	6 099	5 376	**88.1**	6 424	5 629	**87.6**	6 876	5 906	**85.9**	6 461	5 448	**84.3**
Johannesburg West	4 804	4 145	**86.3**	5 154	4 466	**86.7**	4 871	4 233	**86.9**	4 596	4 072	**88.6**
Sedibeng East	2 427	2 213	**91.2**	2 848	2 575	**90.4**	2 899	2 493	**86.0**	2 543	2 234	**87.8**
Sedibeng West	5 897	4 619	**78.3**	5 748	4 721	**82.1**	5 916	4 847	**81.9**	5 727	4 692	**81.9**
Tshwane North	6 210	5 214	**84.0**	6 959	5 657	**81.3**	6 454	5 439	**84.3**	5 491	4 883	**88.9**
Tshwane South	10,296	8 959	**87.0**	10 862	9 433	**86.8**	10 675	9 234	**86.5**	9 669	8 683	**89.8**
Tshwane West	6 529	5 489	**84.1**	7 701	6 343	**82.4**	7 589	6,113	**80.6**	6 654	5 546	**83.3**

(D) KWAZULU-NATAL DISTRICTS

KWAZULU-NATAL DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	139 367	**97 144**	**69.7**	**162 658**	**98 761**	**60.7**	**147 648**	**98 032**	**66.4**	**124 317**	**90 589**	**72.9**
Amajuba	7 463	4 891	**65.5**	9 217	5 415	**58.8**	6 627	5 119	**77.2**	5 848	4 708	**80.5**
Harry Gwala	6 382	4 126	**64.7**	6 985	4 380	**62.7**	6 759	4 323	**64.0**	5 761	3,850	**66.8**
Ilembe	7 963	4 714	**59.2**	9 141	4 747	**51.9**	9 292	4 870	**52.4**	7 121	4 622	**64.9**
King Cetshwayo	15 034	9 626	**64.0**	18 360	10 023	**54.6**	17 172	10 893	**63.4**	14 439	10 344	**71.6**
Pinetown	18 592	14 099	**75.8**	20 098	12 993	**64.6**	19 057	12 650	**66.4**	15 391	11 621	**75.5**
Ugu	9 542	6 921	**72.5**	11 910	7 177	**60.3**	10 487	6 859	**65.4**	8 611	6 293	**73.1**
Umgungundlovu	12 249	9 271	**75.7**	13 218	8 986	**68.0**	11 958	9 129	**76.3**	9 388	7 652	**81.5**
Umkhanyakude	10 308	7 413	**71.9**	14 054	8 810	**62.7**	12 783	8 844	**69.2**	11 452	8 819	**77.0**
Umlazi	21 056	16 272	**77.3**	21 648	15 726	**72.6**	20 400	15 186	**74.4**	18 768	14 167	**75.5**
Umzinyathi	7 545	4 163	**55.2**	10 047	4 679	**46.6**	7 975	4 627	**58.0**	6 870	4 466	**65.0**
Uthukela	8 853	6 493	**73.3**	11 095	6 778	**61.1**	9 816	6 650	**67.7**	8 088	5 892	**72.8**
Zululand	14 380	9 155	**63.7**	16 885	9 047	**53.6**	15 322	8 882	**58.0**	12 580	8 155	**64.8**

(E) LIMPOPO DISTRICTS

LIMPOPO DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	72 990	**53 179**	**72.9**	**101 575**	**66 946**	**65.9**	**101 807**	**63 595**	**62.5**	**83 228**	**54 625**	**65.6**
Capricorn	19 449	13 916	**71.6**	24 839	16 572	**66.7**	27 261	16 592	**60.9**	23 525	14 053	**59.7**
Greater Sekhukhune	14 690	9 389	**63.9**	21 531	11 843	**55.0**	22 439	11 634	**51.8**	16 772	9 611	**57.3**
Mopani	13 963	10 369	**74.3**	19 152	13 193	**68.9**	18 833	12 367	**65.7**	16 870	11 425	**67.7**
Vhembe	18 403	14 932	**81.1**	26 535	19 809	**74.7**	25 544	17 968	**70.3**	19 993	15 322	**76.6**
Waterberg	6 485	4 573	**70.5**	9 518	5 529	**58.1**	7 730	5 034	**65.1**	6 068	4 214	**69.4**

(F) MPUMALANGA DISTRICTS

MPUMALANGA DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	45 081	**35 615**	**79.0**	**54 980**	**43 229**	**78.6**	**54 251**	**41 801**	**77.1**	**48 483**	**36 273**	**74.8**
Bohlabela	9 753	7 491	**76.8**	11 341	8 700	**76.7**	12 454	9 009	**72.3**	11 709	8 477	**72.4**
Ehlanzeni	13 792	11 324	**82.1**	16 203	13 349	**82.4**	15 814	12 568	**79.5**	13 622	10 465	**76.8**
Gert Sibande	10 376	8 005	**77.1**	13 555	9 844	**72.6**	11 934	9 057	**75.9**	10 736	8 211	**76.5**
Nkangala	11 160	8 795	**78.8**	13 881	11 336	**81.7**	14 049	11 167	**79.5**	12 416	9 120	**73.5**

(G) NORTH WEST DISTRICTS

NORTH WEST DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	26 066	**22 061**	**84.6**	**33 286**	**27 118**	**81.5**	**32 045**	**26 448**	**82.5**	**30 792**	**24 462**	**79.4**
Bojanala Platinum	9 979	8 598	**86.2**	12 364	10 541	**85.3**	12 496	10 493	**84.0**	12 410	10 132	**81.6**
Dr. K. Kaunda	5 309	4 450	**83.8**	6 523	5 388	**82.6**	6 132	5 041	**82.2**	6 443	4 976	**77.2**
Dr. R.S. Mompati	4 622	3 658	**79.1**	5 800	4 490	**77.4**	6 136	4 672	**76.1**	5 413	3 970	**73.3**
Ngaka M. Molema	6 156	5 355	**87.0**	8 599	6 699	**77.9**	7 281	6 242	**85.7**	6 526	5 384	**82.5**

(H) NORTHERN CAPE DISTRICTS

NORTHERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	8 794	**6 715**	**76.4**	**11 623**	**8 064**	**69.4**	**10 041**	**7 902**	**78.7**	**8 735**	**6 608**	**75.6**
Frances Baard	3 461	2 632	**76.0**	4 452	3 043	**68.4**	3 690	2 893	**78.4**	3 278	2 476	**75.5**
John Taolo Gaetsewe	1 421	1 034	**72.8**	2 376	1 473	**62.0**	2 096	1 477	**70.5**	1 788	1 276	**71.4**
Namaqua	921	755	**82.0**	1008	771	**76.5**	884	804	**91.0**	733	608	**82.9**
Pixley Ka Seme	1 178	881	**74.8**	1 550	1171	**75.5**	1 254	1 040	**82.9**	1 106	820	**74.1**
Z F Mgcawu	1 813	1 413	**77.9**	2 237	1 606	**71.8**	2 117	1 688	**79.7**	1 830	1 428	**78.0**

(I) WESTERN CAPE DISTRICTS

WESTERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	47 709	**39 237**	**82.2**	**53 721**	**45 489**	**84.7**	**50 869**	**43 716**	**85.9**	**48 867**	**40 440**	**82.8**
Cape Winelands	6 932	5 773	**83.3**	8 070	6 743	**83.6**	7 562	6 405	**84.7**	6 955	5 729	**82.4**
Eden & Central Karoo	5 452	4 373	**80.2**	5 871	5 001	**85.2**	5 478	4 644	**84.8**	4 964	4 058	**81.7**
Metro Central	8 049	6 619	**82.2**	8 639	7 566	**87.6**	7 978	7 026	**88.1**	8 101	6 812	**84.1**
Metro East	7 129	5 809	**81.5**	8 299	6 684	**80.5**	9 268	7 659	**82.6**	8 748	6 798	**77.7**
Metro North	9 227	7 498	**81.3**	10 063	8 501	**84.5**	8 057	7 118	**88.3**	7 784	6 679	**85.8**
Metro South	7 319	5 986	**81.8**	8 605	7 267	**84.5**	8 334	7 108	**85.3**	8 199	6 796	**82.9**
Overberg	1 505	1 326	**88.1**	1 862	1 671	**89.7**	1 698	1 574	**92.7**	1 769	1 552	**87.7**
West coast	2 096	1 853	**88.4**	2 312	2 056	**88.9**	2 494	2 182	**87.5**	2 347	2 016	**85.9**

Table 10.8.2: Summary of District Performance 2016 and 2017

Province	2016						2017					
	Total Number of Districts	Below 50%	50% to 59.9%	60% to 69.9%	70% to 79.9%	80% and above	Total Number of Districts	Below 50%	50% to 59.9%	60% to 69.9%	70% to 79.9%	80% and above
Eastern Cape	**23**	5	4	10	3	1	**12**	0	2	8	2	0
Free State	**5**	0	0	0	0	5	**5**	0	0	0	0	5
Gauteng	**15**	0	0	0	2	13	**15**	0	0	0	1	14
Kwazulu-Natal	**12**	0	3	6	3	0	**12**	0	0	4	6	2
Limpopo	**5**	0	1	3	1	0	**5**	0	2	2	1	0
Mpumalanga	**4**	0	0	0	4	0	**4**	0	0	0	4	0
North West	**4**	0	0	0	1	3	**4**	0	0	0	2	2
Northern Cape	**5**	0	0	0	3	2	**5**	0	0	0	4	1
Western Cape	**8**	0	0	0	0	8	**8**	0	0	0	1	7
Total	**81**	**5**	**8**	**19**	**17**	**32**	**70**	**0**	**4**	**14**	**21**	**31**

11. KEY GAINS

The 2017 NSC is the fourth successful examination based on the CAPS curriculum and the Class of 2017 is the tenth successive cohort to write the examination that was introduced in 2008.The key system gains should be seen in context of a high degree of stability in the system and a successful National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA). The introduction of new set-works in Languages did not significantly affect learner performance. In 2017, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in collaboration with provincial education departments (PEDs) improved its data collection, data analysis and data feedback processes. This enabled provinces, districts and schools to strengthen their efforts in implementing differentiated learner support programmes. Emphasis was placed on monitoring and measuring the effect and impact of major learner support programmes. An unpacking of policy guidelines to correctly apply the selection of progressed learners assisted schools to better manage support this group of learners. There were notable improvements in the performance of key subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, and Economics.

The more tangible system gains can be summarised as follows:

(a) Eighty five percent of those candidates who entered for the NSC, wrote the final examination.

(b) There was a sharp increase of in the number of part-time candidates (19 908) that entered for the examination.

(c) In 38 out of 58 subjects written (66%), the raw marks of candidates were accepted compared to 26 out of 58 in 2016.

(d) The biggest improvements in performance were observed in rural provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal (6.4%), Eastern Cape (5.7%), and Limpopo (3.1%). All provinces had an achievement rate above 65%.

(e) The percentage of learners achieving Bachelor passes improved from 26.6% to 28.7%. 153 610 candidates qualified for Bachelor Studies at Higher Education Institutions with the most number of distinctions recorded in the Western Cape.

(f) In 2017, the number of education districts was reduced from 81 to 70 and all of them had an achievement rate above 50%. Thirty one (31) of the 70 districts had achievement rates above 80%.

(g) 1 626 of the quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools achieved above an 80% pass rate.

(h) The number of candidates that passed Mathematics increased from 51.1% to 51.9%.

(i) The number of candidates that passed Physical Science increased by 3.1% from 62% to 65.1%.

(j) 18 751 (55.1%) of the progressed learners that wrote all seven subjects obtained the NSC. 1 801 of these learners obtained distinctions, even in gateway subjects.

12. LIMITATIONS

The Quality Assurance Council, Umalusi, plays a critical role in protecting the integrity of the NSC examinations. After the Council has completed a rigorous verification of all examination processes, it declares the examination free and fair. However, the NSC has certain limitations that must be borne in mind when reading the Report.

(a) Limited pre-testing of items

The NSC is a public examination utilising secure test items unseen to candidates. The risk of test item exposure does not allow for pre-testing of items. Examination panels comprising subject experts do not make use of statistical information on test item discrimination and difficulty levels to refine question papers. Instead they are assisted by intensive post-test analyses of the previous year's (2016) NSC question papers and international benchmarking exercises. Examination panels carefully consider the analyses conducted by Umalusi and other independent assessment experts in the setting of question papers. Pre-test writing of question papers in key subjects by independent subject experts provides feedback on the face-validity of questions. Using this information, the question papers are further refined.

(b) Subjectivity in determining cognitive and difficulty levels

The construct of question papers is based on test specifications, which shows the details of the cognitive and difficulty levels. Examination panels use pre-determined cognitive levels and difficulty levels listed in subject assessment guidelines to classify items to a test specification grid. This is done according to specific assessment weightings to ensure that balanced examination papers are set comprising a variety of critical thinking and problem solving skills. There is currently a lack of explicit criteria in CAPS to exemplify and differentiate the various categories used to describe cognitive and difficulty levels. Examination panels use their individual subject expertise to match test items to listed categories and this process allows for potentially different analyses of test item classifications by different individuals. The DBE has initiated a process of enhancing assessment guidelines to provide further clarity on this matter.

(c) Marker competency

The reliability of the marking system is primarily dependent on the professional competency and calibre of markers. Uniform and consistent application of the marking guidelines across all learners' scripts is required to ensure reliability of

marking. Intensive training of all appointed chief markers and internal moderators is done to ensure an acceptable "Tolerance Range" is reached on marking each examination question and any discrepancy is closely monitored by the Examination panel. It is expected that the same level of intensity is conducted in the training of markers at provincial level. Where markers are not able to achieve scores aligned to the acceptable tolerance range, they have to be retrained or reassigned to mark a different set of questions. Inappropriate marker competency delays the marking process and disrupts the marking organisation on specific questions. The introduction of the tolerance range in the marking system has reduced the number of discrepancies identified by external moderators in previous years.

(d) Limited presentation of data

The national report presents only a snapshot of data analysis at national, provincial and district levels. The analysis is restricted to full-time candidates that have written six or more subjects. The results of part-time candidates who usually only register for one or more subjects are not considered in the same way as full-time candidates and is limited to subject performance. The results of the 2017 cohort are compared in relation to performance levels of the three previous years. The data is presented to provide an aggregated national picture on the number of NSC passes, qualification type, gender, school performance, quintile, national subjects, special needs education and district performance. It does not provide pedagogical information on learning gaps. A national diagnostic report on specific subjects at a later stage will provide input to teaching and learning at classroom level.

The above limitations are typical of internationally conducted "high stakes" public examinations and are not unique to the NSC.

13. CONCLUSION

The Government of the Republic of South Africa esteems the provision of quality basic education free of discrimination as its apex priority and as a national imperative advanced by citizenry and provided for in the Constitution. It duly recognises the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as the authority responsible for guiding this national imperative into reality for more than 12 million learners from reception (Grade R) to matriculation (Grade 12).

The outcome of the 2017 NSC affirms an upward trajectory system and the notable improved achievements by this cohort reflects a momentum that has been built up over the years as the focus on assuring quality in basic education improved. From Grade R to Grade 12, this momentum has been driven by a number of initiatives begun in recent years, including the roll out of the Foundations for Learning Campaign, introducing an Annual National Assessment in early years of schooling, implementing the CAPS policy in all grades, strengthening the implementation of the NSLA, providing workbooks to disadvantaged learners, initiating a phenomenal expansion of Grade R and coordinating a concerted effort in the sector to improve the NSC pass rate.

In the past year the Department has made positive strides in the roll out of a diversified curriculum (3-stream model) in context of promoting an inclusive education for an inclusive society and economy.

The improved achievement rate of the Class of 2017 underscores recent performance gains observed in international benchmark studies such as TIMSS, SACMEQ and PIRLS, further evidence of a system on the rise.

With such system momentum, the current and future citizenry is assured of high quality skills and knowledge with the Class of 2017 ready to shape their freedom through education, excellently exemplified by OR Tambo. Every effort will be made to support the Class of 2018 in attaining even higher milestones.

75.1%

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