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Assessment Management Minute: 0011/2023

To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors (Head Office and district offices), Deputy Directors, Chief Education Specialists, Heads: Curriculum Support, Heads: Management and Governance, Circuit Managers, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, Subject Advisers and Heads of institutions that prepare learners for the National Senior Certificate and Senior Certificate examinations

Subject: Risk management for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and Senior Certificate (SC) examinations - October/November 2023 and May/June 2024

1. The aim of this minute is to inform principals/centre managers to identify emerging risks that could impact on the conduct of the NSC and SC examinations in October/November 2023 and May/June 2024 timeously. In addition, principals/centre managers are requested to develop a comprehensive contingency plan to be activated when required during the writing phase of the examinations.
2. It is important that proper and detailed planning to administer the NSC/SC examinations precede the writing phase of the examinations to ensure that a school/centre is fully compliant with the minimum prescribed requirements to serve as an examination centre, implement the activities to mitigate emerging risks and develop plans to manage any eventuality that may arise during the writing phase of the examinations. Principals/centre managers are reminded that the proposed risk mitigation strategies and the contingency plan must be school specific.
3. The *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the NSC examinations, 2008, amended 2019*, specifies the basic requirements for a school/centre to serve as an examination centre. Schools/centres need to complete the examination self-assessment compliance audit tool on CEMIS annually and evaluate their readiness to administer the NSC/SC examinations. Circuit managers will verify the information and data and must assist the schools/centres in their circuit to become fully compliant with the minimum prescribed requirements to serve as an examination centre.

4. Principals/centre managers are reminded that they must accept full accountability for all examination related processes when administering the NSC/SC examinations at their schools/centres and that the accountability cannot be delegated.
5. **Risk identification and contingency planning for the NSC/SC examinations**
 - 5.1 The management of a credible examination at each institution depends on the early identification of potential risks and the management of mitigation actions to minimise or eradicate risks. Therefore, it is essential that principals/centre managers identify these potential risks that could have an impact on the examinations at their school/centre well in advance of the commencement date of the examinations. Mitigation strategies must specify controls and actions that will be put in place before the commencement of the writing phase of the examinations.
 - 5.2 In addition to the risk management plan of the school/centre, all schools/centres are required to develop a contingency plan that is school/centre specific. The contingency plan must focus on the safety of candidates and protection of the integrity of the examinations. It must include protocols to be accessed in case of an eventuality.
 - 5.3 The contingency plan must clearly identify the protocol to be followed when candidates must evacuate the examination venue for short periods during the conduct of an examination session. The evacuation protocol must be mediated with all staff members and invigilators who are key in the execution of the plan.
 - 5.4 Schools/centres are encouraged to obtain the contact details of all parents/primary caregivers of candidates to ensure that they can be contacted in case of an emergency. The information must be managed in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013).
 - 5.5 All schools/centres are required to obtain the contact details of their nearest emergency services: police, ambulance, and fire rescue services. These contact numbers must be easily accessible in case of an emergency and must be included in the contingency plan and examination file of the school/centre.
 - 5.6 Principals are advised to engage the local police station with a request to be more visible during the writing of examinations at their school/centre.
 - 5.7 The contingency plan must include the following areas but is not limited to:
 - 5.7.1 Risk area: Security/safety and access control;
 - 5.7.2 Risk area: Safe/strong room management;
 - 5.7.3 Risk area: Communication;
 - 5.7.4 Risk area: Invigilation;
 - 5.7.5 Risk area: Management of irregularities;

- 5.7.6 Risk area: Candidates with accommodations/concessions using electronic devices, requiring scribes and readers, or a separate venue;
 - 5.7.7 Risk area: Computer breakdowns during the examination;
 - 5.7.8 Risk area: Power failure during the examination, e.g. Computer Applications Technology (CAT) and Information Technology;
 - 5.7.9 Risk area: Emergency before candidates enter the examination venue; and
 - 5.7.10 Risk area: Emergency while candidates are writing.
- 5.8 The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) proposes the risk management and contingency plan templates as guidelines (**Annexure A and Annexure B**) for the development and writing of school/centre specific plans.
- 5.9 Attached to this minute is the monitoring instruments which will be used to monitor the NSC/SC examinations and CAT Paper 1 examination for easy reference (**Annexure C: WCED Instrument 2023** and **Annexure D: CATN.1**). Principals/centre managers may consult this instrument during their planning sessions when developing their unique risk management and contingency plan.

6. Preventing/eradicating irregularities

- 6.1 Risk management should also include strategies to eradicate irregularities.
- 6.2 The following irregularities occurred during the writing phase of the November 2022 NSC examinations:

Type of irregularity
Candidates in possession of a cell phone (unauthorised device) on their person
Candidates in possession of unauthorised material
Candidates who write incorrect question paper or level
Neglecting to verify question papers issued against admission letter of candidates
Ineffective invigilation controls (e.g. one invigilator per 30 learners)
Incorrect completion of script control register, mark sheets and seating plans
Incorrect batching procedures

- 6.3 Principals are encouraged to mediate the examination rules with all learners during the trial examination period in preparation for the final examinations in October/November 2023. During the October/November 2023 and May/June 2024 examinations a self-search of the candidates' pockets, pencil cases and sleeves in which admission letters are carried are promoted.

6.4 Principals/centre managers must acquaint themselves with the contents of:

Minute	Title	Summary
Assessment Management Minute 0013/2017, dated 24 August 2017	Ways to minimise assessment irregularities during national examinations	Guidelines to curb irregularities and applicable sanctions for irregularities.
Assessment Management Minute 0010/2021, dated 30 July 2021	Prevention of irregularities during the conduct of the NSC/SC examinations	Information on irregularities and guidelines to prevent irregularities during the conduct of the NSC/SC examinations.

- Principals/centre managers are reminded to implement recommendations and mitigate concerns raised by circuit managers, assessment coordinators and the provincial audit coordinator during audit verification visits from June to September 2023. This will ensure that the school/centre is fully compliant with examination centre requirements and that they are ready to host the NSC/SC examinations 2023/2024.
- Circuit managers must ensure that principals/centre managers implement the mitigation strategies for the identified risks. A progress report on the implementation of the risk controls and activities listed on the risk management plan must be submitted via the office of the circuit manager to the assessment coordinator on or before **29 September 2023**.
- A copy of the school's/centre's comprehensive contingency plan must be submitted to the circuit manager and district assessment coordinator on or before **20 October 2023**.
- The WCED wishes principals/centre managers well with their preparation to administer the NSC/SC examinations in 2023/2024.

SIGNED: H MAHOMED

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT

DATE: 2023-08-11