

BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR GRADE 10 LEARNERS

SACAI has developed baseline assessments for the start of grade 10 to test learners' competency in the language of teaching and learning and numeracy with effect from 2027. These assessments do not use pass-or-fail criteria; instead, they provide evidence of a learner's knowledge base acquired during the Senior Phase (Grade 7 – 9). This approach is similar to international best practice, i.e. the approach followed by the OECD during PISA assessments.

Who should write the baseline assessment?

The test is intended for learners who wish to enrol at a SACAI registered institution without a valid report card. The national policy requires that learners may only be promoted or progressed if a valid report card supports such an action.

What does SACAI regard as a valid grade 9 report card?

A report card issued by the following institutions:

- A public school;
- A registered independent school; or
- A SACAI registered institution.

What are the primary objectives for the baseline assessments?

The primary aim of the baseline assessments is not for certification purposes, but to assist learners, parents and institutions with the following:

- The choice of the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), i.e. English or Afrikaans, is important as it has a direct influence on a learner's ability to comprehend the teaching process, to comprehend reading and to write coherent responses;
- The assessments can assist learners in making subject choices, especially the choice between Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy;
- Learners who wish to change their LOLT should write both the Afrikaans and English baseline assessments to assess whether they will be able to keep up with the curriculum in the new language;
- The identification of areas of weaknesses in learners' knowledge bases for the development of individual support programmes (ISP);
- To communicate realistic expectations to learners and parents regarding anticipated academic performance; and
- To assist with the structuring of an institution's educational programme.



Are learners able to prepare for the assessment?

Yes, learners can prepare for the baseline assessment. The assessment is based on the minimum required CAPS-curriculum knowledge acquired during the Senior Phase (Grades 7, 8 and 9).

How are the question papers compiled?

There are three baseline assessment papers, i.e.:

- Afrikaans (for learners whose LOLT is Afrikaans);
- English (for learners whose LOLT is English); and
- Numeracy.

The papers each comprise a total of 100 marks and are divided into two sections. Each paper must be written during two 90-minute sessions, with a 30-minute break in between.

What can be expected from the Afrikaans and English baseline assessments?

The language assessments test the following on a final grade 9 level:

- Comprehension;
- Précis writing;
- Visual literacy;
- Poetry;
- Language skills; and
- Creative writing skills.
- Note: The primary aim is to determine learners' competence in and mastery of the LOLT.

What can be expected from the Numeracy baseline assessment?

The numeracy examination includes content from both Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy, based on work covered up to the end of grade 9. For this reason, it is not structured according to the CAPS assessment format.

What is acceptable performance in terms of the percentage (%) attained, and what are the consequences if a learner fails to reach the acceptable level?

The acceptable level of percentage is 50%. If a learner fails to reach the acceptable level, the following approach may be considered:

- Inform the learner and parents of the outcome and the dire need for a detailed and structured ISP with clearly defined milestones;
- Develop and implement the ISP and inform the learner and parents of the consequences of not adhering to the ISP and attaining the milestones; and
- If the learner's performance is objectively far below the acceptable level, e.g. below 20%, inform the parents that it may be in the best interest of the learner to repeat grade 9.

Who will mark the assessments?

The following will apply:

- Assessments must be marked by qualified teachers who teach the subject;
- Once the assessments have been written, SACAI will arrange a formal discussion on the day of the assessment at 14:00 on the marking guidelines, after which the marking guidelines will be finalised;
- The final marking guidelines will then be disseminated for marking; and
- SACAI will request a sample from each institution for moderation purposes.

How should the assessments be conducted?

The credibility, reliability and validity of the assessments are of the utmost importance. The assessment must be conducted in the same manner as the mid-year and end-of-year SACAI common examinations, i.e. in strict, genuine examination writing conditions. This implies either the use of the Invigilator App, or physical invigilation by SACAI certified invigilators.

How will the question papers be disseminated?

The approach will be the same as for the official common examinations. SACAI will provide the exams in electronic format, and the institution will disseminate them as it normally does with exams. All the security measures must be adhered to.

When will the assessments be conducted?

Assessments are planned for the following dates:

- 09 February 2027: Afrikaans
- 10 February 2027: English
- 11 February 2027: Numeracy

How much will the assessment cost the institutions?

SACAI will provide the assessments at no cost. The aim is to assist the institution, the learner, and parents by providing transparency into the learner's abilities and assist in making informed decisions regarding the learner's academic prowess.

How must the assessment results be interpreted?

The following applies in this regard:

- The assessments are not designed for a pass-or-fail mark, but to objectively determine competence and knowledge bases on a genuine grade 9 level;
- The results must be presented in a diagnostic evaluation structured around specific topics, enabling a detailed analysis of learners' strengths and areas for further development. Once the examination has been marked according to the prescribed marking guidelines, the individual learner's results are broken down into these components;
- A diagnostic framework must then be applied to determine learners' level of competence in each area, typically indicating whether the learner demonstrates adequate competency, partial competency, or requires further support;
- Based on the diagnostic analysis, institutions must identify strengths and problem areas to structure the teaching programme;
- Develop structured intervention programmes, e.g.
 - A learner may demonstrate strong comprehension skills but require support in language structures or creative writing. Such targeted insights allow for informed academic decisions, including appropriate placement, tailored teaching strategies, and the implementation of focused intervention programmes where necessary;
 - The diagnostic interpretation of the numeracy baseline assessment may reflect a learner's ability in different areas of numeracy. The assessment has been structured to assess performance on pure Mathematics-type questions, categorised into lower-order and higher-order cognitive levels. It also analyses performance on Mathematical Literacy-type questions, divided similarly into lower- and higher-order questions. In short, an overall indication of the learner's level of competence.

What must the institution do with the results?

The results and diagnostic interpretation must be shared with the learner and parents. Transparency is important to make learners and parents aware of the learners' actual abilities. SACAI will also request the following information from institutions before or on 27 February 2027:

- How will learners be supported?
- Communication with parents?
- How teaching programmes were adjusted?
- What are the outcomes of the diagnostic analysis of the results as this will inform SACAI's future assessment programmes.
- What assistance from SACAI is requested?

Why does SACAI want access to the results?

To make the data usable, each baseline assessment will begin with 10 demographic questions, such as age, gender, home language, and who taught the learners up to grade 9 level. SACAI aims to improve the homeschooling environment, distance education and online schools. The results will assist to gain valuable insights into these sectors and assist SACAI to structure future assessments.