

## NEWSLETTER 5 OF 2025

### ACADEMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As stated in an earlier newsletter, the SACAI Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) convened on 12 March 2025 to consider a variety of issues related to the relationship by and between SACAI, the registered institutions and learners. Since SACAI is an accredited assessment body, the primary focus was to improve on the quality and credibility of all assessments in the FET phase. In this regard the following feedback is provided:

#### 1. COMPULSORY ONLINE PROCTORING FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDERS (DEP): “INVIGILATOR APP”

The AAC considered a comprehensive presentation by Mr Nic Riemer from the Invigilator App. Considering the serious discrepancies found at some DEPs between the exam marks and the SBA marks, the committee was unanimous that it is virtually impossible to ensure exam writing conditions without credible online proctoring. Therefore, it was resolved that henceforth the Invigilator App will be compulsory for DEPs registered with SACAI for Grades 10 to 12.

The cost for the App is truly affordable, i.e. R80 p.a. and will assist an institution in upholding academic integrity, which is to the benefit of all stakeholders, including learners and parents. Academic integrity includes administering all assessment that is valid, fair, and reliable for all learners and ultimately protects the quality of SBAs, common examinations and the final NSC examinations.

The App will at random intervals during an assessment function ensure credible assessment in the following manner by utilising AI:

- Request the learner to take a selfie.
- Request the learner to take a photo of a valid proof of identification.
- Request a photo of the answer script (if the assessment is a written and uploaded examination) with the student number clearly visible.
- Records audio whilst your assessment is underway.
- Prevent the use of a search engine during the assessment.
- Track eye movement.
- To flag and record a possible assessment irregularity.
- Online assessments written on a learning management system (LMS) will request a verification code which is obtained from the App.

Mr Riemer may be contacted at 071-350-4842 or [nic@invigilator.app](mailto:nic@invigilator.app)

**Note:** It is common cause that independent schools conduct physical invigilation in either classrooms or a school hall. However, such institutions will have to comply with the SACAI policy regarding invigilation and examination centres for all forms of assessment.



## 2. LATEST CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

The Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) guides the curriculum to be offered in all schools from Grade 1 to 12. Because of learning losses during the COVID period, the prescribed curriculum was shortened for each subject into an Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). The Department of Basic Education (DBE) advises the Minister on the content of the curriculum and on the structure of the schooling system.

For a number of years, the DBE has been engaged in an exercise known as “Strengthening the Curriculum”, which entails the revision of Chapters 3 and 4 of the CAPS document and which could lead to revised curriculum content. This process has, however, been delayed and the revision of CAPS and the ATPs has therefore not been finalised.

It can with confidence be stated that for 2025 subject curricula will not be revised by the DBE. Over the past decade the DBE has also been engaged in an exercise designed to re-structure the schooling system into three components or streams – Academic, Vocational and Occupational. Thus far, nothing has flowed from this initiative. Various methodological experiments have been, or are being, tried in various parts of the country. These have thus far not led to policy change and some of the experiments have been halted.

Regarding the field of assessment, no changes are expected. It is expected that in 2025, and even 2026, business will be very much as usual.

## 3. WHAT IS MEANT BY EXAM WRITING CONDITIONS?

To ensure examination writing conditions, SACAI has implemented the following measures:

- All formal assessments must be conducted under strict examination conditions, i.e. an online proctoring system is imperative for online students and for institutions, physical invigilation in terms of SACAI policy.
- To facilitate fair and honest assessments, SACAI drafted integrity declarations for candidates, parents and invigilators that must be signed before the commencement of the midyear examinations. Such declarations will be valid for one (1) year only.
- An examination manual for institutional based assessments and examinations has been compiled. It must be carefully studied to ensure genuine exam writing conditions in all formal assessments.
- SACAI will introduce a training course and the subsequent assessment for invigilators to obtain certification as an invigilator. The first training dates will be during April.
- With effect from 2026, the use of SACAI Certified Invigilators in formal assessments will be compulsory. The list of SACAI Certified Invigilators will be made available to institutions. This list will be updated regularly.
- To achieve certification the training must be attended, and the individual must score above 80% on the assessment. The status of a SACAI Certified invigilator will expire after 3 years.

## 4. TUTOR CENTRES: STATUS AND ROLE

Section 51 of the SA Schools Act makes provision for home schooling, provided (a) the education received by the learner will meet the minimum requirements of the curriculum at public schools and (b) that the standard of learning and teaching will not be inferior to that of public schools. Furthermore, the DBE

policy for home schooling makes provision for the utilisation of tutors by parents, provided that section 51 of SASA is complied with.

Thus, there rests an onerous statutory duty on tutors to ensure that the comparable standard of learning and teaching, which includes credible assessment under exam writing conditions, must be beyond reproach. This includes compliance with the immutable principles of credible assessment. Therefore, parents and DEPs that are curriculum providers to home schoolers via tutors, must ensure that the following is complied with:

- The CAPS curriculum is followed;
- The standard of learning and teaching is not inferior to that which a learner receives at a public school;
- There is strict adherence to exam writing conditions for all assessments; and
- Tutors do not operate as unregistered independent schools, i.e.:
  - Issue own report cards under the name of the tutor;
  - Follow a timetable similar to a school;
  - Require learners to wear a uniform, etc.

The AAC resolved to establish a working committee to discuss options to monitor the activities of tutors closely and to formulate criteria for “quality tutors” within the framework of the SASA and the policy for home schooling without “throwing the baby out with the bath water”. The intention is that the working committee will comprise DEPs, tutors and SACAI. Interested parties are invited to submit names to the CEO of SACAI at [chris@sacai.org.za](mailto:chris@sacai.org.za).

## **5. NSC: POST 2024**

Post NSC examination feedback was provided during January 2025 for subjects moderated by Umalusi based on the Umalusi feedback and the feedback from marking teams. A clear need was identified to provide more comprehensive subject related feedback post the examination. To facilitate this a revised instrument was developed for Chief Markers to complete after marking sessions. The feedback will also be expanded to all subjects and will be provided by the examination teams. Teachers teaching in the FET phase must await the invitations to the feedback sessions soon.

## **6. SBAs: ADDRESSING THE CREDIBILITY GAP**

It is now generally accepted that the tumult on social media after the release of the official NSC results was caused by dissatisfaction with the variance between the SBA marks and the NSC examination marks. It was also evident that the dissatisfaction emanated primarily from a very small number of institutions. On a closer analysis of the SBA marks and the examination marks it was determined that there was very little or no correlation between the marks. Parents and learners had unrealistic expectations based on high SBA marks that did not reflect learners’ academic ability. In the process, reputation damage was caused to SACAI, Umalusi and the institutions themselves. Such a recurrence must be avoided at all costs.

Therefore, the SACAI Council and the AAC formally resolved to address the matter by implementing the following compulsory control measures for 2025:

1. The provision of a range for SBAs per subject (+5 to 10% above examination mark) for grades 10 – 12. This range has already been provided to all institutions and will form the basis for the consideration and moderation of SBAs and common examinations.
2. Compulsory exam writing conditions: The following will be absolute requirements, i.e.:
  - As stated here above, online proctoring via the Invigilator App;
  - Physical invigilation by independent schools in terms of the SACAI policy that applies to exam writing centres;
  - That DEPs will have to ensure that parents and tutors of home schoolers will also abide by either the compulsory online proctoring or the same physical invigilation that applies to independent schools.
3. All institutions must establish an Institutional Assessment Integrity Committee (ideally also at tutor centres). SACAI will provide a policy framework for the consideration of assessment irregularities and the concomitant sanctions
4. The marking of question papers must be conducted in terms of SACAI policy that includes the formal discussions of marking guideline discussions at institutional level prior to the commencement of formal marking. Any amendment of the marking guideline of common examinations will be subject to SACAI approval. Institutional moderation must also be implemented.
5. SACAI will implement a system of external moderation that will require the submission of answer scripts on a random basis. SACAI reserves the right to adjust marks based on the range of SBA marks referred to in paragraph 1 here above.

## 7. EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENTS

Institutions are reminded to ensure that all assessments conducted are reliable, valid and effective and contribute to improve teaching and learning. SACAI has developed moderation tools that teachers can use to improve the setting of assessment tasks and will continue to support teachers in the development of effective assessments. Relevant and applicable feedback to learners, parents and within institutions was highlighted as part of effective assessment systems.

## 8. TSGs vis-à-vis ATPs

In light of curriculum changes expected with effect from 2027, SACAI will not be updating its TSGs for 2026. We will provide institutions with the following in terms of TSGs:

- SACAI ATPs Gr 10-12.
- Programme of Assessment Gr 10-12.
- Examination Guidelines Gr 12.

These documents will be available in English and Afrikaans and will be shared with institutions before the end of 2025 to ensure a smooth transition into 2026 when common assessments will be compulsory.

For 2025, the TSG 2022 must be used, with the SACAI Subject Guidelines as the main curriculum document. The ATPs for grades 10 and 11 were shared as a supplementary resource to assist educator planning etc.

## 9. POLICY: PROMOTION, PROGRESSION & CONDONATION

The NPPPPR document, i.e. *National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*, specifically section 29, refers. Attention is specifically drawn to the following:

- Institutions must implement strict promotion and progression requirements as per NPPPPR.
- Report cards (issued by only the DEP or the independent school) must clearly state “Promoted” or “Progressed” at the end of the year.
- No condonation is allowed for grades 10 and 11. Condonation is only available at the end of grade 12 and is programmatically applied by Umalusi for one subject. As per the NPPPPR, a condonation of a maximum of one (1) subject will only be applied to a **Grade 12 candidate** in the final NSC examination **by Umalusi**, if such a candidate requires a maximum of 2%, either to obtain a pass at 30% or 40%. Such a condonation will automatically be applied in only one subject, provided the condonation will allow the candidate to obtain the NSC qualification.
- **Progression** from grade 11 to grade 12 requires SACAI’s permission
  - Institutions must have internal meetings to determine if a learner meets the requirements to progress. Only if a grade 11 learner meets the requirements, then thereafter the institution must consult SACAI for permission to progress the learner
  - Identify learners at risk in grade 10 already and update the list of learners regularly. Ensure that there is sufficient support for learners at risk to ensure they don’t fall behind or “get lost in the system”.
- SACAI remains at the 75:25 split between final exams and SBAs for the whole FET phase.
- Learners who experience barriers to learning or have other complications can complete grade 12 over two years – SACAI needs to be notified.
- First-time enrolment for grade 12 must not be later than in the year the learner turns 21.

## 10. SPRING SCHOOL

SACAI will not hold a Winter School during the July holidays as institutions have already started planning and marketing their own Winter Schools. SACAI will offer a Spring School to prepare candidates for final exams. The provisional planning is as follows:

- 6 – 10 October 2025.
- 1 hour per subject per paper, offered in both English and Afrikaans.
- No teaching of content, but rather specific best practice approaches and pitfalls to look out for.

## 11. COMMON EXAMINATIONS (GRADES 10-12)

SACAI will write the first cycle of common assessments in the midyear examinations for grades 10 and 11 in identified subjects. This will ensure a more transparent and objective process and allow SACAI to provide training and guidance while actively being involved in the process.

As mentioned in the Client Forum, the Gr 12 Life Orientation examination is scheduled on the provisional examination timetable, but candidates should be informed that it is their final NSC examination. As such, proper examination conditions and proctoring is vital. Where possible, it should be a seated examination with proper invigilation, and if it is online, only be online if the SACAI approved Invigilator App is used.

Part of SACAI's approach to address the SBA credibility gap, marking moderation will be implemented to ensure standardised marking of all SACAI set examinations. Institutions are required to have an internal marking guideline discussion with all markers to familiarise themselves with the marking guidelines. No changes are to be made and if any need arises, SACAI must be contacted, and changes must be approved.

After the marking and internal institutional moderation has been completed, the post assessment analysis (MOD3), intervention plan (MOD4) and marksheets for that specific subject and paper must be uploaded for random SACAI marking moderation. Please refer to the documents discussed by Dr vd Westhuizen in the SBA information session if there are any queries.

The process of handling errata will also be managed differently, as we will adopt the Umalusi approach. Therefore, no candidates may be made aware of any possible *erratum* on a question paper unless communicated by SACAI prior to the commencement of the question paper. Any comments or errata communicated without the approval of SACAI constitutes an irregularity. All possible errors must be reported via a Google Form to SACAI at the earliest convenience. It will then be addressed during the marking guidelines that will be made available the morning after the paper was written.

## 12. REGULATIONS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDERS (DEPs)

There are currently two sets of "proposed" regulations doing the rounds. On enquiry with the Minister of Basic Education's (MBE) office it was determined that the MBE is not aware of the documents, but she is of the opinion that this growing sector must be regularised to ensure that credible DEPs that do their utmost to ensure quality learning and teaching are recognised and will be entitled to continue functioning within the statutory framework provided by SASA and the policy for home schooling.

The current documents attempt to enforce a model similar to that which applies to "brick-and-mortar" schools. It does not recognise the development of information technology, AI and other factors. Education is exposed to all the new technological developments and online schools, or distance education providers, are also able to deliver quality education at an affordable price.

A meeting within the foreseeable with the MBE's office has been arranged with the aim to commence a process of round table discussions by and between the education authorities and representatives of the DEP/ online school communities. SACAI institutions will be kept abreast of unfolding developments.

## 13. QUESTIONNAIRE

SACAI has prepared a questionnaire regarding a needs survey among SACAI institutions. We request all institutions to complete this questionnaire. The questionnaire is in the form of a Google Form and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Click on this [link](#) to complete this form. Please be so kind as to complete this by no later than Friday, 28 March 2025 at 12:00 after which the link will be closed.