

LEARNING CENTRES

WHAT IS THE REQUISITE RELATIONSHIP WITH A DEP?

SACAI is fully cognisant that the relationship by and between distance education providers (DEPs) and learners in many instances is via learning centres. We are also aware that the quality of service rendered by learning centres differ substantially on a case-by-case basis, as well as the fact that the role of learning centres differs substantially for the voluntary FET phase (Grades 10 – 12) when compared with the compulsory GET phase (Grades R – 9). To increase the standard of learning and teaching, it is of the utmost importance to implement a uniform approach to learning centres and to interpret their role as a support service to DEPs in connection with curriculum delivery and assessment integrity.

SACAI's focus as an accredited assessment body is on the credibility of all assessments conducted under the authority of the DEP and therefore, the following principles underpin the relationship by and between the DEP and learning centres:

- **Support:** The learning centre plays a supportive role and is not the primary role player. In practice, centres add significant value when they focus on learner supervision, creating conducive learning environments, and facilitate parent communication. This supportive role encourages healthy collaboration without diluting DEP accountability.
- **Assessment integrity:** All assessments, marking and moderation remains the primary responsibility with the DEP. The centre assists with curriculum delivery by subject specialists, invigilation and logistical support. This separation ensures SBA credibility.
- **Clear Boundaries on Reporting:** Even though parents sometimes expect centres to issue progress reports, it must be borne in mind that the DEP is registered with SACAI and only the DEP's assessment report regarding performance and compliance with promotion requirements will be accepted. Thus, only the DEP issues report cards.
- **Uniform centre accountability agreements:** The sage advice to DEPs is to conclude formal agreements with centres to outline their responsibilities and record unequivocally the DEP's right to apply quality and assurance (QA) criteria and, if required, to withdraw the status of the centre as an "approved" support site. If all DEPs follow such a uniform approach, it will enable DEPs to uniformly enforce SACAI policy at centre level.

SACAI deems it prudent to record what is regarded as the non-negotiables that must inform the relationship by and between DEPs and learning centres in terms of a formal agreement wherein the principles referred to above are clearly reflected, as well as the following matters:

1. Quality learning and teaching in terms of CAPS is non-negotiable and must comply with the DEP's QA requirements, including providing learners access to subject specialists for Mathematics, Accountancy, Home Languages, the science subjects, etc.



2. SBA credibility is of vital importance, and the DEP's QA processes must be implemented as SACAI will request objective evidence.
3. The centre's SBA marks must comply with SBA range provided annually by SACAI to the DEP based on the previous year's final NSC examination results of the DEP.
4. The centre must be able to provide strict exam writing conditions that will not be compromised as SACAI will request objective evidence, i.e.:
 - a. Proctoring/ Invigilation in terms of the "Invigilator App" or physical invigilation by SACAI certified invigilator(s) who are not family members of learners.
 - b. Adherence to exam timetables for all common examinations (Grade 10 -12).
 - c. Strict seating plans and session times will apply.
 - d. The centre will apply the SACAI policy in connection with assessment irregularities.
 - e. Proper control and security in connection with the common exam question papers, including the storing of such exam papers in strong rooms or safes, and that access will be limited.
5. The marking and moderation of all assessments will be conducted by the DEP in terms of SACAI policy.
6. Learning centres must be able to provide clear and acceptable organograms and keep comprehensive records on teaching and support staff including background checks in terms of SAPS clearance, to ensure the safety of learners at the learning centre.
7. All learners and staff members must complete "SACAI integrity undertakings"
8. The centre must ensure that all learners and parents are continuously advocated in connection with the non-negotiable requirements related to assessment integrity.
9. The centre will ensure that realistic parental and learner expectations regarding learner's academic prowess will be managed, i.e. that a close correlation between SBA marks and the final NSC examination is unavoidable.
10. The centre may not –
 - a. Issue report cards,
 - b. Purport to be a registered independent school, or
 - c. Claim to be accredited by the DEP or SACAI.

Considering the above, it is clear that the learning centre plays a pivotal support role to assist with the establishment of standards in connection with academic services, compliance with SACAI policies and CAPS curriculum requirements, and the protection of the integrity and credibility of assessments.

SACAI advises DEPs to conclude agreements with learning centres in terms of the agreement – [click here](#) to access an example agreement. Such a uniform approach will lift all role players to a much higher common denominator.