

NEWSLETTER 1 OF 2025

CLOSER MONITORING OF INSTITUTIONS' SCHOOL BASED ASSESSMENTS (SBAs)

During the last fortnight it has become abundantly clear that the discrepancies between the SBA marks awarded to candidates and the eventual NSC examination marks has led to serious dissatisfaction among parents and candidates. It would be wrong to state that all institutions are guilty, but it is factually correct to state that some institutions did not succeed in determining SBAs that can be regarded as reconcilable with the final NSC results.

SACAI analysed the combined SBAs of the combined institutions and determined the following:

- Only seven (7) institutions had no subjects with downward adjustments;
- Eight (8) institutions had no subjects within the acceptable range of 5%-10% above the examination mean;
- 75% of the subjects of 20 institutions' SBA marks were adjusted downward;
- 40.1% of all subjects' SBA mean of the combined institutions were adjusted up to 5% above the exam mean;
- Only 15.5% of all subjects' SBA mean of the combined institutions were within the ideal range, i.e. 5% to 10% above the exam mean; and
- 30.6% of subjects' SBA mean of all institutions combined, was adjusted down to 5% above the exam mean.

Here below, a genuine extract of an institution wherein the significant variance between examination results and the SBAs is evident:

SBA RANGE FOR 2025					SBA TOLERANCE RANGE FOR 2025		
Subject Name	Mean of Examination Marks (%)	Mean of SBA Marks (%)	Variance	Condition Applied by Umalusi	Adjusted 2024 SBA	Max SBA 2025(+5)	Range
ACCOUNTING	42.95	52.15	9.20	Accepted	52.15	57.15	5.00
AFRIKAANS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	48.95	62.29	13.34	SBA Mean scaled downwards	55.95	60.95	5.00
BUSINESS STUDIES	38.13	70.01	31.88	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	43.13	48.13	5.00
COMPUTER APPLICATIONS TECHNOLOGY	43.11	54.17	11.05	SBA Mean scaled downwards	52.11	53.11	1.00
ECONOMICS	42.76	62.01	19.24	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	47.76	52.76	5.00
ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE	51.64	64.53	12.89	SBA Mean scaled downwards	58.64	61.64	3.00
GEOGRAPHY	38.68	59.55	20.88	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	43.68	48.68	5.00
HISTORY	37.71	61.31	23.60	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	42.71	47.71	5.00
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	35.13	53.87	18.74	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	40.13	45.13	5.00
ISIXHOSA FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	48.27	58.56	10.29	SBA Mean scaled downwards	57.27	58.27	1.00
ISIZULU FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	58.28	57.34	-0.94	SBA Mean brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean	63.28	68.28	5.00
LIFE SCIENCES	35.02	60.51	25.49	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	40.02	45.02	5.00
MARINE SCIENCES	73.67	65	-8.67	SBA Mean brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean	78.67	83.67	5.00
MATHEMATICAL LITERACY	63.73	51.89	-11.84	SBA Mean brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean	68.73	73.73	5.00
MATHEMATICS	27.75	50.76	23.01	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	32.75	37.75	5.00
MUSIC	74.33	72	-2.33	SBA Mean brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean	79.33	84.33	5.00
PHYSICAL SCIENCES	29.73	54.87	25.14	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	34.73	39.73	5.00
SESOTHO FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	43.09	61.2	18.11	SBA Mean brought down to 5% above the adjusted Examination mean	48.09	53.09	5.00
VISUAL ARTS	58.24	56.96	-1.28	SBA Mean brought up to 5% above the adjusted examination mean	63.24	68.24	5.00
Average	46.90	59.42	12.52	-6.66	52.76	57.23	4.47

SACAI has developed a similar table for each institution that will be disseminated shortly. On a close inspection of the table above, the following can be stated:



- 1) Umalusi firstly verifies the institution's SBA average (mean) for a particular subject. Thereafter it is compared to the institution's average performance in the NSC examination in that subject. Any variance larger than 10 % above the examination mean requires adjustment of the average SBA mark. Consequently, it also affects the SBA marks of the candidates in tandem.
- 2) Under the heading, "Condition applied by Umalusi", the Umalusi approach can be seen. The net result of the adjustment is under the heading, "Adjusted 2024 SBA".
- 3) The scale for the scaling of marks is as follows:
 - a. If the SBA mean is more than 15% above the examination mean, the SBA mean of the institution is adjusted down to 5% above the examination mean.
 - b. If the SBA mean is greater than 10% and less than or equal to 15%, the following inverse sliding scale is applied to the institution:
 - i. 11%, scaled down to 9%
 - ii. 12% scaled down to 8%
 - iii. 13% scaled down to 7%
 - iv. 14% scaled down to 6%
 - v. 15% scaled down to 5%
 - vi. Note: To protect the credibility of the SBA marks, the variance must not exceed 10% of the examination mean as a 10% or less variance is not subject to adjustment.
- 4) The difference between the average examination marks and the average SBA marks was 12.52%
- 5) The average of the Umalusi adjustments led to an average 6.66% reduction of the average SBA marks.
- 6) The SBA marks in "bold red" are obviously those subjects wherein the variance exceeds 15%. In short, less than acceptable as it raises questions regarding its credibility. Those marks were all reduced to 5% above the average examination mark.
- 7) The SBA range that SACAI will regard as acceptable for 2025 for each subject is as stated, e.g. Mathematics, from 32.75% to 37.75%, Accounting from 52.15% to 57.15, etc.
- 8) Note: The "bunching" of marks should be avoided at all costs as it also raises questions regarding its credibility. Umalusi determines the standard deviation by using the Excell formula, "STDEV. S". If the standard deviation is less than 5, it is not regarded as credible.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT: ADDRESSING THE SBA CREDIBILITY GAP

For 2025 it is imperative to implement a structured approach to assist institutions with the compiling of credible and realistic SBA marks for all candidates. SACAI is acutely aware that institutions wish to positively motivate candidates with the allocation of good SBA marks, but as can be seen from the analysis here above, it also creates unrealistic expectations and does not accurately reflect the affected candidates' academic competence.

On a detailed analysis of some candidates' Grade 11 report cards for 2024, it has been identified that numerous candidates achieved 95% to 100% for certain subjects. The respectful contention is that, although not impossible, it is highly improbable that numerous learners from one institution are able to perform that well. The danger of unrealistic expectations is thus very real.

Therefore, a self-assessment instrument is being developed to assist institutions to manage the process of compiling realistic SBA marks, i.e. an “Institutional SBA Improvement Plan”. The self-assessment instrument, based on the analysis referred to here above, will require institutions to formally provide considered feedback in terms of an electronic template regarding the following:

1. Has the institution identified the reasons for the large variances of subject SBAs that exceed 10% above the examination mark?
2. What measures does the institution intend to implement to address the underlying reasons for such excessive variances?
3. Do the learners have access to quality learning support material in all subjects?
4. Are the educators who teach the subjects sufficiently qualified and are they subject specialists?
5. Is the institution convinced that the SBA assignments and tests are on the required standard for Grades 10 to 12?
6. How does the institution determine such standards?
7. Does the institution implement formal baseline assessment at the commencement of each school year for the various grades and subjects, especially those subjects wherein the learners perform below average?
8. Is there a correlation between the various subject performances between Grades 10 and 11 and the final NSC marks for each subject.
9. Has the institution determined the standard deviation for each subject’s SBA and examination marks?
10. Are the marking guidelines on the required standard?
11. Are the markers qualified subject experts, and do they have the required experience?
12. Do the markers strictly adhere to marking guidelines (memoranda)?
13. Do the markers hold joint and objective deliberations on the marking guideline prior to the commencement of the marking process?
14. Who moderates the marking accuracy and standard of the markers?
15. If the moderator(s) find variances in the marking standards, how are such variances addressed?
16. Are formal assessments conducted under strict examination conditions?
17. If the formal assessments are conducted “online”, what proctoring system is used?
18. How does the institution ensure that all online learners comply with the institution’s examination requirements and are not able circumvent the proctoring system?
19. Has the institution established an “Institutional Assessment Integrity Committee” to attend to assessment transgressions?
20. How does the institution manage the possible abuse of AI?
21. How does the institution intend to manage the realistic expectations of learners and parents, especially regarding the SBA marks vs the final examination marks?
22. Does the institution have progressed learners?
23. How does the institution manage and teach learners at risk?

COMMON EXAMINATIONS AND CLOSER MONITORING OF SBAs

SACAI intends to implement a system of common examinations and contemporaneous interaction with institutions in connection with SBAs as explained here below:

- Common examinations:
 - Grades 10 and 11: Mid-year and end-of-year examinations in identified subjects.
 - Grade 12: Mid-year and pre-liminary examination in identified subjects.
 - The marking guidelines will be disseminated 24 hours after the intended date and time.
 - The marking will be conducted by the institutions.

- The validity and credibility of such results will be determined by the integrity of each institution.
- Closer monitoring of SBAs to address the SBA credibility gap:
 - SACAI is in the process of increasing its capacity to implement a system of much closer monitoring of the SBAs as Umalusi requires formal proof that all learners have complied with the policy regarding the promotion of all learners.
 - The ideal is to hold at least a monthly discussion with each institution regarding the frequency, quality and credibility of assessments.
 - An important issue that has increasingly surfaced and will form an integral part of the envisaged discussion, is the conditions under which the assessments were conducted. In short, did those conditions comply with the principles of –
 - The candidates own work;
 - No parental, or other irregular assistance;
 - No use of AI; and
 - Based on absolute integrity.