

NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE Examination Report 2016



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A system on the rise.

NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE

Examination Report

2016



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT	9
3. THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE AS A QUALIFICATION	10
3.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS	10
3.2 ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	10
3.3 MINIMUM PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDING THE NSC TO CANDIDATES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	11
4. THE NATIONAL NSC EXAMINATION SYSTEM	11
4.1. ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS	11
4.2 QUESTION PAPER DEVELOPMENT	12
4.3. MARKING	13
4.4 SCHOOL BASED ASSESSMENT	17
5. CHALLENGES TO THE NSC	19
5.1 THROUGHPUT	19
5.2 PROGRESSION	20
5.3 STANDARD OF THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE	22
6. PERFORMANCE TRENDS IN GRADE 12	23
6.1 THE GRADE 12 EXAMINATIONS – 20 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT	23
6.2 PROVINCIAL TRENDS 2009 - 2015	26
7. THE CLASS OF 2016	29
7.1 THE PROFILE OF THE 2016 NSC CLASS	29
7.2 SCOPE AND SIZE OF THE CLASS OF 2016	29
7.3 NSC SUBJECT ENROLMENT: 2012 TO 2016	20
7.4 NSC ENROLMENTS IN TERMS OF GENDER	32
7.5 INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES TARGETING THE CLASS OF 2016	33
8. PERFORMANCE IN THE 2016 NSC EXAMINATIONS	35
8.1 OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN THE 2016 NSC EXAMINATION	35
8.2 COMPARISON OF PERFORMANCE	36
8.3 SUBJECT PERFORMANCE	48
8.4 PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	63
8.5 PERFORMANCE OF REPEAT CANDIDATES	64
8.6 PERFORMANCE OF PART-TIME CANDIDATES	65
8.7 PERFORMANCE OF PROGRESSED LEARNERS	67
8.8 DISTRICT PERFORMANCE	68
9. KEY GAINS	74
10. LIMITATIONS	75
11. CONCLUSION	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1: The number of progressed learners that enrolled for the 2015 and 2016 NSC	21
Table 7.1: NSC Enrolments per province for 2015 and 2016	29
Table 7.3.1: Subject Enrolments- 2012 to 2016	30
Table 7.4.1: Enrolments in terms of Gender	33
Table 8.1.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2016 NSC examination	35
Table 8.2.1: Comparison of NSC passes by province, 2013 to 2016	37
Table 8.2.2: NSC performance by type of qualification, 2016 (Endorsed Certificate candidates included but not reflected)	38
Table 8.2.3: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2016 (Endorsed Certificate candidates included but not reflected)	39
Table 8.2.4: Comparison of Bachelor's passes by provinces between 2013 to 2016	42
Table 8.2.5: Bachelor's passes by gender. 2014 -2016	43
Table 8.2.6: Comparison of number of NSC passes by province and gender from 2013 to 2016	44
Table 8.2.7: Number of schools within different pass rate categories (2015 and 2016)	45
Table 8.2.8: Number of schools within different pass percentage categories by Quintile	46
Table 8.2.9: Number of candidates who wrote in schools per quintile (2015 and 2016)	47
Table 8.2.10: NSC passes by type of qualification per Quintile (2015 and 2016) (Excluding candidates who qualify for the Endorsed Certificate)	47
Table 8.3.1: Candidates' Performance in Home Language (Official Languages) 2013 to 2016 at 40%	48
Table 8.3.2: Candidates' performance in First Additional Language (2013 to 2016 at 30%)	49
Table 8.3.3: Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects (Full-Time - 2013 to 2016)	50
Table 8.3.4: Candidates' performance in non-language subjects (2013 to 2016)	51
Table 8.3.5: Candidates' performance in Mathematics and Physical Science by gender (2012 to 2016)	52
Table 8.3.6: Candidates' performance in Mathematics by province and level of achievement (2014 to 2016)	53
Table 8.3.7: Candidates' performance in Physical Science by province and level of achievement (2014 to 2016)	54
Table 8.3.8: Candidates' performance in Accounting by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	55
Table 8.3.9: Candidates' performance in Business Studies by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	56
Table 8.3.10: Candidates' performance in Economics by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	57
Table 8.3.11: Candidates' performance in Geography by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	58
Table 8.3.12: Candidates' performance in History by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	59
Table 8.3.13: Candidates' performance in Life Science by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	60
Table 8.3.14: Candidates' performance in Mathematical Literacy by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)	61
Table 8.3.15: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)	62
Table 8.4.1: Special Needs Education (SNE) candidates (including concession candidates) - Full-Time 2014 - 2016	63
Table 8.5.1: Overall performance of Repeat candidates (Full Time) in the 2016 NSC examination	64
Table 8.6.1: Candidates Enrolled / Wrote (Part-time) (2014 – 2016)	65
Table 8.6.2: Part-Time Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects. Part-Time (2012 to 2016)	66
Table 8.7.1: Number wrote and achieved NSC - Progressed Learners Excluded (2015 and 2016)	67
Table 8.7.2: Number wrote and achieved NSC - Progressed Learners Only (2015 and 2016)	67
Table 8.8.1: District Performance in the National Senior Certificate (2013 to 2016)	68
Table 8.8.2: Summary of District Performance 2015 and 2016	72
Table 8.8.3: Names of Districts performing below 50%	73



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.1: youth having completed Grade 12 by province and age (2012-2014)	20
Figure 6.1: The number of students obtaining the 'Matric' (1994 to 2015 increase in 'Matric' attainment)	23
Figure 6.2: Increase in 'Bachelors-level' attainment (1994 to 2016 increase in 'Bachelors-level' attainment)	24
Figure 6.3: NSC pass rate by province since 2009	26
Figure 6.4: Numbers passing NSC by province since 2009	27
Figure 6.5: Numbers obtaining a Bachelor pass by province since 2009	27
Figure 6.6: Bachelor passes relative to all NSC passes by province since 2009	28
Figure 6.7: Numbers passing NSC and pass rates by gender since 2009	28
Figure 7.1: Part-time candidates enrolled from 2012 to 2016	30
Figure 7.2: Mathematics Full-Time Enrolments	31
Figure 7.3: Physical Science Full-Time Enrolments	32
Figure 8.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2016 NSC examination	36
Figure 8.2: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2016 (Excluding Endorsed)	41
Figure 8.3: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)	62
Figure 8.4: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)	64



FOREWORD



“System on the rise”

In 2016, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the South African Constitution. The Constitution, signed into law by former President Nelson Mandela, marked one of the most exceptional moments in South Africa’s history. The South African Constitution is regarded as one of the most progressive in the world and enjoys high acclaim internationally. As we celebrate a rising constitutional democracy in South Africa, I am pleased to release the National Senior Certificate Examination Report for the class of 2016. The Class of 2016 entered the education system in 2005, secure in the context of free citizenry in South Africa and a commitment from government to create better life opportunities for all. We value this societal freedom and common citizenry that is constitutionally driven by values of ‘Ubuntu’ and ‘Batho-Pele’, empowering this cohort of learners to successfully build on 20 years of freedom and democracy.

The cornerstone of the democratic era has been an improving education system committed to the pursuit of quality basic education, the necessary raising of standards and careful introspection of progress. Government’s strategy of improving basic education quality has been articulated in the *National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030: Our future – Make it work*. In this regard, the education sector has aligned its medium-term and annual performance plans towards improving the nutrition of learners, building more safe schools and improving school infrastructure in rural areas, ensuring every child in “no-fee” schools has access to workbooks, improving the competency and capacity of school principals to be effective leaders and building more teacher development centres to support the improvement in teacher content knowledge and pedagogical practice. It is against these sector inputs and noting that the education enterprise is a highly complex activity where the outcome is based on a multiplicity of factors, that we use the National Senior Certificate examination results, as one of the barometers to evaluate our success. There are noteworthy observations of progress adjudged in recent cycles of international and regional assessment programmes which indicate that our concerted efforts in strengthening these sector inputs have positively contributed to improved learner performance.

The results of recent international studies such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) show that the performance of South African learners is on an upward trajectory. The TIMSS 2015 results confirmed noteworthy growth patterns; which when compared with other countries since 2003, at the Grade 9 level, shows that South Africa has the largest improvement of 87 points in Mathematics and 90 points in Science. Furthermore, the preliminary SACMEQ IV study results affirmed upward trends; and for the first time showed that South African learners, at the Grade 6 level, achieved Mathematics scores above the significant centre point of 500 points. Mathematics and Science are key subjects that provide a gateway for learners to enter career fields where currently there is a skills shortage. We are therefore pleased that at key levels of the system, there are encouraging gains that can be built on.

The Quality Assurance Council, Umalusi, which plays a critical role in upholding the integrity of the NSC examination, has after rigorous verification of all examination processes, approved the results of the 2016 NSC examination. This achievement has been attributed to an examination and assessment system that has engineered a high degree of



precision in its administrative systems and processes, set papers that are internationally comparable, improved its marking processes so that competent markers are appointed and trained, and introduced robust quality assurance measures to improve the quality of marking. The strengthened administration processes saw a reduction of group copying and serious irregularities. The regrettable leakage of a Mathematics examination paper in a Limpopo school was contained and did not disrupt the smooth running of the 2016 NSC examination. Further, it must be acknowledged that the results are subjected to a rigorous standardisation process conducted by Umalusi prior to the release. The NSC examination processes have been consistently reviewed and strengthened over the past 20 years and the qualification is therefore trusted by employers, higher education institutions and the South African public.

Building on the upward system trajectory patterns observed in TIMSS and SACMEQ, the achievement rate of the 2016 NSC cohort has increased from 70,7% in 2015 to 72.5% in 2016. This indicates that systemic gains at lower levels of the system (e.g. Grade 6 and Grade 9) are being carried through to Grade 12. The results also point towards increasing stability in performance levels where the NSC national achievement rate has consistently remained above 70% for the past six years. The class of 2016 should be commended for their contribution to a rise in the system performance. There are also significant gains in the margins of improvement among quintile 1 to 3 schools, which points towards an average annual increase in black African high-level achievers since 2008. Many of these learners come from historically disadvantaged schools. Overall, the 2016 NSC examination results mark yet another point in a long-term trajectory which has seen far more youth having access to a school qualification and further signs of government's pro-poor policies working.

Typical of "high stakes" public examinations conducted internationally, there are challenges which are not unique to the NSC. While our rates of learners completing twelve years of schooling remains a challenge, throughput rates have been steadily increasing since 1994 and the class of 2016 is the ninth cohort to sit for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) since its inception in 2008. There were also noteworthy changes in the number of candidates that wrote Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy. The number of candidates that wrote Mathematics increased by 1 907, from 263 903 in 2015 to 265 810 in 2016 whilst in Mathematical Literacy, the number of candidates that wrote decreased by 26 980 from 388 845 in 2015 to 361 865 in 2016. As was observed in 2015, more girls than boys enrolled for the NSC examination. In 2016, the number of Grade 11 learners that were progressed, increased from 65 671 learners to 108 742. This is an increase of 43 071. In 2016, the current policy on progressed learners was amended to streamline its application so as to ensure that only learners with the potential of succeeding in Grade 12 are progressed from Grade 11.

Congratulations to the Class of 2016! Your hard work has been justly rewarded. I encourage you to see this achievement as an important milestone to even greater success in furthering your life opportunities in higher education, in the workplace and as valuable citizens in our constitutional democracy. I also thank parents, teachers, principals, teacher unions, communities, district and provincial officials, and social partners for supporting the Class of 2016. I therefore invite all education stakeholders and the broader South African republic to view the results with a sense of ownership and involvement to support the projects, programmes and efforts of the Department in our mission to deliver quality basic education to all learners.

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit," (Aristotle)



MRS AM MOTSHEKGA, MP
MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION
04 JANUARY 2017



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The class of 2016 is the third cohort of candidates to write the NSC examination that is aligned with the internationally benchmarked national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The rise in achievement rates from 70.7% in 2015 to 72.5% in 2016 must be seen in context of a maturing and stabilising system in which teachers and district officials are now more familiar with the required pedagogical content knowledge of CAPS and the need to expose learners to questions of high cognitive demand. It is also underpinned by systemic gains at lower levels of the system as indicated by higher achievement patterns in the recent cycles of TIMSS and SACMEQ.

It is noteworthy that more learners are successfully completing 12 years of schooling and the class of 2016 recorded the highest enrolment of Grade 12 learners in the history of public examinations in South Africa. The total number of candidates who registered for the 2016 NSC Examinations was 828 020 up from 799 306 in 2015. The examination was written by a total number of 610 178 full-time candidates and 107 793 part-time candidates. Of the full-time candidates, who wrote the examination, 442 672 attained the NSC, which constitutes a 72.5% pass rate. The table below provides a summary of the achievements of the nine provinces.

Province	2016		
	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	82 902	49 168	59,3
Free State	26 786	23 629	88,2
Gauteng	103 829	88 381	85,1
Kwazulu-Natal	147 648	98 032	66,4
Limpopo	101 807	63 595	62,5
Mpumalanga	54 251	41 801	77,1
North West	32 045	26 448	82,5
Northern Cape	10 041	7 902	78,7
Western Cape	50 869	43 716	86,0
National	610 178	442 672	72,5

The National pass rate improved by 1.8% with four provinces, Free State, Gauteng, North West, and the Western Cape achieving pass rates higher than 80%. Significant improvements from 2015 were observed in the Northern Cape (9.3%), Free State (6.6%), and KwaZulu-Natal (5.7%). The other notable achievements of the 2016 NSC examination are the following:

- There was an increase of 26 913 in the 2016 enrolment, inclusive of both full time and part-time candidates.
- There was a sharp increase of in the number of part-time candidates (16 730) that wrote for the examination.
- The percentage of learners achieving Bachelor passes improved from 25.8% to 26.6%.
- 162 574 (26.6%) of the candidates qualified for Bachelor Studies at Higher Education Institutions.
- 179 619 (29.4%) of the candidates qualified for Diploma Studies at Higher Education Institutions.
- 87 974 (26.4%) of the female candidates qualified for Bachelor Studies at Higher Education Institutions.
- The number of candidates that wrote Mathematics increased from 263 903 in 2015 to 265 810 in 2016.
- The number of candidates that passed Mathematics increased from 49.1% to 51.1%.
- The number of male candidates that wrote Physical Science increased from 55 085 in 2015 to 58 485 in 2016.
- The number of candidates that passed Physical Science increased from 58.6% to 62%.
- 2 853 (41.9%) schools attained a pass percentage of 80% and above. An increase of 222 schools from 2015.
- 547 schools attained a pass percentage of 100% (8%). This figure was up from 2015. 111 schools achieved a 100% pass rate from 2012 to 2016.



- (m) 1 452 (59.9%) of the schools from quintile 1, 2 and 3 attained a pass percentage of 80% and above.
- (n) 78 878 learners from quintile 1-3 schools qualified for Bachelor studies. This number is more than the schools from quintiles 4 and 5.
- (o) 32 (35.5%) of the 81 districts achieved a pass rate of 80% and above.
- (p) The number of districts attaining a pass rate of below 50% decreased from 8 in 2015, to 5 in 2016.

The results of the class of 2016 show that although marginal, the gains point towards an upward trajectory. In 2015, the Department of Basic Education noted with concern the decrease in achievement rate and undertook specific intervention strategies to support the 2016 cohort. The 2016 Grade 12 examination should be viewed in context of 20 years of educational improvement. Performance trends since 2009 confirm that more youth have access to a school qualification than seven years ago. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South African schools have become more inclusive and the gap between the top performing schools and the other schools is closing. Current performance levels in 2016 point to a system on the rise. The gains observed in TIMSS, SACMEQ and the NSC provide a solid basis for continued growth in 2017, and every effort must be made by all in the sector to support the class of 2017 in extending the gains of 2016 to greater heights of excellence.



1. INTRODUCTION

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination is the culmination of twelve years of teaching and learning and the final outcome of this examination, which is captured in this Report, is indicative of one of the most important indicators of performance of the schooling system in the 2016 academic year. In terms of the Action Plan of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the following three key targets are directly measured through the performance in the NSC:

- (a) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelor's Programme at a university;
- (b) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who pass Mathematics; and
- (c) Increase in the number of Grade 12 learners who pass Physical Science

There is an increasing trend among national education systems to use data supplied by well managed public examination systems to signal to an awaiting public, current levels of knowledge and skills among youth entering higher education and the world of work. Public examinations in South Africa have played a major role in this regard and the NSC, since replacing the Senior Certificate in 2008 as an exit certificate, has proved itself to be a historically stable system with sufficiently robust processes that compare favourably with internationally benchmarked qualifications and standards. The results enable the education sector to, on an annual basis, take cognisance of successes and review deficiencies of various strategies and interventions that have impacted on participating candidates.

The NSC examination is primarily designed for certification i.e. to assess candidates' attainment of expected learning outcomes at the end of twelve years of teaching and learning. However, the NSC examination also provides valuable data to education planners, institutional role players and decision makers in the sector to improve the quality of basic education. Critically, it also has an important diagnostic role in assisting education stakeholders to identify areas of weakness and strength in each of the subjects offered in the qualification.

This report outlines the purpose, noteworthy trends on historical performance, and key challenges confronting the NSC in the national schooling system as the backdrop against which the results of the class of 2016 should be read and understood. Included in this report are pertinent details on the NSC and the underlying methodology of examination processes followed in 2016. The presentation of results is preceded by a detailed account of specific quality controls on question paper development, examination administration, marking, and school based assessment. The analysis of results is presented graphically and in tabular format and covers national, provincial and district contexts. The analysis covers the results of both full-time and part-time candidates. A summary of key gains in the system and limitations in the analysis concludes the report.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides aggregated learner performance data on the Class of 2016 at the different levels of the system, subject data at national and provincial levels, and presents an analysis of data in terms of the gender of candidates and quintile rankings in which schools are categorised. This report is the first in a compilation of four reports covering the NSC examinations. In addition to the NSC Examination Report, the following three reports have been published:

- (a) National Schools Report that presents the overall school results per school over the last three years;
- (b) National Subject Report which provides the results of selected subjects per individual school; and,
- (c) National Diagnostic Report which analyses learner performance in the gateway subjects, identifies the areas of poor performance and recommends appropriate remedial measures in each of the subjects.



This report will provide the education sector with valuable data on learner performance after 12 years of schooling and empirical evidence on the performance of the basic education system on quality learning outcomes. Findings listed in the report provide an evaluation of national achievements of the sector and further assists in understanding existing disparities for future planning.

This report will assist managers at the national, provincial, district and circuit level in planning their programmes for the 2017 academic year, and beyond. The data provided, will be used by educational researchers to conduct a deeper analysis of learner performance so as to make recommendations for improved performance.

3. THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE AS A QUALIFICATION

3.1 General Requirements

“To obtain a NSC a candidate must achieve at least 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level, and 30% in three other subjects.”

In order to pass the NSC, a candidate must offer seven approved subjects and provide evidence of school based assessment (SBA) for each of the subjects. The minimum duration of the NSC qualification, is three years, namely Grades 10, 11 and 12.

For a candidate to obtain a National Senior Certificate qualification, he or she must:

- (a) Complete the programme requirements for Grades 10, 11 and 12 separately, and obtain the stipulated outcomes and associated assessment requirements of all three years; and
- (b) Comply with the internal and external assessment requirements for Grades 10, 11 and 12.

The qualification is structured according to specific categories of subjects and rules of combination. The minimum requirements for a candidate to obtain the NSC are that a candidate should:

- (a) Achieve at least 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level and 30% in three other subjects; and
- (b) Provide full evidence in the SBA component in the subjects offered.

3.2 Admission to Higher Education Institutions

The NSC is accepted internationally as a qualification of a high standard. It is also the gateway for further study at higher education institutions. For this purpose, Universities South Africa, formerly known as Higher Education South Africa (HESA), has developed minimum requirements for admission to higher education institutions, namely, studies leading to a Higher Certificate, Diploma or Bachelor's Degree.

(a) Higher Certificate

The minimum admission requirement is a NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi. Institutional and programme needs may require additional combinations or recognised NSC subjects and levels of achievement.



(b) Diploma

The minimum admission requirement is the NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi, coupled with an achievement rating of 3 (moderate achievement, 40% - 49%) or better in four (4) recognised 20-credit subjects. Institutional and programme needs may require additional combinations of recognised NSC subjects and levels of achievement.

(c) Bachelor's Degree

To meet the minimum admission requirements to a Bachelor's Degree study at a higher education institution, a candidate must obtain, in addition to the NSC, an achievement rating of 4 (Adequate Achievement, 50% - 59%) or better in four designated subjects chosen from the following recognised 20-credit bearing subjects:

Accounting	Information Technology
Agricultural Sciences	Languages
Business Studies	Life Sciences
Consumer Studies	Mathematics
Dramatic Arts	Mathematical Literacy
Economics	Music
Engineering, Graphics and Design	Physical Sciences
Geography	Religion Studies
History	Visual Arts

“Candidates registered for Endorsed NSC only need to offer five subjects, and the candidate is expected to achieve a minimum of 30% in the five subjects.”

3.3 Minimum promotion requirements for awarding the NSC to candidates with Special Needs

FET learners who experience barriers to learning enrolled in Grade 10-12 are allowed to follow alternative pathways to obtain the NSC.

The Endorsed NSC is for candidates who cannot, despite the concessions granted in the policy, meet the stipulated requirements. Barriers to learning identified in the policy include visual, aural and hearing impairment, aphasia, dyslexia, and mathematical disorders such as dyscalculia. Candidates registered for the Endorsed NSC only need to offer five subjects, namely, First Additional Language, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation and two other subjects.

A candidate is expected to achieve a minimum of 30% in the five subjects to be awarded the Endorsed NSC.

4. THE NATIONAL NSC EXAMINATION SYSTEM

4.1. Administration of Public Examinations

The administration of public examinations is a joint responsibility of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). The DBE has a responsibility to set national standards and to coordinate and monitor the administration of the examinations across the nine PEDs. The DBE does this by the development of national policy for the conduct, administration and management of national examinations and the setting of national question papers in all subjects. The DBE also co-ordinates the administration of the public examinations through a sub-committee of Heads of Education Committee (HEDCOM), which is referred to as the National Examinations and Assessment Committee (NEAC), and monitors the entire examination cycle from its inception to its conclusion.

The PEDs are responsible for the administration of the examination, which includes, the registration of centres and candidates, the printing, packing and distribution of question papers, the writing of the examination, the marking of the examination answer scripts, and the capture of the marks on the Integrated Examination Computer System (IECS). The DBE takes final responsibility for the processing of the results, and the standardisation and quality assurance of the NSC results is the mandatory responsibility of Umalusi, the Quality Assurance Council.



“The DBE and PEDs. are jointly responsible for the conduct, administration and management of the NSC examinations”

The NSC examinations may be administered at public or independent schools. Public schools are deemed to be automatically registered and are allowed to conduct the NSC examinations, unless they have been implicated in serious examination irregularities, in which case the examination administration will be taken over by the provincial office. Previously implicated public schools are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they comply with the requirements for the administration of a credible examination. An independent school must be registered with the PED as an institution of teaching and learning, accredited by Umalusi, and only then will such a school be considered for registration as an examination centre. All independent schools are evaluated by the PED on an annual basis in order to verify that they complied with the criteria relating to the registration of examination centres.

A major challenge has been centres that do not offer tuition on a full-time basis, particularly private centres that offer tuition for part-time learners that need to complete one or more subjects to obtain the NSC. These centres have been in the spotlight for violating examination regulations and therefore PEDs have established designated examination centres, managed by district officials, for such repeat candidates. These learners attend these tuition centres, but write the examination at the designated centres.

All learners wishing to write the NSC examination must register. Registration is conditional on a learner producing evidence that he/she has completed the outcomes of Grades 10, 11 and 12 and has satisfied the School Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for Grade 12. These learners are registered for the NSC as full-time candidates, if they attend school on a full-time basis. However, if these learners do not attend school on a full-time basis, they are registered as part-time candidates who in most cases were unsuccessful in one or more subjects in the previous NSC examinations. These are repeater candidates who are attached to an institution only for examination purposes and are allowed to enrol for subjects they did not pass in previous examinations. Repeater candidates may carry over their SBA marks to the subsequent year of registration and therefore are not compelled to re-do their SBA, which is valid for a period of three years.

Access to examinations is extended to all candidates, including Learners with Special Needs (LSEN). The LSEN learner may register for the Endorsed NSC, which allows Grade 12 candidates to obtain the NSC based on offering five subjects in the NSC examination. The Department also further accommodates learners with barriers to learning by granting them special concessions. These special concessions include Braille for blind learners, adapted question papers for the deaf, extended time duration for specific learning difficulties, scribes for candidates that are unable to write, and amanuenses for candidates that need to have the question paper read and answers written. All of these concessions are offered based on stringent criteria so as to ensure that the credibility of the NSC is not compromised.

4.2 Question Paper Development

The national question papers set and internally moderated by the DBE are one of the most important components of a high standard, high quality exit examination. These question papers embody the standard of the examination and ultimately the standard of the certificate that is issued to the candidates. Therefore, the DBE prioritises the process of setting and moderating of question papers to ensure the best expertise is utilised in this process, while also ensuring the highest security levels.

Each examining panel that is entrusted with the responsibility of setting the question papers for a specific subject, comprises a minimum of three examiners, a chief examiner and one or two internal moderators, based on their



expertise and experience. Every panel of examiners is trained prior to the commencement of the setting process. The art of setting a question paper that is of the appropriate standard, requires extensive experience, expertise and is to a large degree dependent on the feedback obtained from professionals that engage with the question paper from the previous examination. Therefore, before the setting of the November 2016 examinations commenced, feedback received from the marking and the standardisation of the November 2015 question papers, the public and professional bodies like the Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa (AMESA), were considered and utilised.

A total of **130** question papers were set by the DBE for the November 2016 NSC examination. The November 2016 question papers were developed following the format and structure of the November 2015 and 2016 Supplementary examinations. All question papers after they were set and approved by the chief examiner, were moderated by an independent DBE-appointed internal moderator whose responsibility is to ensure that the question paper complies with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and satisfies all the technical requirements for submission to Umalusi for external moderation. Umalusi's external moderators evaluate the question paper and ensure that it is of the required quality and standard. This entails an intensive review by the team of Umalusi moderators and normally a question paper is subjected to more than one review session by the external moderators before it is approved.

After the question paper is approved by the Umalusi moderator it is subjected to an extensive editing and quality assurance process. A four-tier editing process is followed. The first step involves editing, which is done concurrently with language simplification to ensure that the language used is accessible and that there is judicious correlation between Afrikaans and English versions of the question papers. Accuracy in language, format and translation, as well as correct and consistent use of terminology, is ensured. The layout and design of all question papers are also checked to guarantee that they are learner-friendly, consistent and uniform across all the subjects. All accompanying diagram sheets and annexures are checked for clarity and legibility.

After the DBE editing team has completed the editing and correlation, a team of selected editors from different provinces are used to conduct another round of editing and proofreading of the question papers. The external and internal moderators also proofread the final print-ready copies of each question paper and marking guideline/memorandum, and sign off the final version after it is regarded as print ready. The DBE introduced an additional layer of quality assurance focusing, mainly on the fairness of the November 2016 question papers in relation to the absence of bias, language accessibility, and relevance of the tests for Grade 12 learners, as well as the overall technical aspects of the papers. The fairness review was conducted by three independent subject specialists, comprising mainly retired subject-experts or language editors. The fairness review panel read all the question papers and their input was incorporated prior to the release of question papers to the PEDs. This multi-step approach to the quality assurance of question papers aims to ensure that they are error-free.

In addition, based on a contractual arrangement with the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), **41** question papers for non-official Languages were set by the IEB. Fifty (**50**) question papers were adapted for the blind learners and **46** question papers were adapted for deaf learners. The adaptation of the question papers for those who use Braille and those who need large prints was done by special examiners, who are mainly subject specialists with proven experience in the education of the blind and visually impaired, together with the chief examiners or internal moderators from the national panel. Specialists were utilised to adapt the papers for the deaf.

4.3. Marking

In a report published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations in the United Kingdom (OFQUAL), the quality of marking was defined as the accuracy and reliability of marking. This definition comes to life in practice when a candidate is given a mark that is as close as possible to his/her true score, irrespective of who marked the script. (OFQUAL, 2013:45). The principles inherent in this definition have motivated the Department of Basic Education to incrementally enhance the credibility of the marking of the NSC Examination. For 2016,



this involved inputs into improving the selection of markers, strengthening the marking processes, improving the quality control mechanisms, and formalising the format and management of the marking standardisation meetings. The 2016 marking processes were organised and implemented according to the following key areas:

- 🌱 Strengthening Marking Standardisation Meetings;
- 🌱 Quality assurance of marker recruitment systems and processes;
- 🌱 Scaling up of Centralised Marking by the DBE; and
- 🌱 Moderation of marking.

4.3.1. Strengthening the marking standardisation meetings

The 2016 Marking Standardisation Meetings were structured so as to serve as a vital precursor to the statistical standardisation process and also ensure that the Marking Standardisation Meeting allowed for the development of a marking guideline that was comprehensive and included all legitimate inputs from all PEDs.

The 2016 NSC Marking Standardisation Meetings, hosted at the DBE, were attended by the DBE examination panel members, PED chief markers and internal moderators, Umalusi external moderators and DBE Curriculum Specialists. At these Standardisation Meetings, collective inputs were made into the marking guidelines. This collaborative engagement among the custodians of marking quality was of critical importance because it set the required standard for the estimated 10.7 million scripts marked this year.

The marking standardisation meeting for each subject extended over three days which encompassed the following three components:

- a) A preparatory meeting for the DBE panels;
- b) The marking guideline standardisation meeting, and
- c) The training of PEDs' chief markers and the internal moderator.

Prior to participating in the marking standardisation meeting at the DBE, PEDs were required to facilitate local standardisation meetings among the provincial chief markers and internal moderators, subject advisors and selected teachers to allow for their feedback on the question paper and possible responses to the questions. In addition, the chief markers and internal moderators were required to pre-mark 20 scripts to inform their preliminary findings about learner performance and to compile the provincial report. This ensured that the provincial report not only reflected the inputs of the Chief Marker and Internal Moderator, but it incorporated the inputs of all the key persons that had a direct interest in the question paper. The provincial report presented at the marking guideline standardisation meeting, included, *inter alia*, the following:

- 🌱 The standard of the question paper;
- 🌱 Distribution of cognitive levels and levels of difficulty in the question paper ;
- 🌱 Unfair questions;
- 🌱 Language and accessibility;
- 🌱 Time allocation; and
- 🌱 Other concerns and issues that need to be considered by the DBE Panel.

As from 2016, each standardisation meeting was formally constituted and chaired by a senior official, at the level of a director or above, from the DBE or the PED. The aim of this is to ensure that the integrity of the marking standardisation process is upheld by all stakeholders. PEDs and the DBE were invited to nominate officials who would serve as chairpersons at the 2016 marking standardisation meetings. Nominated officials were then invited to an orientation session. The chairperson ensured that the standardisation meeting was carried out in an objective manner, and that all participants were given an equal opportunity to contribute to the final marking guideline. The oversight role played by the nominated chairpersons ensured that the marking standardisation meetings were



formally managed, participation was optimal and that decisions made were endorsed by the Umalusi external moderators.

The second day of the Marking Standardisation Meeting was dedicated to the training of PED chief markers and internal moderators to ensure that they were able to apply the marking guideline that had been standardised on the previous day. Six dummy scripts, representing different levels of learner achievement were sampled from all provinces and were used for training and authorisation purposes.

As a developmental process, the first three scripts were used to train the chief markers and internal moderators to apply the marking guideline and to allow for intensive discussion on variances in the marking of higher order or open ended questions. The scores of PED chief markers and internal moderators on the three training scripts were recorded by the panel so that any deviations in the marking of questions could be identified, discussed and corrected. During the training session the Tolerance Range was set. The second set of three scripts was marked individually by chief markers and internal moderators to establish if they were able to adhere to the agreed Tolerance Ranges for the respective papers.

The Tolerance Range, phased in as a quality assurance mechanism by the DBE over the last three years, is the allowed deviation between a marker and a moderator's score, and is determined by the nature and type of responses. As such constructed response questions, (questions that require complex or extended responses due to the subjective interpretation by a candidate) are likely to have a higher deviation between the marker and the moderator as the marking guideline may not be applied consistently by all markers. Hence the agreed deviation is catered for by establishing a Tolerance Range for that question. Closed response questions (short, tightly constrained questions) may have a zero Tolerance Range as there is no room for subjective interpretation on the part of the candidate or marker. For the marking of the NSC examinations, a Tolerance Range of a maximum of between 2% - 3% was allowed.

As part of the standardisation of marking, the PED chief markers and internal moderators were required to replicate the standardised marker training done at the DBE, with their marking teams. Dummy scripts used at the DBE training were scanned and made available to provinces electronically, to enable them to standardise the training.

As part of the monitoring mechanism, data on variances between markers and the senior markers, senior markers and deputy chief markers were recorded and this served to identify excessive deviations by markers, so that they could be corrected. This also ensured that the marking process moves away from anecdotal or qualitative data to more reliable information on the quality of marking.

4.3.2. Improved marker recruitment processes

The quality of marking is dependent on the competency and experience of the markers appointed for this purpose. According to the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the NSC Examination*, provinces are required to establish selection panels to review, shortlist, and recommend markers according to the identified duties. The regulations also state that all marker selection panels must be chaired by the relevant Head of the assessment body, or his or her representative. From June to September 2016, the DBE supported and monitored the marker selection process in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo Province. The aim of this exercise was to:

- (a) evaluate the verification of the application forms at school and district level;
- (b) assess the quality and reliability of selection processes;
- (c) audit the recommendations of the selection panels; and
- (d) ensure that the recommended markers' profiles are compliant with the minimum criteria outlined in Chapter E of the *Personnel Administrative Measures*.

The DBE through this process was able to gain valuable insight into the intricacies of the PEDs' recruitment



processes, appreciate the magnitude of the administrative processes required in these large provinces and note the logistical and resource challenges that impact on the organisation of the selection process. The DBE was able to provide constructive feedback to each of the three PEDs.

The DBE conducted a final audit of the markers selected across all provinces. The application data and records of recommended senior marking personnel, markers, novice and reserve markers, were sampled and audited by the DBE for verification purposes. The DBE was encouraged to note that the PEDs' marker information management systems and processes were effectively managed across most PEDs. The following improvements were noted:

- (a) The implementation of a standardised marker application form across all PEDs;
- (b) Commendable compliance by applicants in providing supporting documentation;
- (c) Improved verification and sifting processes at both school and district levels;
- (d) Functional marker databases, albeit at varying levels of development and capability, were verified in all nine provinces;
- (e) Six PEDs used reliable evidence of marker evaluation information from the previous NSC examination to motivate the reappointment of selected markers; and
- (f) Re-mark data from 2015's NSC examination was used to enhance marker training, marker selection, monitoring and support during the marking session.

A total of 47 414 markers were appointed by the nine PEDs to mark across 140 marking centres.

4.3.3 Centralised marking

The DBE has piloted the Centralised Marking of selected small enrolment subjects since 2014. The purpose of the pilot is to:

- (a) Cater for the marking of small enrolment subjects across provinces that either has limited or no capacity to mark these subjects. This ensures that markers do not mark the scripts from their own centres;
- (b) Optimise the available marking expertise in the identified subjects from the provinces that do have the required marking personnel and expertise;
- (c) Ensure credible and reliable marking within a controlled and standardised environment; and
- (d) Establish the effectiveness of the DBE's marking enhancements in a centralised marking environment and to extract lessons learnt to improve the overall NSC marking management.

In 2016, the DBE scaled up the Centralised Marking to include four non-language subjects, namely Agricultural Technology, Agricultural Management Practice, Dance Studies and Music. The DBE also centralized the marking of Second Additional Languages, excluding Afrikaans. Due to the large number of Afrikaans Second Additional Language (SAL) entries, the marking was done in the respective provinces, because they had the capacity to mark this subject. The centralised marking of SiSwati and IsiNdebele Second Additional Languages was managed by the Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department. The DBE took full responsibility for the appointment of markers, senior markers, a chief marker and an internal moderator for each paper.

For the past two years, the centralised marking of the scripts for blind and deaf candidates from all provinces has been centralised in the Western Cape and Gauteng respectively. This is due to the fact that these provinces have the technical expertise and capacity to mark these scripts.

4.3.4. Quality assurance of marking

The DBE trained and deployed a team of onsite moderators to quality assure the marking of the 10 gateway subjects. These subjects are: Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, English First Additional Language, Geography, History, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. The On-site moderators were able to monitor the following:



- (a) organisation of marking in terms of the ratio of markers to senior markers, and senior markers to deputy chief markers;
- (b) quality of moderation conducted by the deputy chief marker, chief marker and internal moderator;
- (c) adherence by the markers to the established Tolerance Ranges per paper;
- (d) consistent and correct application of, and adherence to, the marking guideline by the markers;
- (e) adherence to the technical marking principles that underpinned the marking within each subject;
- (f) frequency and quality of feedback to markers within the hierarchical line function in the marking teams;
- (g) sustainability of marking quality throughout the marking session; and
- (h) the management and leadership of the chief marker and internal moderator as the custodians of the marking of a subject.

The DBE on-site moderators provided support and feedback to the chief markers and internal moderators where relevant, and provided the DBE with qualitative and quantitative information on the quality assurance of the marking of the 2016 NSC examination. This information will be used iteratively to plan for and improve marking in the next examination cycle.

4.4 School Based Assessment

School Based Assessment comprises 25% of the final examination mark in the FET phase. Whilst it is clear that some progress is being made and the national moderation system is beginning to impact gradually on improving provincial SBA moderation systems and processes, the quality of assessment tasks, and the lack of dedicated support at district and school levels across a number of provinces remained a concern for the DBE.

During the Minister's Lekgotla at the beginning of 2016 the following, pertinent macro issues that underpin the implementation of School Based Assessment in South Africa were raised:

- (a) Concern that the current design, and implementation of SBA within the current FET assessment framework, has deviated from the initial policy intention for the purpose of school based assessment;
- (b) The need for a regulatory framework that governs the school based assessment and examinations that are conducted at school level; and
- (c) Instructional leadership gaps (capacity of Provincial SBA Coordinators, Subject Advisors, HODs, teachers to administer SBA) that hamper the effective implementation of SBA at all levels of the system.

One outcome of these discussions was that the DBE decided to move beyond the myopic focus on moderation of SBA tasks, to a more holistic approach that focused on the SBA systems and processes at all levels of the education system. Hence the DBE's focus on improving SBA implementation included a focus on the following components:

- (a) Dissemination of 2015 NSC SBA Comparative Analysis;
- (b) Finalisation of a national SBA Policy
- (c) An audit of the SBA systems in all provinces;
- (d) Moderation of the SBA assessment tasks and the marking of learner evidence;
- (e) Moderation of the Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) in selected subjects including oral assessment; and
- (f) Setting of a Common Assessment Task for Life Orientation.

4.4.1. Dissemination of 2015 NSC SBA Comparative Analysis

For the first time in 2016, the DBE compiled a report which compared the examination mark in the subject with the SBA mark. This report was able to illustrate how the means of the adjusted examination mark for each of the subjects compared statistically to the means of the raw SBA marks, per school. On the basis of this report, provinces and districts were able to identify schools that have presented SBA marks that were within the acceptable ranges allowed by Umalusi and those schools that have deviated, and, the extent to which they have deviated, so that appropriate interventions could be implemented.



The individual school reports were used to inform their 2016 School Improvement Plans and Academic Improvement Plans respectively, and enable Subject Advisors to provide differentiated professional support to the school. This also allowed each level of the system to reflect on, identify and respond to the causative factors for a school's moderation records being in the acceptable category, exceeding the acceptable range or being less than the acceptable range of scores. The utility value of this new layer of information will be evaluated against the comparative analysis of the 2016 examination mark and the 2016 SBA mark.

4.4.2 Finalisation of a National SBA Policy

The DBE sought to close a gap in the legislative framework by finalizing the policy on the quality assurance of SBA which will guide the audit of the SBA system, the moderation of assessment tasks and the moderation of the learner evidence. The Policy will be gazetted for public comment in 2017 but in the interim it is being used as guideline document by the nine PEDs.

4.4.3 Audit of provincial SBA Systems

The audit of the provincial SBA systems was conducted by the DBE to establish whether the existing SBA systems were adequate to support the effective implementation of SBA. This included an audit of the key aspects of the SBA system which covered, inter alia, teacher support, subject advisory support, the monitoring capacity, moderation approach and feedback/utilisation of data emanating from moderation.

The DBE is pleased to confirm that all provinces had functional SBA systems in place, however, structural variations across provinces resulting from resource challenges and inadequate capacity to develop and moderate quality assessment tasks impacted on the effectiveness of the respective SBA systems. Monitoring of SBA implementation, the pre-moderation of assessment tasks, the capacity to develop and administer common assessment tasks at a district and provincial level, and the inadequacy of teacher training programmes requires a concerted effort and mobilisation in the next examination cycle.

4.4.4 Moderation of the SBA assessment tasks and the marking of learner evidence

The model of moderation of SBA for 2016 was based on the selection of two districts per province and 10 schools per district during each session of SBA moderation. The DBE used the comparative SBA analytical data to select the districts and schools with the highest number of rejected SBA moderation records as the sample to be moderated. During the first national moderation visits to PEDs in June-July 2016, a systems audit preceded the moderation of assessment tasks and learner evidence.

The second moderation conducted in October 2016, confirmed that there is a need to invest in and build the capacity of teachers, Heads of Department and Subject Advisors to develop assessment tasks, and question papers. There is also a need for increased uniformity in the implementation of SBA across PEDs to engender confidence in the reliability of the SBA marks that comprise 25% of the final NSC examination.

4.4.5 Moderation of the Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) and Moderation of Oral Assessment in selected subjects

(a) Practical assessment tasks

Sixteen (16) CAPS subjects contain a practical component and all include a Practical Assessment Task (PAT). The PAT mark is a compulsory component of the final promotion mark for all learners offering subjects that have a practical component and counts for 25% of the end-of-year mark. The PAT allows learners to be assessed during the school year and allows for the assessment of skills that cannot be assessed in the written examination. Schools are therefore required to ensure that all learners complete their PAT within the stipulated period to ensure that they are resulted at the end of the year.



To support teachers and learners in the administration of PATs, the DBE developed National Guidelines that encompass a Teacher Guideline and a Learner Guideline to help teachers administer the PATs. Since the PAT is a component of the externally set NSC examination that has to be completed by the learner in controlled conditions, it is necessary to quality assure how the PAT is administered, marked and moderated. To this end, in October 2016 the DBE quality assured PEDs' moderation of PATs in seven selected subjects, namely, Agricultural Management Practices, Agricultural Technology, Design Studies, Visual Arts, Music, Dramatic Arts and Tourism. The DBE did a random sampling of the schools for PAT moderation, and conducted site visits where verification was required.

Based on the moderation that was conducted, the DBE was able to establish the overall quality of PAT moderation at each level of the system, the levels of compliance with policy and the support offered at different levels.

(b) Oral Assessment Tasks

The oral component of the Official Home and First Additional Languages and the Official Second Additional Languages are internally assessed and externally moderated. Hence, the necessity for the DBE to quality assure the moderation of grade 12 oral assessment in a sample of the schools. The quality assurance of PEDs' moderation of oral assessment was undertaken to coincide with the provincial moderation in 2016. The DBE moderators were able to draw conclusions about the quality of the oral assessment moderation across the nine Provincial Education Departments.

(c) Common Assessment Task for Life Orientation

In the case of Life Orientation the assessment is only school-based (i.e. 100% SBA). The quality and range of Life Orientation tasks developed by teachers vary across schools. Therefore, it was imperative that the DBE introduces an externally set Common Assessment Task for Life Orientation. This task was set by the DBE and moderated by Umalusi. The DBE hosted a centralised marking guideline standardization meeting to facilitate reliable and valid marking of the LO CAT in 2016. The marking of this Common Assessment Task, however, is still done by teachers and moderated at school and district level. The introduction of the CAT, has improved the reliability of SBA and the DBE will continue to monitor the quality of LO.

5. CHALLENGES TO THE NSC

Despite the historical credibility of Grade 12 public examinations over the last 20 years, and the high public confidence in its associated robust examination processes listed in the previous section, there are still challenges that confront the NSC as a qualification. In this report three of the more serious challenges which relate to throughput of learners, progression of learners and standards of the NSC examination will be described and the measures taken by the DBE to limit these constraints will be discussed.

5.1 Throughput

A key challenge to the NSC is the number of candidates that successfully complete the qualification in the stipulated period. In South Africa, the NSC is regarded as an important barometer of measuring the successful completion of 12 years of schooling. The term throughput is commonly used in discussions around the ability of the schooling system to ensure that learners stay on in school at the secondary level and do not drop out. A good throughput rate improves the chances that youth will eventually obtain a NSC. Throughput can be difficult to measure, in particular because grade repetition can complicate comparisons of enrolment statistics. One relatively simple way of determining the situation is to use the Statistics South Africa household data, which reflects the highest level of education achieved amongst all young South Africans. This data reveals that progress has been made in getting more learners to successfully complete grades 9, 10 and 11. The percentage of youth successfully completing Grade 10, for instance, improved from 73% to 81% between 2007 and 2014. For completion of Grade



11, the improvement noted was from 61% to 70% over the same time period. Clearly, more learners are successfully moving from one grade to the next grade in schools.

One matter that is often overlooked is that different schools, districts and provinces can display rather different throughput rates. If one does not take this into account, traditional Grade 12 pass rates (examination candidates obtaining the NSC divided by all candidates) may be misinterpreted. For example, a province which permits high levels of dropping out after Grades 10 and 11 can end up with a higher Grade 12 pass rate, than another similar province which ensures that learners do not drop out. Provinces which have displayed high throughput rates in recent years are Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Western Cape. In 2014, the percentage of youth completing Grade 11 for these four provinces was 85%, 73%, 73% and 72% respectively (according to Stats SA household data). Eastern Cape and Northern Cape, on the other hand, displayed worryingly low figures for Grade 11 completion in 2014 (60% and 56% respectively).

Figure 5.1 displays the successful completion of Grade 12 by province and age. Given Gauteng's high throughput up to Grade 11, it is not surprising that Gauteng should also do well in relation to the successful completion of Grade 12 (or the achievement of the NSC). What is also noteworthy is that despite KwaZulu-Natal's relatively low pass rate in recent years, a high percentage of youth in this province have obtained the NSC. This would be an example of a province which would be 'under-appreciated' if one looks only at the pass rate. KwaZulu-Natal's pass rate must be read together with the fact that the throughput rate is good.

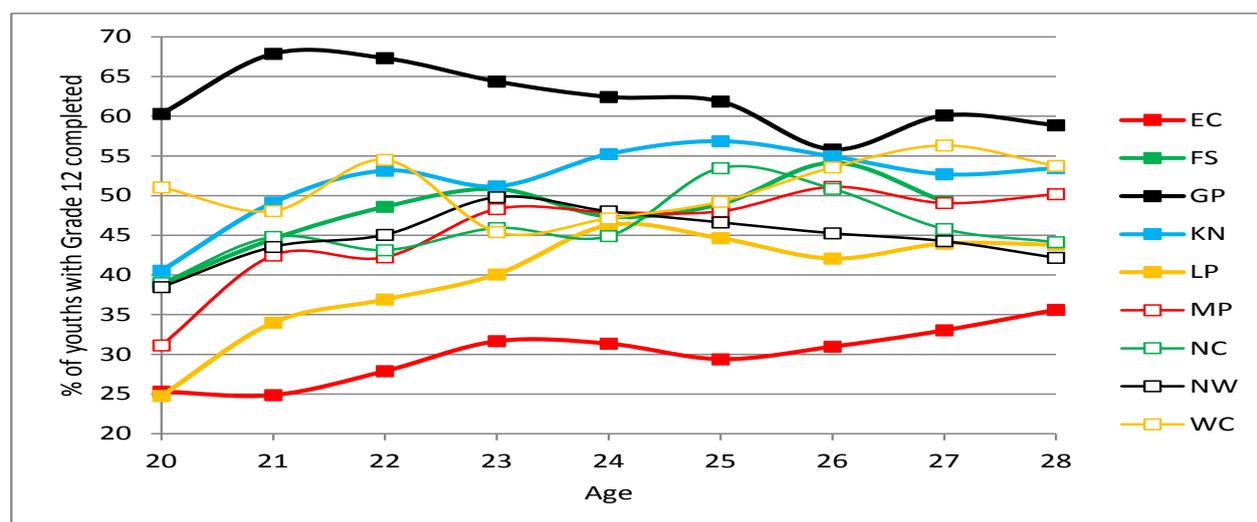


Figure 5.1: youth having completed Grade 12 by province and age (2012-2014)

In 2017, the DBE will highlight the KwaZulu-Natal throughput gains, and use it as an example of best practice that can be showcased and emulated to and by other provinces. The DBE will issue directives for PEDs to establish annual throughput targets and using the NSC measure their annual progress against them.

5.2 Progression

A constrained throughput rate can negatively affect learner progression. Research conducted by the DBE on progression suggests that in the South African schooling system there is a high drop-out rate. Approximately 60% of learners that enter the schooling system complete Grade 12. These learners drop out of the system after repeated failure. After much consideration and having considered the international practice in countries like Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Korea, Kenya and the United Kingdom, the Minister in 2013, approved a policy that allows learners that have failed a grade for the second time to be promoted to the next grade, provided he/she meets the following criteria which are indicators that he/she has the potential of coping with the next grade, with the necessary support:



- (a) the learner must have passed the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and another three of the seven subjects offered;
- (b) the learner must have attended school on a regular basis; absenteeism in excess of 20 days, without a valid reason, would disqualify the learner from being progressed; and
- (c) the learner must have complied with the prescribed SBA requirements for that academic year.

With the policy on progression, the learner must finally satisfy the requirements of the NSC at the end of Grade 12 for the certificate to be awarded. There is no condonation of the minimum requirements that must be satisfied at this stage. The policy on progression was also approved by the Minister with the proviso that progressed learners must be provided with special support in the subjects that they are experiencing difficulty so as to allow them to cope with the demands of the next grade.

Coupled with the policy on progression, is the policy on Multiple Examination Opportunity, which states that a learner who is progressed, has the option of not writing all seven subjects in one examination sitting. This policy allows the learner after he/she has written the final preparatory examination, based on his/her performance in the preparatory examination to write either all seven subjects in the first examination sitting or write subjects over two examination sittings (i.e. November and June). The rationale for this dispensation is to alleviate the pressure of writing all subjects in one sitting and also to provide the learner with additional time to prepare for the examination, particularly in subjects where he/she may be challenged.

As with implementation of all policies, the policy on progression presented a number of challenges which included:

- (a) the policy was interpreted differently across the system and hence there was variable implementation of the policy across schools;
- (b) the dispensation relating to the multiple examination opportunity was looked at, by some school principals and teachers, as a mechanism to manipulate the pass rate of the school, given that the pass rate is determined based on learners that offer all subjects in the first examination sitting;
- (c) progressed learners are stigmatised and therefore carry this label through their years of schooling; and
- (d) teachers, given their current workloads are unable to provide differentiated support to progressed learners and hence these learners are frustrated and may be tempted to drop out of school.

The DBE is addressing these challenges and indications are that the system is making steady progress with counteracting these impediments. The table below provides a summary of the number of progressed learners that enrolled for the 2015 and 2016 NSC examination.

Table 5.1: The number of progressed learners that enrolled for the 2015 and 2016 NSC

Province	Progressed 2015	Progressed 2016	Difference 2016-2015
Eastern Cape	12 304	14 289	1 985
Free State	8 187	6 990	-1 197
Gauteng	5 198	11 596	6 398
KwaZulu-Natal	10 633	26 046	15 413
Limpopo	13 227	22 256	9 029
Mpumalanga	5 228	14 068	8 840
North West	3 767	7 588	3 821
Northern Cape	2 280	2 506	226
Western Cape	4 847	3 403	-1 444
National	65 671	108 742	43 071



5.3 Standard of the National Senior Certificate

The issue of whether the NSC is of the appropriate standard is not a unique challenge for South Africa. Other countries making use of public examinations, such as the United Kingdom, Singapore and Hong Kong, have similar challenges. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) views standards as being able to provide agreed-upon descriptions of the outcomes which students must achieve, as well as the criteria by which they must be assessed. There have been concerns in certain quarters that there has been a lowering of standards with the introduction of the NSC.

It needs to be noted that the requirements for the NSC are similar to and in some cases higher than the requirements of the old Senior Certificate (SC). Furthermore, the new curriculum was introduced with the explicit purpose of moving away from rote learning to higher-order knowledge and skills that would allow learners to demonstrate the ability to think logically and analytically as well as holistically and laterally.

Moreover, the NSC is not an elitist qualification that caters only for those who wish to gain access to institutions of higher learning. It needs to be understood that the NSC has been designed to serve multiple purposes. These include admission to higher education studies and also serves as a school-leaving certificate which reflects the credits obtained by the learner and may be used to gain entry into the workplace or to pursue a vocational stream at a Further Education and Training (FET) college. Therefore the NSC cannot be judged solely in terms of its role in serving the higher education sector.

The standard of the NSC is often measured against the quality of question papers. In the light of this, the DBE has benchmarked the NSC question papers and the qualification has also been benchmarked against international institutions. In 2007, the DBE benchmarked ten NSC subjects with the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the Board of Studies New South Wales (BSNSW) in Australia. In 2011, the DBE benchmarked seven NSC subjects with the SQA, CIE, BSNSW and Higher Education South Africa (HESA). There was consensus among the four institutions that the question papers are well designed by international standards and assess what they purport to assess. They adequately measure the learning outcomes and assessment standards that are articulated in the National Curriculum Statement and the Subject Assessment Guidelines. There is also agreement that the question papers assess analytical, application and evaluative skills and that some papers reflect the latest developments in their subject. The three international assessment bodies confirmed that the content assessed by these question papers is, in the main, comparable to the CIE, SQA and BSNSW. It was also indicated that the skills that are assessed by the curriculum are of international standard and prepare learners appropriately for the global community. In addition, the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) benchmarked the NSC with the United Kingdom National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC). Their findings suggested that:

- (a) Features of the NSC indicate a qualification with an underlying level that is both robust and fit for the purpose of examining at senior secondary school levels; and
- (b) The NSC at the Grade 12 level is broadly comparable to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS)-level.

Lastly, the DBE is committed to ensuring that the NSC reflects the highest standards that prepare learners for both the local and the international community. Public concerns around the standards applied in the schooling system, and specifically at the Grade 12 level, led to a major review by a Ministerial Committee of the Grade 12 NSC, culminating in a report in 2014. The chairperson of the committee and other members were university academics. In addition there was wide consultation on the quality and standard of the NSC. Overall, the Committee found that that whilst there was room for improvement, it was reassuring that the standards and systems of the NSC are improving and that there was a commitment to further improvement.

The DBE will further pursue independent evaluations of the NSC over the next few years as the qualification begins to settle, and the discrepancies that begin to emerge will be addressed.



6. PERFORMANCE TRENDS IN GRADE 12

6.1 THE GRADE 12 EXAMINATIONS – 20 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

The 2016 Grade 12 examination results mark yet another point in a long-term trajectory which has seen far more youth having access to a school qualification. Moreover, more youth acquire the skills they require to participate meaningfully in society and the country's economy. There is still much progress which must be made before we can say that all of South Africa's youth are offered the best available school education. Although substantial progress has been made, this momentum needs to be further sustained and strengthened.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South African schools have become more inclusive. More learners remain in school to up to Grade 12. In this regard, South Africa does well relative to other middle-income countries. Virtually all children remain in school up to the year in which they turn 15, in line with the compulsory schooling policies embodied in the South African Schools Act.

By 2015, around 58% of youth were successfully completing twelve years of education in the sense that they were obtaining the NSC or an equivalent qualification from a college. The figure becomes 56% if one counts only the NSC¹.

With respect to the successful completion of secondary schooling, South Africa performs roughly on par with other middle income countries. South Africa outperforms countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Costa Rica and Uruguay on this indicator². South Africa has moreover, made considerable progress in the last twenty years when one considers that in 1995, 39% of youth aged 25 reported having successfully completed Grade 12, against a figure of 58% in 2015.

As seen in the following graph, the number of students obtaining the 'Matric', or what is today formally known as the NSC, increased from around 275 000 in the late 1990s to over 400 000 in recent years. These figures reflect year-end passes among full-time learners in the public examination system. If one were to factor in the results following supplementary examinations, and passes among part-time candidates, the figures would rise slightly. This would particularly apply to the more recent years, but the overall picture of ongoing improvement would remain.

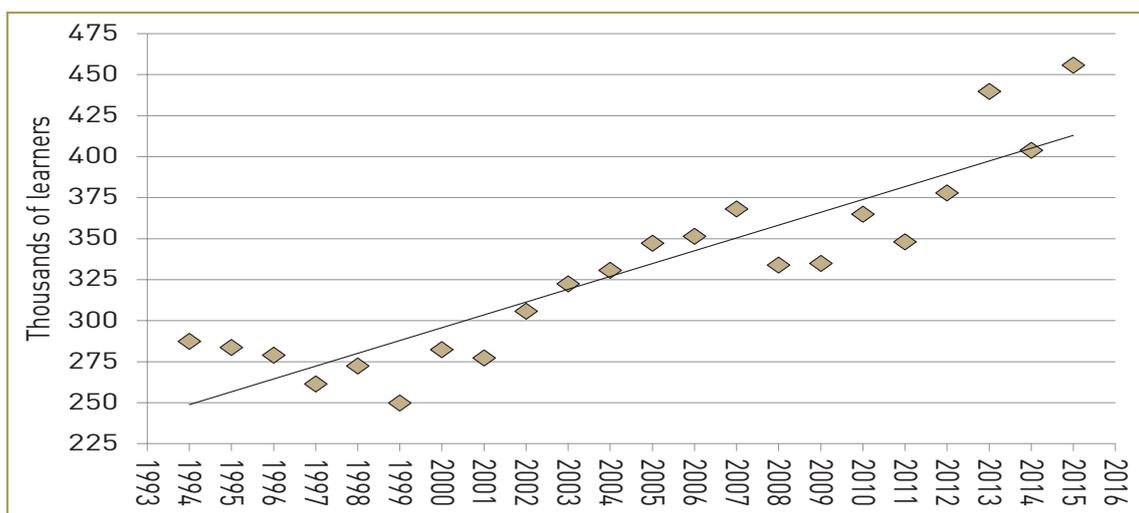


Figure 6.1: The number of students obtaining the 'Matric (1994 to 2015 increase in 'Matric' attainment)

Note: Points in the graph represents annual values. The line is a trendline calculated from the points.

1 These figures are obtained through careful analysis of (a) the enrolment by age data of the DBE, (b) qualifications obtained by both full- and part-time Grade 12 students, and (c) responses of households in Stats SA's General Household Survey.

2 UNESCO Institute for Statistics secondary completion statistics, for 2011 and later.



The following graph shows that the achievement of a 'Bachelor's-level pass', previously known as a 'Matric exemption' or an 'endorsement', has also improved, in fact to a greater degree than Grade 12 passes. The number of candidates obtaining results that would allow them to pursue Bachelor's-level studies at a university roughly doubled, from around 80 000 in the 1990s to around 160 000 in recent years.

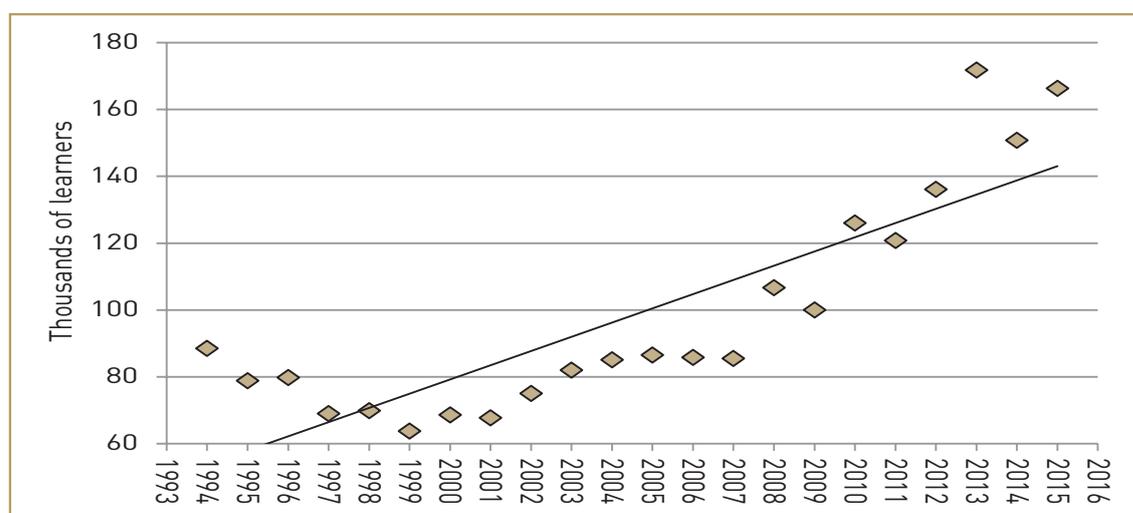


Figure 6.2: Increase in 'Bachelors-level' attainment (1994 to 2016 increase in 'Bachelors-level' attainment)

What do these trends actually mean for the prospects of South Africa's youth? They mean that an increasing number of youth have a qualification they can use to navigate post-school education and the labour market. This is especially important given that there is no national qualification below Grade 12 in the schooling system.

As emphasised in the National Development Plan and government's Medium Term Strategic Framework, not only do we need to pursue the attainment of qualifications: we also need to ensure that the skills learners acquire improve, in particular in key subjects such as Languages and Mathematics, which are fundamental for success in other subjects.

The skills of learners have indeed improved, according to rigorous and widely respected international testing programmes. Ambitious policy shifts by government, combined with the efforts and commitment of the thousands of people who work in our schools, are paying off.

Results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) programme provide an exceptionally valuable long-term trend describing what learners in Grades 8 and 9 know in Mathematics and Science. Nationally representative samples of Grade 8 learners were tested in 1995, 1999 and 2002, while Grade 9 learners were tested in 2002, 2011 and 2015. While the trend between 1995 and 2002 was relatively flat, the improvements seen in the Grade 9 results from 2002 to 2015 are about as large as one could expect, and as steep as the best improvements seen in other countries. For instance, our annual improvement over the years 2002 to 2015 has been as steep as the exceptional improvements seen in Brazil from 2003 to 2012, with respect to that country's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores.

While the exact causes of the improvements seen in TIMSS are debatable, they have coincided with important changes in strategy by government. From around 2005, there has been a stronger emphasis on the teaching of basic competencies at the primary school level. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) brought greater clarity to the curriculum. Spending on textbooks, as well as a strong focus on the quality of books and having books delivered on time, would all have contributed towards a healthier classroom environment.

The TIMSS trends are important for Grade 12 results. If learners enter the final grades of school with better skills, they are more likely to perform well in Grade 12. The fact that in Grade 9 South Africa has been ranked almost



“Since 1994, South African schools have become more inclusive.”

at the bottom of the 39 TIMSS countries is often raised as a point of concern. While it is true that our ranking ought to be better, it is also important to bear in mind that around 160 countries do not participate in TIMSS, and many of these countries would perform worse than South Africa. Of the 39 TIMSS countries, all but three are more developed than South Africa in terms of income per capita. To further illustrate the gains made in TIMSS; in 2002 South Africa’s TIMSS performance was well below that of Botswana but by 2015 South Africa was almost on a par with its neighbour in Mathematics.

Though 2013 results from the SACMEQ programme have not been officially announced, revised preliminary figures confirm that 2007 to 2013 improvements at the Grade 6 level, in Languages and Mathematics, have been about as substantial as the TIMSS improvements.

Importantly, the Grade 12 examinations are not primarily designed to measure whether there is progress in the system as a whole, or even in individual schools. The main purpose of these examinations is to provide learners with a qualification. Statistics based on examination results need to be analysed with care as they are influenced by, for instance, the profile of the learners who get to write the examinations in a particular year, and subject choices made by learners. Moreover, comparisons over time can be made difficult by minor shifts in standards. For example, it appears that attaining higher marks in mathematics has become more difficult because of the decision to make certain types of questions more demanding.

Careful analysis of the Grade 12 examination trends does, however, confirm that improvements seen in TIMSS have been carried through to Grade 12. Specifically, the analysis conducted by the DBE has shown that the gap between top performing schools with a proven track record, and other schools in the system, has narrowed. Moreover, the number of schools with learners reaching performance levels in Mathematics required for mathematically-oriented programmes at universities increased. In 2008, around 60% of Grade 12 learners were in schools where at least one learner could attain the required level of performance in Mathematics³. By 2015, the figure had increased to 80%. More schools are thus rising to the challenge of providing the skills South Africa needs.

The extent to which Bachelor’s-level passes are concentrated in better performing schools is sometimes used as a measure of the inequalities in the schooling system, and society in general. Here there has been a shift towards greater equity, though the inequalities remain unacceptably high. In 2005, as many as 63% of Bachelor’s-level passes (or ‘endorsements’), came from the best performing 20% of the system (in the sense of top schools accounting for 20% of Grade 12 learners). By 2015, the best performing 20% of the system was producing just 49% of Bachelor’s-level passes. In other words, the remaining 80% of the system accounted for a larger proportion of all learners deemed ready to enter university. University readiness had become more equitably spread by 2015.

Progress has been achieved, but many challenges remain. The DBE, together with the nine provincial education departments, are addressing these challenges through a large variety of programmes and interventions. The schooling system needs to deal more decisively with the fact that too many youth do not obtain any school qualification. In this regard, more school-based curriculum options, especially in the technical and vocational areas, are being explored through the ‘three curriculum streams’ model. Through programmes such as the National School Safety Framework, government is focussing on reducing bullying, gender-based violence and other such social problems which undermine learning and teaching. These are but a couple of examples of the many interventions in the system, some of which have existed for many years, and some of which are in the process of being introduced. Readers are urged to consult the DBE’s sector plan, and the annual and five-year plans of the education departments for more details.

3 The ‘required level’ is a mark of 60% in mathematics, using the 2013 examination as a benchmark.



6.2 PROVINCIAL TRENDS 2009 - 2015

The first table below shows that, aside from one or two peculiar years, the number of candidates that have written the NSC over the last few years has been relatively stable. The numbers that wrote in 2011 and 2012 were somewhat lower than in 2010 and 2013, and this was because of a change in the policy regarding the age of school-entry in 1999 and 2000. The second peculiarity was the especially large class that wrote the NSC in 2015. This was largely because of the so-called progressed learner policy which led to an increase in the numbers entering Grade 12 in 2015.

The numbers that have passed the NSC have increased consistently since 2009. Similarly, the numbers who have passed at the Bachelor level have also increased, peaking in 2013 at 171,755⁴. This trend is important because it indicates that the improvements have consisted not only of lower-end passes but also of increased high-level performance. The basic education sector has therefore improved its output of youth qualifying to enter university. Recent research shows that currently about two thirds of those who obtain a Bachelor pass in fact enter university. This means that there is still scope to increase university enrolments in the years to come.

Table 6.1: NSC candidates, passes and Bachelor passes 2009 – 2016⁵

	Number wrote NSC	Number passed NSC	Pass rate	Number of Bachelor passes
2009	552 073	334 718	60.6%	109 697
2010	537 543	364 513	67.8%	126 371
2011	496 090	348 117	70.2%	120 767
2012	511 152	377 829	73.9%	136 052
2013	562 112	439 779	78.2%	171 755
2014	532 860	403 874	75.8%	150 752
2015	644 536	455 825	70.7%	166 263

The next figure shows pass rates since 2009 by province. The figure shows that the Eastern Cape has consistently had the lowest pass rate, while Gauteng, the Western Cape, Free State, and the North-West province have consistently had the highest pass rates in recent years. Most provinces have experienced a gradual improvement in their pass rates over the period, with Mpumalanga having achieved an exceptionally high rate of improvement since 2009, moving from a pass rate of under 50% to nearly 80% in 2015.

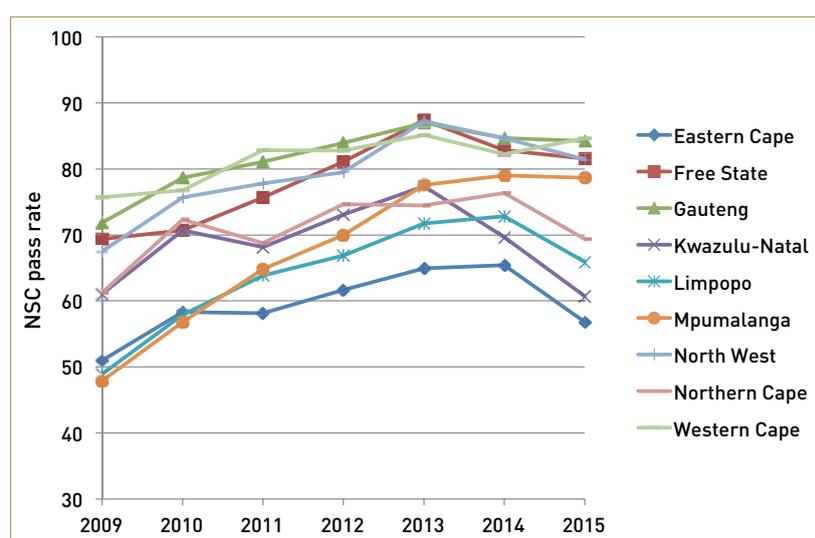


Figure 6.3: NSC pass rate by province since 2009

⁴ The impact of the supplementary examinations on Bachelors-level passes is relatively small. For example, the 2015 figure of 166 263 seen in the table rises to 167 576 after the supplementary examination results are taken into account.

⁵ Note that the numbers in this table and throughout this section slightly under-state the true numbers writing and passing the NSC since they are based on end-of-year NSC reports, which do not include part-time candidates, supplementary exam candidates or those achieving the equivalent of an NSC at post-school institutions.



The next figure shows the number of NSC passes since 2009 by province. Firstly, it indicates that KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng are the provinces that contribute the highest numbers of passes each year. Of course this is largely a reflection of the high populations in those provinces. All provinces have increased the number of NSC passes since 2009, with the highest increases seen in Limpopo and Mpumalanga with average annual increases of 10% and 9%, respectively. However, these two provinces recorded a marginal decline in their pass rate. All the provincial increases exceed the growth in the number of youth aged 18 by far. Nationally, the number of 18 year olds has increased on average by 0.9% a year since 2002, according to Stats SA population statistics. It is significant that Mpumalanga has substantially increased both the number of passes and its pass rate over the period, indicating that there really have been substantial improvements in this province.

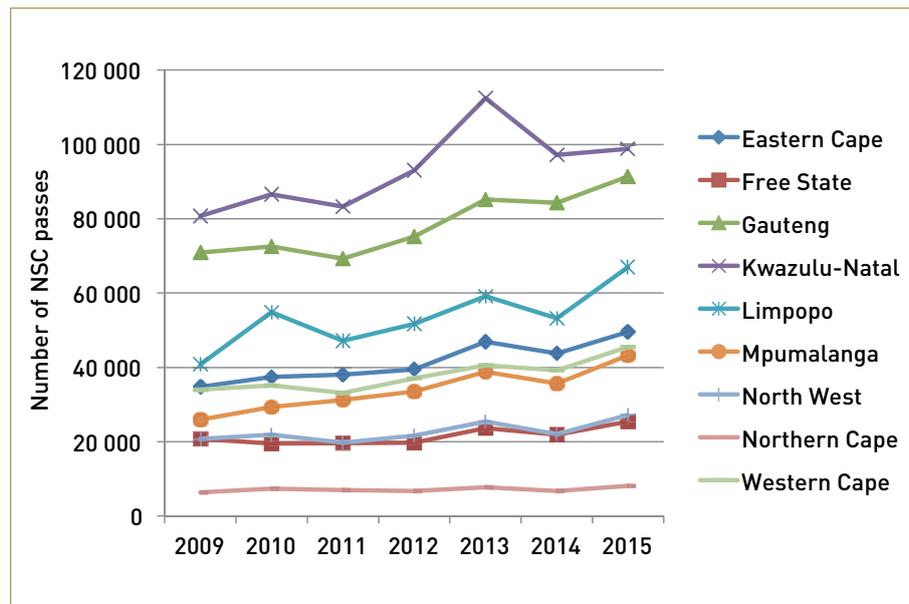


Figure 6.4: Numbers passing NSC by province since 2009

The next figure shows the numbers obtaining a Bachelor pass by province since 2009. Once again, it is KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng that produced the most Bachelor passes. Again, all provinces have increased the numbers of Bachelor passes over the period, with the largest increases in Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

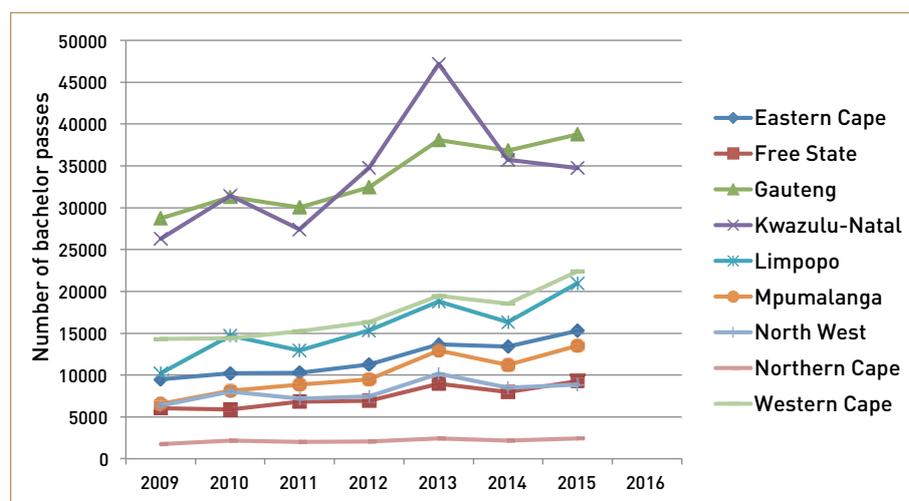


Figure 6.5: Numbers obtaining a Bachelor pass by province since 2009



The next figure looks at the ratio of Bachelor passes to overall NSC passes, as an indicator of the quality of NSC passes. Here the Western Cape shows the best ratio. Whereas nationally, roughly one in three NSC passes are Bachelor passes, in the Western Cape about one in two passes are Bachelor passes. It is also significant that all provinces have improved on this indicator over the period, suggesting that the improvements in NSC performance since 2009 have also been at the high end of performance.

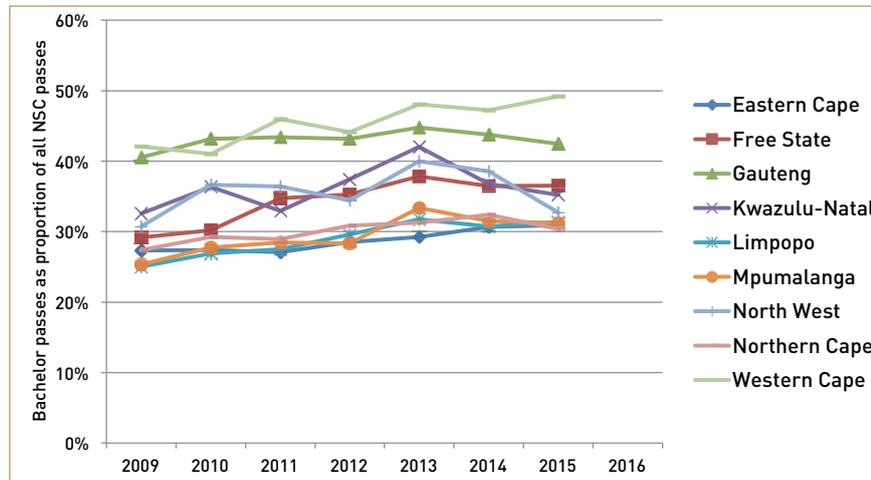


Figure 6.6: Bachelor passes relative to all NSC passes by province since 2009

The next figure shows the number of NSC passes as well as the NSC pass rates by gender, and it reveals some interesting and consistent patterns. Ever since 2009, the pass rate for males has typically been about three percentage points higher than the pass rate for females. This could lead one to believe that females are still at a disadvantage when it comes to educational outcomes in South Africa. However, the number of females that pass Grade 12 is consistently higher than the number of males who pass it, and this gap is widening over time. In 2013 and 2015 nearly 30 000 more females than males passed Grade 12. Underlying this pattern is the reality throughout the school system that males are more likely than females to repeat grades and to drop out of school, despite the specific disadvantages faced by females in terms of pregnancies and family responsibilities. The root cause of this is the low levels of learning obtained by males throughout the school system. Whether one looks at achievement at the very start of school or at standardised assessments during primary school or at standardised assessments during secondary school, girls are consistently outperforming boys in both literacy and numeracy. It is interesting, though, that those boys who do reach Grade 12 appear to be a stronger selection than those females who reach Grade 12, as evidenced by the higher NSC pass rates.

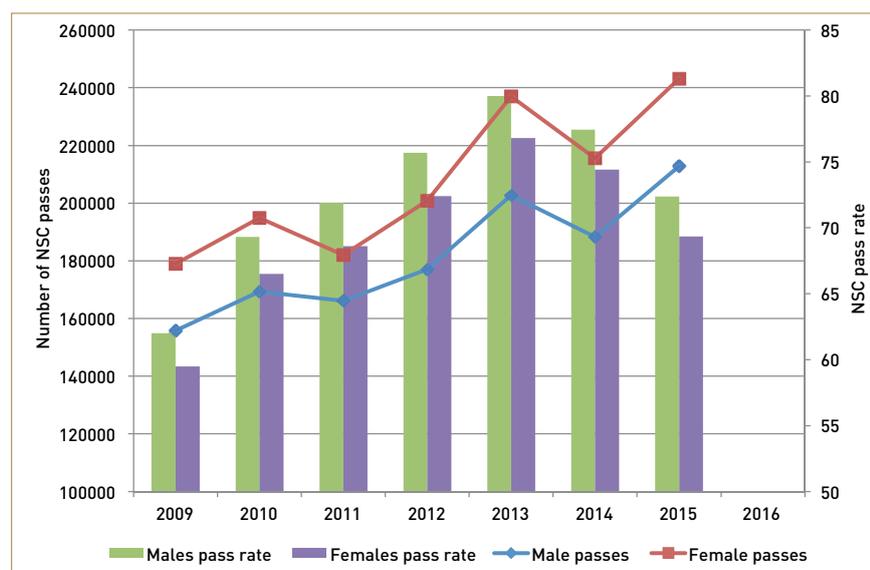


Figure 6.7: Numbers passing NSC and pass rates by gender since 2009



“The Class of 2016 was introduced to the high knowledge and skills curriculum from Grade 1.”

7. THE CLASS OF 2016

7.1 The Profile of the 2016 NSC Class

In January 2004, a significant curriculum revision (RNCS) was implemented. In the following year, the Class of 2016 entered the formal schooling system and it is the ninth cohort to sit for the NSC since its inception in 2008.

Curriculum 2005, which was based on the principles of Outcomes-Based Education, was introduced in January 1998. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for GET (General Education and Training) was born of the review of Curriculum 2005. The RNCS simplified and clarified Curriculum 2005, and attempted to shift from a skills-based and context-dependent body of knowledge towards a more coherent, explicit and systematic body of knowledge suitable for a national curriculum in the twenty-first century. The RNCS was completed in 2002 and it was implemented in January 2004. This implies that the Class of 2016 was introduced to the high-knowledge, high-skills curriculum from Grade 1 in 2005.

In 2002, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase was developed. This was followed by the development of the supporting policies and guidelines, which included the Subject Frameworks and Subject Assessment Guidelines. The NCS for the FET phase was introduced in 2006 in Grade 10 and in 2007 in Grade 11, and then in 2008 for the first time in Grade 12. The NCS was further streamlined and packaged as the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*, which was phased in at Grade 10 in 2012 and finally implemented in Grade 12 in 2014.

The 2016 cohort had written the NSC (CAPS) examinations at a time when the standard and quality of the public examinations system is considered to be maturing and stabilising.

7.2 Scope and Size of the Class of 2016

The Class of 2016 has recorded the highest enrolment in the 21-year history of public examinations. The provincial enrolments from 2012 to 2016 are indicated in the following table:

Table 7.1: NSC Enrolments per province for 2015 and 2016

Province	Entered 2012	Entered 2013	Entered 2014	Entered 2015	Entered 2016
Eastern Cape	69 427	75 117	69 306	89 740	92 755
Free State	24 616	27 457	26 756	35 209	28 901
Gauteng	91 503	99 480	101 212	112 064	112 164
KwaZulu-Natal	132 503	149 954	147 355	169 769	169 023
Limpopo	78 211	83 561	73 543	102 618	110 639
Mpumalanga	48 961	51 155	46 900	55 945	60 794
North West	27 555	29 534	26 382	33 845	35 403
Northern Cape	9 234	10 570	8 950	12 173	11 821
Western Cape	45 562	48 680	48 835	56 562	53 152
National	527 572	575 5080	548 239	667 925	674 652

674 652 full-time candidates registered for the 2016 NSC examination. Five provinces recorded an increase in the enrolment of full-time candidates. Compared to 2015's enrolment figures, fewer candidates were enrolled in the Free State, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape in 2016. Figure 7.1 indicates the enrolment of part-time candidates from 2012 to 2016. The number of part-time candidates that wrote the examination in 2016 increased sharply this year.



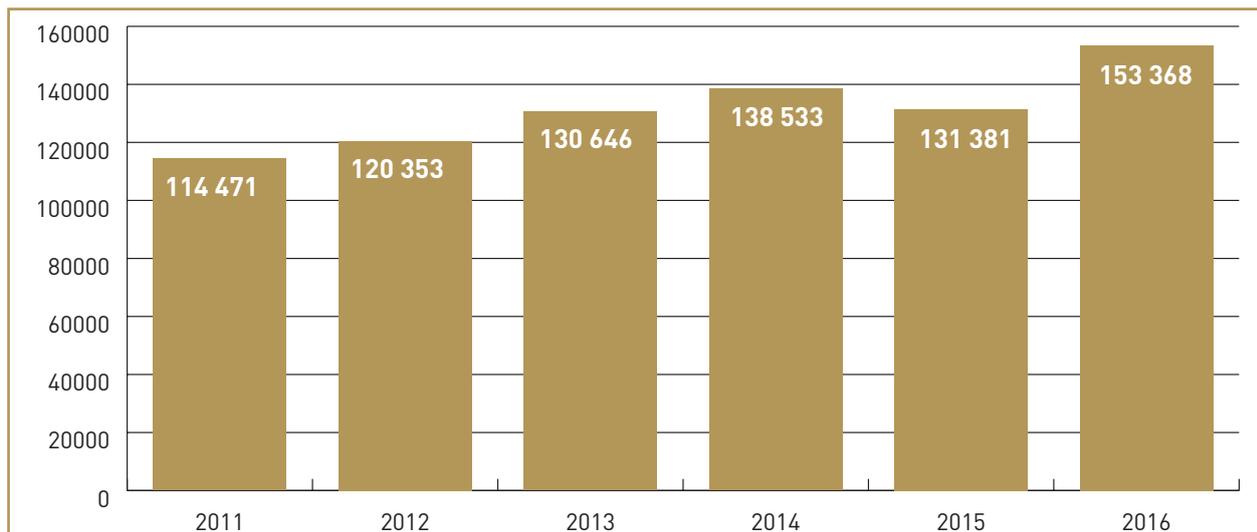


Figure 7.1: Part-time candidates enrolled from 2012 to 2016

7.3 NSC subject enrolment: 2012 to 2016

The DBE has identified 11 key subjects as the main focus for intervention (see table below). These subjects generally have high enrolments of more than 100 000 learners. Performance in these subjects significantly impacts the overall achievement in the NCS results in terms of quality and quantity of the pass rate, thus the need for intervention.

The following table indicates the number of learners entered in these key subjects from 2012–2016:

Table 7.3.1: Subject Enrolments- 2012 to 2016

Subjects	Entered 2012	Entered 2013	Entered 2014	Entered 2015	Entered 2016
Accounting	137 587	147 950	128 779	143 962	137 808
Agricultural Sciences	79 963	85 234	80 194	106 183	113 119
Business Studies	199 506	222 928	212 147	254 188	248 730
Economics	137 645	153 340	140 860	169 937	165 782
English First Additional Language	430 897	464 377	443 145	554 565	564 814
Geography	218 048	244 121	241 321	310 300	321 829
History	96 550	111 459	118 575	158 451	165 294
Life Sciences	283 811	307 062	290 580	355 614	368 191
Mathematical Literacy	297 514	330 329	318 994	398 632	389 163
Mathematics	230 022	245 344	229 888	269 253	285 406
Physical Sciences	182 126	187 109	171 549	197 047	204 695

Table 7.3.1 and Figure 7.2 show that the enrolment for the Mathematics examination increased by 13 066 candidates in 2016 and this substantiates the lower number in Mathematical Literacy.



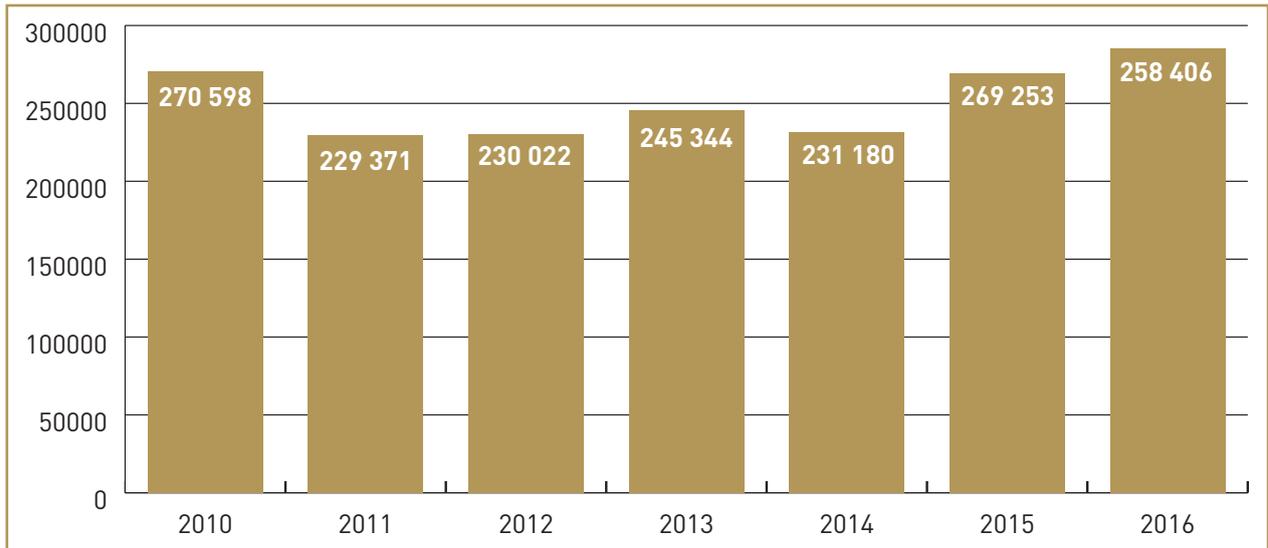


Figure 7.2: Mathematics Full-Time Enrolments



There has been a steady increase in the number of candidates who register for the Physical Sciences examination.

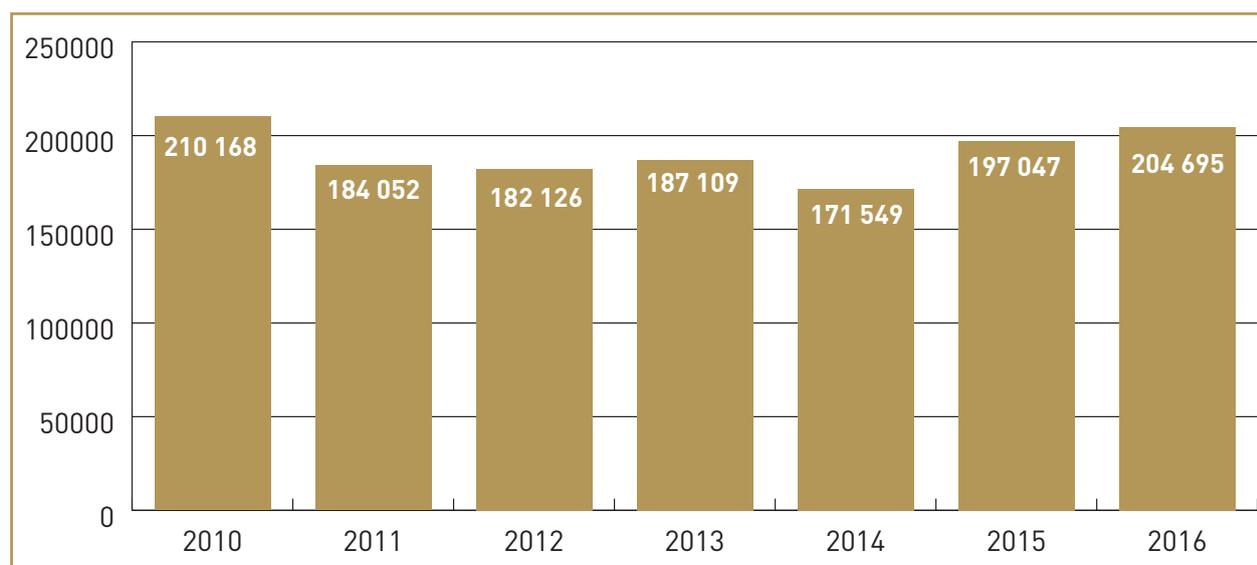


Figure 7.3: Physical Science Full-Time Enrolments

The increased enrolment in Physical Sciences from 2014 to 2016 is encouraging. The total of **204 695** entries in 2016 represents the largest number of learners offering Physical Sciences since 2012. This represents an increase of **7 648** candidates when compared with 2015.

7.4 NSC Enrolments in terms of Gender

The NSC enrolments on the basis of gender are indicated in Table 7.3, with more female than male learners completing Grade 12.

Table 7.4.1: Enrolments in terms of Gender

Provinces	2016			
	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Eastern Cape	41 483	51 272	50.0	61.8
Free State	12 982	15 919	48.5	59.4
Gauteng	50 844	61 320	49.0	59.1
KwaZulu-Natal	78 384	90 639	53.1	61.4
Limpopo	49 983	60 656	49.1	59.6
Mpumalanga	27 062	33 732	49.9	62.2
North West	16 447	18 956	51.3	59.2
Northern Cape	5 334	6 487	53.1	64.6
Western Cape	23 120	30 032	45.5	59.0
National	305 639	369 013	50.1	60.5

The ratio of female learners and male learners remained constant at 45:55 over the last two years.



7.5 Intervention programmes targeting the Class of 2016

The following intervention programmes implemented by the Basic Education Sector aimed at supporting and improving the quality of education and ultimately the achievements of the Class of 2016.

7.5.1 National Strategy for Learner Attainment

The National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) is a pivotal intervention initiative by the DBE. The NSLA attempts to meet the targets set out in the *Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030*. The action plan has clear measurable-output goals and time frames for each critical deliverable. The objectives of the framework are:

- (a) sustained improvement in learner outcomes or performance;
- (b) enhanced accountability at all levels of the system;
- (c) greater focus on basic functionality of schools;
- (d) protecting time for teaching and learning;
- (e) improved support for teaching and learning;
- (f) increased efforts to time on task; and
- (g) resource provisioning.

All provinces have improvement plans linked to the NSLA and aimed at enhancing learner attainment in the NSC (NSC). Provinces report on a quarterly basis to the DBE on the strategic activities identified in the NSLA. The reports are analysed to monitor progress and give constructive feedback and, also on a quarterly basis, recommendations for improvement are made to provinces.

7.5.2 Information and Communication Technology

The DBE has developed a repository of electronic curriculum-aligned and enriched content resources, including study guides, interactive workbooks, free core textbooks and videos. Resources are provided to Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) for distribution to schools through ICT initiatives. These high-quality teaching materials include videos and interactive content via the Internet or a local area network (School Connectivity Projects) or through the DBE television channel, broadcasting on OVHD & DSTV). These developments can significantly contribute to the move toward paperless classrooms. In this regard, ICT programmes will:

- (a) minimise the negative impact of any shortage of teachers, especially of Mathematics and Physical Sciences;
- (b) contribute to the alleviation of the shortage of learning material such as textbooks for teachers and learners;
- (c) improve the quality of education by providing improved informational content and learning approaches;
- (d) facilitate and promote the development of crucial skills in learners; these include critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, collaboration and creativity; and
- (e) provide learners with resources to collaborate with their peers and teachers, and to raise motivation levels and enthusiasm among both learners and teachers.

Furthermore, the Internet is a valuable source of information and teaching tool. Schools have access to online curriculum resources (e.g. past papers and study guides) on the DBE website, Thutong and provincial curriculum portals. In addition, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube can be useful.

Moreover, one of the key focus areas of the DBE High School Channel is to support Grade 12 learners in preparation for their examinations. Teachers discuss strategies and skills required to answer examination questions. Learners are able to interact with the teachers in the studio by completing assessments using mobile devices and by asking questions on social media platforms. These programmes are broadcast on DStv 319, OpenView HD 201 and Star Sat 309.



7.5.3 Subject Intervention: The 2015 Diagnostic Report

As part of the ongoing initiative by the DBE to improve the use of the NSC (NSC) results, the Diagnostic Report is a source of information for improving learning and teaching. In this report, a qualitative analysis is undertaken in the 11 key subjects (also known as high-enrolment subjects). It attempts to determine the extent to which the Class of 2015 achieved the learning outcomes and fulfilled the academic requirements of the CAPS. The report evaluates learner performance in selected subjects by highlighting the areas of weakness in each subject and articulating the remedial measures to be adopted at school level to improve performance in these subjects.

The report is based on qualitative data that is drawn from the subject reports compiled by the chief markers, internal moderators and subject specialists after the marking process. This report therefore served as a catalyst for improved planning at all levels of the system so that the quality of teaching and learning can be elevated to the next level. Over the last few years, this report has established itself as a valuable resource for Grade 12 teachers as well as for curriculum planners and curriculum implementers.

7.5.4 Support for Progressed Learners

Owing to the cumulative deficit in knowledge acquisition, the DBE and PEDs provided support to the progressed learners. Provinces identified progressed learners and provided them with additional and differentiated support programmes. To ensure that each learner has the best possible opportunity to obtain an NSC in 2016, provinces embarked on a rigorous support programme for progressed learners in addition to the programme offered to other learners. Intensive support programmes developed and implemented for High Enrolment Subjects across provinces included:

- (a) differentiated teaching and revision;
- (b) extra classes with emphasis on work done in earlier grades to close the gaps;
- (c) administration of common standardised tests and examination;
- (d) emphasis on topics that carry a relatively greater weight in the curriculum, e.g. Functions (Trigonometric and Algebraic) and Euclidian Geometry;
- (e) Provision of worksheets on practice exercises on Euclidian geometry (circle geometry);
- (f) administration of weekly short tests in preparation for formal ones;
- (g) provision of exemplar tasks for schools;
- (h) emphasizing cumulative assessment;
- (i) utilisation of past papers; and
- (j) autumn and winter camps.

7.5.5 Support for Grade 12 learners in Vuwani

The DBE provided curriculum support to those Grade 12 learners in Vuwani, Limpopo, who were affected by the recent unrest in the district. The Limpopo Department of Education established three teaching centres, namely MASTEC, Makhado and Tivumbeni. The DBE provided electronic and digital equipment that gave learners access to the following content:

- (a) Mindset-scheduled programs via the HD OpenView Satellite and Decoder screened on television;
- (b) Internet Broadcasting Solution (IPB) videos (University of the Free State);
- (c) telematics videos (University of Stellenbosch);
- (d) Kahn Series videos;
- (e) Mind the Gap books;
- (f) past question papers and marking guidelines (memoranda);
- (g) diagnostic reports; and
- (h) other available material.



8. PERFORMANCE IN THE 2016 NSC EXAMINATIONS

This section of the report provides the analysis of the data at national, provincial and district levels. The report will focus on full-time candidates that have written seven or more subjects, therefore it will be based on 610 178 candidates listed in Table 8.1.1. The performance of a total of 107 793 Part-Time candidates will be analysed separately, as these candidates register for one or more subjects, and in most cases these are less than the full package of seven subjects. Therefore, their results cannot be analysed in the same way as those for the full time candidates.

This section will focus on the following analyses:

- (a) National pass rates and pass rate trends over the last four years;
- (b) Analysis of provincial performance;
- (c) Comparison of NSC passes by type of qualification;
- (d) Comparison of NSC passes by gender;
- (e) Analysis of school pass rates with different percentage categories;
- (f) Analysis of subject performance;
- (g) Analysis of school performance by quintile ranking;
- (h) Performance of learners with special needs;
- (i) Subject performance of part-time candidates; and
- (j) Analysis of district performance.

“The Overall pass rate improved from 70.7% in 2015 to 72.5% in 2016.”

8.1 Overall Performance in the 2016 NSC Examination

As seen in the next table, of the 610 178 full-time examination candidates who obtained marks in seven or more subjects during the 2016 year-end examinations process, 442 672 candidates, or 72,5% of the total, obtained the National Senior Certificate. The ‘pass rate’ varies at the provincial level from 88,2% in the case of Free State, to 59,3% in the case of Eastern Cape. As explained in the earlier section 5, it is important that pass rates be viewed together with ‘throughput’, or the extent to which learners ‘survive’ to Grade 12 without dropping out, in particular after grades 10 and 11. Whilst well-performing schools can contribute to a higher provincial pass rate, high levels of dropping out of weaker learners before Grade 12 can have a similar effect. As pointed out in section 5, KwaZulu-Natal, despite displaying a relatively low pass rate, is relatively successful at ensuring that learners do not drop out. The latter in part explains this province’s low pass rate.

Table 8.1.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2016 NSC examination

Province	2016		
	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	82 902	49 168	59.3
Free State	26 786	23 629	88.2
Gauteng	103 829	88 381	85.1
Kwazulu-Natal	147 648	98 032	66.4
Limpopo	101 807	63 595	62.5
Mpumalanga	54 251	41 801	77.1
North West	32 045	26 448	82.5
Northern Cape	10 041	7 902	78.7
Western Cape	50 869	43 716	85.9
National	610 178	442 672	72.5



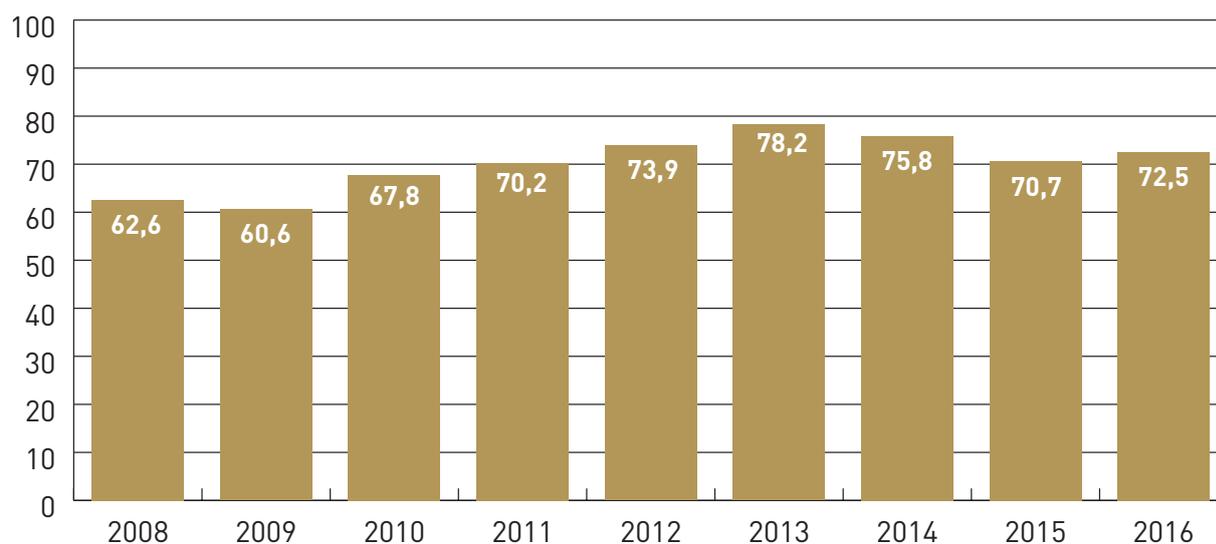


Figure 8.1: Overall performance of candidates in the 2016 NSC examination

8.2 Comparison of performance

The last four years have seen important shifts in the outputs of the schooling system. As seen in the next table, the number of full-time candidates obtaining seven or more subject marks increased to a large extent between 2014 and 2015. This was part of a deliberate attempt to ensure that schools gave learners the opportunity to attempt the Grade 12 examinations, even if their Grade 11 results suggested they were at risk of not passing Grade 12. Specifically, the 'class of 2015' benefitted from new rules governing progression from the earlier grades. As seen in the statistics, this policy shift has been successful in the sense that more learners have obtained the National Senior Certificate from 2015. However, this has come at the cost of a lower pass rate. The national pass rates of 2015 and 2016 have both been lower than those of 2013 and 2014.

If one compares just 2015 to 2016, then three provinces emerge as having fared relatively well with respect to both the number of passes and the pass rate. Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape all saw increases in their pass rates at the same time as their number of passes remained relatively stable. Free State saw a large increase in its pass rate, but a substantial drop in its number of passes (and candidates writing the examination).



Table 8.2.1: Comparison of NSC passes by province, 2013 to 2016

Province	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	72 138	46 840	64,9	66 935	43 777	65,4	87 090	49 475	56,8	82 902	49 168	59,3
Free State	27 105	23 689	87,4	26 440	21 899	82,8	31 161	25 416	81,6	26 786	23 629	88,2
Gauteng	97 897	85 122	87,0	99 478	84 247	84,7	108 442	91 327	84,2	103 829	88 381	85,1
Kwazulu-Natal	145 278	112 403	77,4	139 367	97 144	69,7	162 658	98 761	60,7	147 648	98 032	66,4
Limpopo	82 483	59 184	71,8	72 990	53 179	72,9	101 575	66 946	65,9	101 807	63 595	62,5
Mpumalanga	50 053	38 836	77,6	45 081	35 615	79,0	54 980	43 229	78,6	54 251	41 801	77,1
North West	29 140	25 414	87,2	26 066	22 061	84,6	33 286	27 118	81,5	32 045	26 448	82,5
Northern Cape	10 403	7 749	74,5	8 794	6 715	76,4	11 623	8 064	69,4	10 041	7 902	78,7
Western Cape	47 615	40 542	85,1	47 709	39 237	82,2	53 721	45 489	84,7	50 869	43 716	85,9
National	562 112	439 779	78,2	532 860	403 874	75,8	644 536	455 825	70,7	610 178	442 672	72,5



Table 8.2.2: NSC performance by type of qualification, 2016 (Endorsed Certificate candidates included but not reflected)

Province	Total Wrote		Bachelor		Diploma		Higher Certificate		NSC		Total Achieved		% Achieved
	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	
Eastern Cape	15 645	18.9	19 996	24.1	13 520	16.3	5	0.0	49 168	59.3			
Free State	9 596	35.8	10 244	38.2	3 767	14.1	1	0.0	23 629	88.2			
Gauteng	37 582	36.2	37 121	35.8	13 615	13.1	0	0.0	88 381	85.1			
Kwazulu-Natal	36 139	24.5	39 507	26.8	22 347	15.1	39	0.0	98 032	66.4			
Limpopo	18 762	18.4	23 544	23.1	21 281	20.9	7	0.0	63 595	62.5			
Mpumalanga	12 420	22.9	18 447	34.0	10 918	20.1	16	0.0	41 801	77.1			
North West	8 820	27.5	11 177	34.9	6 450	20.1	0	0.0	26 448	82.5			
Northern Cape	2 606	26.0	3 278	32.6	2 015	20.1	0	0.0	7 902	78.7			
Western Cape	20 804	40.9	16 305	32.1	6 573	12.9	0	0.0	43 716	85.9			
National	162 374	26.6	179 619	29.4	100 486	16.5	68	0.0	442 672	72.5			

There are 125 candidates who qualify for the endorsed certificate as follows:

- 2 from Eastern Cape;
- 21 from Free State;
- 63 from Gauteng;
- 1 from Limpopo;
- 1 from North West;
- 3 from Northern Cape; and
- 34 from Western Cape.

Table 8.2.3: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2016 (Endorsed Certificate candidates included but not reflected)

Province	Year	Total Number Wrote		Bachelor		Diploma		Higher Certificate		NSC		Total Achieved	% Achieved
		Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved		
Eastern Cape	2012	63 989	11 246	17.6	16 148	25.2	11 998	18.8	51	0.1	39 443	61.6	
	2013	72 138	13 686	19.0	19 179	26.6	13 950	19.3	25	0.0	46 840	64.9	
	2014	66 935	13 435	20.1	18 339	27.4	11 958	17.9	45	0.1	43 777	65.4	
	2015	87 090	15 291	17.6	20 055	23.0	14 119	16.2	10	0.0	49 475	56.8	
	2016	82 902	15 645	18.9	19 996	24.1	13 520	16.3	5	0.0	49 168	59.3	
	2012	24 265	6 937	28.6	8 553	35.2	4 181	17.2	5	0.0	19 676	81.1	
Free State	2013	27 105	8 961	33.1	10 089	37.2	4 636	17.1	3	0.0	23 689	87.4	
	2014	26 440	7 987	30.2	9 754	36.9	4 107	15.5	51	0.2	21 899	82.8	
	2015	31 161	9 277	29.8	11 026	35.4	5 102	16.4	11	0.0	25 416	81.6	
	2016	26 786	9 596	35.8	10 244	38.2	3 767	14.1	1	0.0	23 629	88.2	
Gauteng	2012	89 627	32 449	36.2	30 422	33.9	12 335	13.8	8	0.0	75 214	83.9	
	2013	97 897	38 104	38.9	33 716	34.4	13 295	13.6	7	0.0	85 122	87.0	
	2014	99 478	36 843	37.0	35 034	35.2	12 295	12.4	75	0.1	84 247	84.7	
	2015	108 442	38 760	35.7	37 375	34.5	15 191	14.0	1	0.0	91 327	84.2	
	2016	103 829	37 582	36.2	37 121	35.8	13 615	13.1	0	0.0	88 381	85.1	
	2012	127 253	34 779	27.3	36 841	29.0	21 274	16.7	109	0.1	93 003	73.1	
Kwazulu-Natal	2013	145 278	47 202	32.5	42 760	29.4	22 328	15.4	113	0.1	112 403	77.4	
	2014	139 367	35 724	25.6	39 751	28.5	21 544	15.5	125	0.1	97 144	69.7	
	2015	162 658	34 751	21.4	39 799	24.5	24 180	14.9	31	0.0	98 761	60.7	
	2016	147 648	36 139	24.5	39 507	26.8	22 347	15.1	39	0.0	98 032	66.4	
	2012	77 360	15 324	19.8	20 103	26.0	16 301	21.1	17	0.0	51 745	66.9	
	2013	82 483	18 781	22.8	22 694	27.5	17 695	21.5	14	0.0	59 184	71.8	
Limpopo	2014	72 990	16 325	22.4	20 927	28.7	15 912	21.8	15	0.0	53 179	72.9	
	2015	101 575	20 992	20.7	25 434	25.0	20 513	20.2	7	0.0	66 946	65.9	
	2016	101 807	18 762	18.4	23 544	23.1	21 281	20.9	7	0.0	63 595	62.5	



Province	Year	Total Number Wrote		Bachelor		Diploma		Higher Certificate		NSC		Total Achieved	% Achieved
		Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved	Achieved	% Achieved		
Mpumalanga	2012	47 889	19.8	14 277	29.8	9 633	20.1	99	0.2	33 504	70.0		
	2013	50 053	25.9	16 366	32.7	9 507	19.0	9	0.0	38 836	77.6		
	2014	45 081	24.9	15 898	35.3	8 423	18.7	65	0.1	35 615	79.0		
	2015	54 980	24.5	18 675	34.0	11 046	20.1	11	0.0	43 229	78.6		
	2016	54 251	22.9	18 447	34.0	10 918	20.1	16	0.0	41 801	77.1		
	2012	27 174	27.4	9 151	33.7	5 010	18.4	3	0.0	21 609	79.5		
North West	2013	29 140	34.9	10 249	35.2	4 998	17.2	1	0.0	25 414	87.2		
	2014	26 066	32.6	9 472	36.3	4 079	15.6	1	0.0	22 061	84.6		
	2015	33 286	26.6	11 554	34.7	6 699	20.1	0	0.0	27 118	81.5		
	2016	32 045	27.5	11 177	34.9	6 450	20.1	0	0.0	26 448	82.5		
Northern Cape	2012	8 925	23.0	2 787	31.2	1 819	20.4	0	0.0	6 661	74.6		
	2013	10 403	23.3	3 207	30.8	2 118	20.4	0	0.0	7 749	74.5		
	2014	8 794	24.7	2 941	33.4	1 596	18.1	2	0.0	6 715	76.4		
	2015	11 623	21.1	3 306	28.4	2 306	19.8	1	0.0	8 064	69.4		
	2016	10 041	26.0	3 278	32.6	2 015	20.1	0	0.0	7 902	78.7		
	2012	44 670	36.5	14 599	32.7	6 053	13.6	5	0.0	36 974	82.8		
Western Cape	2013	47 615	40.9	15 032	31.6	6 029	12.7	4	0.0	40 542	85.1		
	2014	47 709	38.8	14 573	30.5	6 108	12.8	32	0.1	39 237	82.2		
	2015	53 721	41.7	16 496	30.7	6 614	12.3	0	0.0	45 489	84.7		
	2016	50 869	40.9	16 305	32.1	6 573	12.9	0	0.0	43 716	85.9		
National	2012	511 152	26.6	152 881	29.9	88 604	17.3	297	0.1	377 829	73.9		
	2013	562 112	30.6	173 292	30.8	94 556	16.8	176	0.0	439 779	78.2		
	2014	532 860	28.3	166 689	31.3	86 022	16.1	411	0.1	403 874	75.8		
	2015	644 536	25.8	183 720	28.5	105 770	16.4	72	0.0	455 825	70.7		
	2016	610 178	26.6	179 619	29.4	100 486	16.5	68	0.0	442 672	72.5		

The Western Cape had the highest percentage of Bachelor passes (40.9%) and Free State had the highest percentage of Diploma passes. It should be noted that Free State had the highest combined percentage of Bachelor and Diploma passes (74.1%). Free State also had the highest percentage increase in Bachelor passes of 6% with Northern Cape having an increase of 4.9% .

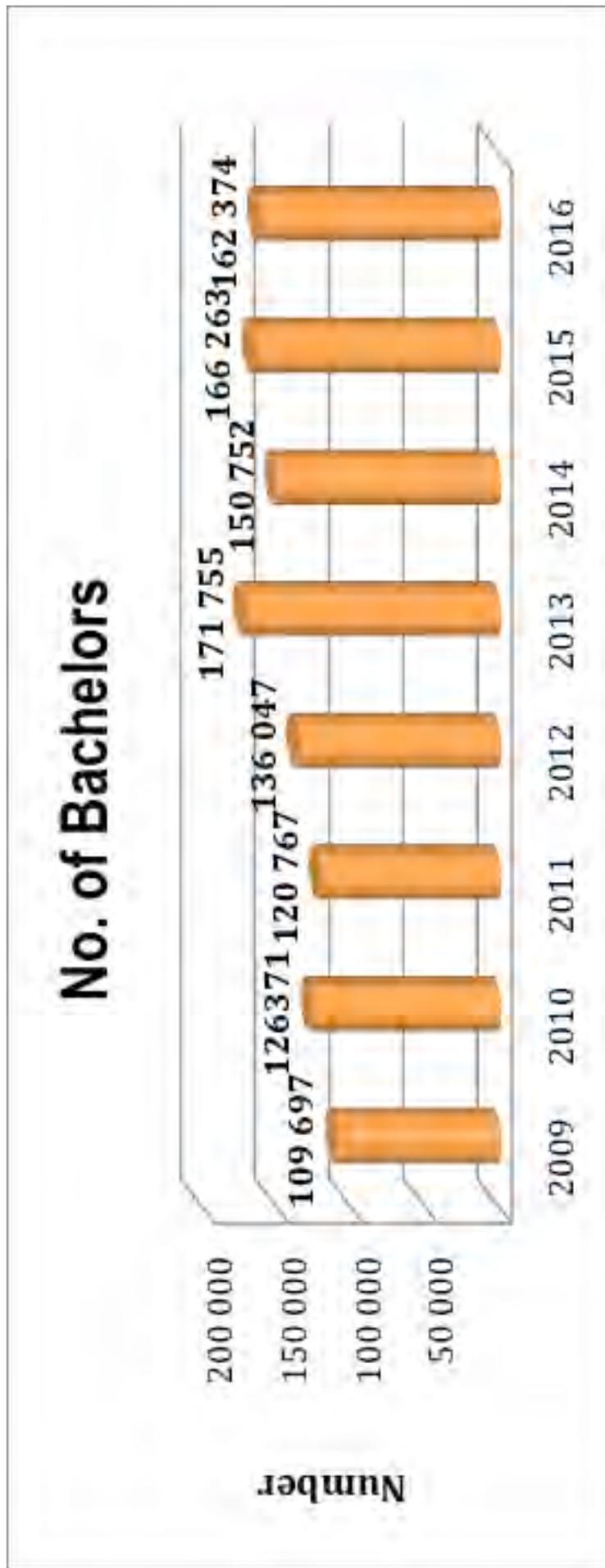


Figure 8.2: Comparison of the NSC performance by type of qualification from 2012 to 2016 (Excluding Endorsed)



Table 8.2.4: Comparison of Bachelor's passes by provinces between 2013 to 2016

Province	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor	Number Wrote	Number Achieved with Bachelor	% Achieved with Bachelor
Eastern Cape	72 138	13 686	19.0	66 923	13 435	20.1	87 090	15 291	17.6	82 902	15 645	18.9
Free State	27 105	8 961	33.1	26 382	7 987	30.3	31 161	9 277	29.8	26 786	9 596	35.8
Gauteng	97 897	38 104	38.9	99 321	36 843	37.1	108 442	38 760	35.7	103 829	37 582	36.2
Kwazulu-Natal	145 278	47 202	32.5	139 365	35 724	25.6	162 658	34 751	21.4	147 648	36 139	24.5
Limpopo	82 483	18 781	22.8	72 973	16 325	22.4	101 575	20 992	20.7	101 807	18 762	18.4
Mpumalanga	50 053	12 954	25.9	45 081	11 229	24.9	54 980	13 497	24.5	54 251	12 420	22.9
North West	29 140	10 166	34.9	26 069	8 509	32.6	33 286	8 865	26.6	32 045	8 820	27.5
Northern Cape	10 403	2 424	23.3	8 794	2 176	24.7	11 623	2 451	21.1	10 041	2 606	26.0
Western Cape	47 615	19 477	40.9	47 679	18 524	38.9	53 721	22 379	41.7	50 869	20 804	40.9
National	562 112	171 755	30.6	532 587	150 752	28.3	644 536	166 263	25.8	610 178	162 374	26.6

Table 8.2.5: Bachelor's passes by gender. 2014 - 2016

Province Name	Gender	2014			2015			2016		
		Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors	Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors	Total Wrote	Total Achieved Bachelors	% Achieved Bachelors
Eastern Cape	Male	30 106	6 104	20.3	39 644	7 307	18.4	37 116	7 337	19.8
	Female	36 829	7 331	19.9	47 446	7 984	16.8	45 786	8 308	18.1
Free State	Male	12 320	3 632	29.5	14 474	4 277	29.5	12 114	4 467	36.9
	Female	14 120	4 355	30.8	16 687	5 000	30.0	14 672	5 129	35.0
Gauteng	Male	44 700	15 686	35.1	48 812	16 738	34.3	47 016	16 152	34.4
	Female	54 778	21 157	38.6	59 630	22 022	36.9	56 813	21 430	37.7
Kwazulu-Natal	Male	64 647	16 194	25.0	76 725	16 061	20.9	68 028	16 446	24.2
	Female	74 720	19 530	26.1	85 933	18 690	21.7	79 620	19 693	24.7
Limpopo	Male	33 737	8 323	24.7	46 013	10 608	23.1	46 292	9 520	20.6
	Female	39 253	8 002	20.4	55 562	10 384	18.7	55 515	9 242	16.6
Mpumalanga	Male	20 511	5 394	26.3	24 682	6 527	26.4	24 350	6 083	25.0
	Female	24 570	5 835	23.7	30 298	6 970	23.0	29 901	6 337	21.2
North West	Male	12 111	4 012	33.1	15 148	4 126	27.2	14 963	4 207	28.1
	Female	13 955	4 497	32.2	18 138	4 739	26.1	17 082	4 613	27.0
Northern Cape	Male	3 983	935	23.5	5 352	1 114	20.8	4 552	1 162	25.5
	Female	4 811	1 241	25.8	6 271	1 337	21.3	5 489	1 444	26.3
Western Cape	Male	20 950	7 767	37.1	23 099	9 478	41.0	22 195	9 026	40.7
	Female	26 759	10 757	40.2	30 622	12 901	42.1	28 674	11 778	41.1
National	Male	243 065	68 047	28.0	293 949	76 236	25.9	276 626	74 400	26.9
	Female	289 795	82 705	28.5	350 587	90 027	25.7	333 552	87 974	26.4
	Both	532 860	150 752	28.3	644 536	166 263	25.8	610 178	162 374	26.6

There are more female candidates but the performance between male and female candidates in terms of Bachelor passes are virtually the same.



Table 8.2.6: Comparison of number of NSC passes by province and gender from 2013 to 2016

Province	Gender	Total Wrote				Total Achieved				% Achieved			
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Eastern Cape	Male	32 010	30 106	39 644	37 116	21 911	20 397	23 634	22 955	68.5	67.8	59.6	61.8
	Female	40 128	36 829	47 446	45 786	24 929	23 380	25 841	26 213	62.1	63.5	54.5	57.3
Free State	Male	12 588	12 320	14 474	12 114	11 199	10 404	11 883	10 875	89.0	84.4	82.1	89.8
	Female	14 517	14 120	16 687	14 672	12 490	11 495	13 533	12 754	86.0	81.4	81.1	86.9
Gauteng	Male	43 798	44 700	48 812	47 016	38 326	38 218	41 709	40 479	87.5	85.5	85.4	86.1
	Female	54 099	54 778	59 630	56 813	46 796	46 029	49 618	47 902	86.5	84.0	83.2	84.3
Kwazulu-Natal	Male	65 291	64 647	76 725	68 028	50 958	45 648	47 056	45 468	78.0	70.6	61.3	66.8
	Female	79 987	74 720	85 933	79 620	61 445	51 496	51 705	52 564	76.8	68.9	60.2	66.0
Limpopo	Male	38 300	33 737	46 013	46 292	28 982	25 855	32 196	30 580	75.7	76.6	70.0	66.1
	Female	44 183	39 253	55 562	55 515	30 202	27 324	34 750	33 015	68.4	69.6	62.5	59.5
Mpumalanga	Male	23 044	20 511	24 682	24 350	18 359	16 668	20 048	19 442	79.7	81.3	81.2	79.8
	Female	27 009	24 570	30 298	29 901	20 477	18 947	23 181	22 359	75.8	77.1	76.5	74.8
North West	Male	13 056	12 111	15 148	14 963	11 598	10 575	12 719	12 676	88.8	87.3	84.0	84.7
	Female	16 084	13 955	18 138	17 082	13 816	11 486	14 399	13 772	85.9	82.3	79.4	80.6
Northern Cape	Male	4 756	3 983	5 352	4 552	3 603	3 059	3 749	3 639	75.8	76.8	70.0	79.9
	Female	5 647	4 811	6 271	5 489	4 146	3 656	4 315	4 263	73.4	76.0	68.8	77.7
Western Cape	Male	20 628	20 950	23 099	22 195	17 805	17 433	19 723	19 428	86.3	83.2	85.4	87.5
	Female	26 987	26 759	30 622	28 674	22 737	21 804	25 766	24 288	84.3	81.5	84.1	84.7
National	Male	253 471	243 065	293 949	276 626	202 741	188 257	212 717	205 542	80.0	77.5	72.4	74.3
	Female	308 641	289 795	350 587	333 552	237 038	215 617	243 108	237 130	76.8	74.4	69.3	71.1
	Both	562 112	532 860	644 536	610 178	439 779	403 874	455 825	442 672	78.2	75.8	70.7	72.5

Male candidates have been performing better than female candidates over the last 4 years in terms of pass rate.

Table 8.2.7: Number of schools within different pass rate categories (2015 and 2016)

PROVINCES	Total Number of Schools		0 - 19.9%		20 - 39.9%		40 to 59.9%		60 to 79.9%		80 to 100%		Exactly 0%		Exactly 100%		
			2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
EASTERN CAPE	Number	924	925	47	43	229	183	276	276	209	231	163	192	2	2	37	44
	%			5.1	4.6	24.8	19.8	29.9	29.8	22.6	25.0	17.6	20.8	0.2	0.2	4.0	4.8
FREE STATE	Number	328	328	2	0	0	1	23	4	82	58	221	265	0	0	46	65
	%			0.6	0.0	0.0	0.3	7.0	1.2	25.0	17.7	67.4	80.8	0.0	0.0	14.0	19.8
GAUTENG	Number	853	875	6	3	8	6	45	47	212	207	582	612	6	2	144	144
	%			0.7	0.3	0.9	0.7	5.3	5.4	24.9	23.7	68.2	69.9	0.7	0.2	16.9	16.5
KWAZULU-NATAL	Number	1 748	1 745	149	105	345	240	450	388	415	486	389	526	12	10	66	85
	%			8.5	6.0	19.7	13.8	25.7	22.2	23.7	27.9	22.3	30.1	0.7	0.6	3.8	4.9
LIMPOPO	Number	1 414	1 413	32	43	169	217	369	382	475	444	369	327	1	4	29	40
	%			2.3	3.0	12.0	15.4	26.1	27.0	33.6	31.4	26.1	23.1	0.1	0.3	2.1	2.8
MPUMALANGA	Number	545	551	2	1	13	14	55	64	167	189	308	283	0	0	24	22
	%			0.4	0.2	2.4	2.5	10.1	11.6	30.6	34.3	56.5	51.4	0.0	0.0	4.4	4.0
NORTH WEST	Number	383	400	3	1	2	3	32	26	115	121	231	249	0	0	26	40
	%			0.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	8.4	6.5	30.0	30.3	60.3	62.3	0.0	0.0	6.8	10.0
NORTHERN CAPE	Number	135	136	1	0	6	4	33	16	39	38	56	78	1	0	9	19
	%			0.7	0.0	4.4	2.9	24.4	11.8	28.9	27.9	41.5	57.4	0.7	0.0	6.7	14.0
WESTERN CAPE	Number	442	441	1	0	3	3	27	18	99	99	312	321	0	0	89	89
	%			0.2	0.0	0.7	0.7	6.1	4.1	22.4	22.4	70.6	72.8	0.0	0.0	20.1	20.2
NATIONAL	Number	6 772	6 814	243	196	775	671	1 310	1 221	1 813	1 873	2 631	2 853	22	18	470	548
	%			3.6	2.9	11.4	9.8	19.3	17.9	26.8	27.5	38.9	41.9	0.3	0.3	6.9	8.0

Western Cape has the highest percentage of schools with a 100% pass rate. Kwazulu-Natal has the highest number of schools (10) with a 0% pass rate. There has been a general improvement in the number and percentage of schools nationally who had exactly a 100% pass rate (from 6.9% in 2015 to 8% in 2016).



Table 8.2.8: Number of schools within different pass percentage categories by Quintile

Quintiles	0 - 19.9%	20 - 39.9%	40 - 59.9%	60 - 79.9%	80 - 100%	Total
Quintile 1	106	287	410	504	500	1 807
Quintile 2	41	189	383	536	493	1 642
Quintile 3	31	157	295	486	459	1 428
Quintile 4	2	10	57	168	365	602
Quintile 5	0	4	19	83	607	713
Total	180	647	1 164	1 777	2 424	6 192



Table 8.2.9: Number of candidates who wrote in schools per quintile (2015 and 2016)

% Interval (Schools)	2015					2016						
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Total	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Total
No with 0 to 19.9%	7 435	3 333	2 239	139	0	13 146	5 700	2 026	2 050	119	0	9 895
No with 20 to 39.9%	20 481	16 633	17 770	3 547	441	58 872	20 282	13 120	13 183	1 511	495	48 591
No with 40 to 59.9%	33 651	35 226	36 040	8 668	4 055	117 640	31 810	28 846	28 883	7 669	2 339	99 547
No with 60 to 79.9%	41 712	47 447	55 412	25 114	11 260	180 945	39 581	49 954	53 821	23 740	10 192	177 288
No with 80 to 100%	35 848	39 611	44 520	39 910	84 826	244 715	37 036	39 634	47 026	41 089	83 574	248 359
Grand Total	139 127	142 250	155 981	77 378	100 582	615 318	134 409	133 580	144 963	74 128	96 600	583 680

Table 8.2.10: NSC passes by type of qualification per Quintile (2015 and 2016) (Excluding candidates who qualify for the Endorsed Certificate)

Achievement Status	2015					2016						
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Totals	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Totals
Achieved Bachelor	23 407	26 098	30 533	21 813	51 997	166 263	23 016	25 926	29 936	21 529	51 389	162 374
Achieved Diploma	35 346	38 228	44 265	26 253	31 057	183 720	34 658	37 405	42 765	26 332	30 090	179 619
Achieved H-Certificate	26 874	27 490	28 052	12 013	8 235	105 770	26 249	26 268	26 392	11 092	7 488	100 486
Achieved NSC	36	17	10	5	1	72	31	30	5	2	0	68
Total Achieved	85 663	91 833	102 860	60 084	91 290	455 825	83 954	89 629	99 098	58 955	88 967	442 547



8.3 Subject performance

Table 8.3.1: Candidates' Performance in Home Language (Official Languages) 2013 to 2016 at 40%

Subject Name (Home Languages)	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 40% & Above	% Achieved
Afrikaans Home Language	50 101	49 058	97.9	48 885	47 363	96.9	53 799	52 366	97.3	50 019	48 338	96.6
English Home Language	110 243	106 715	96.8	105 480	100 279	95.1	111 785	104 875	93.8	107 967	101 610	94.1
IsiNdebele Home Language	4 287	4 281	99.9	3 363	3 360	99.9	4 869	4 861	99.8	5 649	5 640	99.8
IsiXhosa Home Language	79 307	79 193	99.9	74 925	74 788	99.8	95 694	95 356	99.6	97 164	96 952	99.8
IsiZulu Home Language	136 302	135 869	99.7	138 004	137 194	99.4	166 403	165 487	99.4	165 572	163 632	98.8
Sepedi Home Language	65 207	64 960	99.6	58 042	57 643	99.3	79 021	78 508	99.4	83 570	82 611	98.9
Sesotho Home Language	28 243	28 165	99.7	27 794	27 657	99.5	36 555	36 351	99.4	32 198	32 002	99.4
Setswana Home Language	40 719	40 603	99.7	35 939	35 863	99.8	47 206	47 020	99.6	48 730	48 560	99.7
SiSwati Home Language	16 586	16 467	99.3	15 545	15 478	99.6	18 589	18 474	99.4	19 649	19 501	99.2
Tshivenda Home Language	14 914	14 912	100.0	13 952	13 947	100.0	20 301	20 281	99.9	22 049	22 032	99.9
Xitsonga Home Language	21 984	21 882	99.5	19 577	19 471	99.5	24 473	24 349	99.5	26 681	26 556	99.5

Table 8.3.2: Candidates' performance in First Additional Language (2013 to 2016 at 30%)

Subject Name (1st Additional Languages)	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Total Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Afrikaans First Additional Language	87 930	81 662	92.9	82 649	76 855	93.0	86 987	79 882	91.8	83 883	75 530	90.0
English First Additional Language	454 666	449 420	98.8	432 933	423 134	97.7	543 941	528 157	97.1	547 292	533 235	97.4
IsiNdebele First Additional Language	23	23	100.0	26	26	100.0	32	32	100.0	36	36	100.0
IsiXhosa First Additional Language	1 880	1 875	99.7	2 043	2 040	99.9	2 369	2 362	99.7	2 220	2 215	99.8
IsiZulu First Additional Language	15 345	15 254	99.4	15 381	15 316	99.6	17 204	17 069	99.2	16 425	16 359	99.6
Sepedi First Additional Language	387	385	99.5	421	418	99.3	545	539	98.9	455	451	99.1
Sesotho First Additional Language	652	648	99.4	702	702	100.0	618	616	99.7	484	483	99.8
Setswana First Additional Language	217	216	99.5	217	217	100.0	162	162	100.0	169	169	100.0
SiSwati First Additional Language	326	326	100.0	362	359	99.2	366	359	98.1	356	350	98.3
Tshivenda First Additional Language	24	24	100.0	21	21	100.0	20	20	100.0	16	16	100.0
Xitsonga First Additional Language	19	19	100.0	13	12	92.3	24	24	100.0	23	23	100.0



Table 8.3.3: Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects (Full-Time - 2013 to 2016)

Subjects (Full-Time)	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Accounting	145 427	95 520	65.7	125 987	85 681	68.0	140 474	83 747	59.6	128 853	89 507	69.5
Agricultural Science	83 437	67 308	80.7	78 063	64 486	82.6	104 251	80 125	76.9	106 386	80 184	75.4
Business Studies	218 914	179 329	81.9	207 659	161 723	77.9	247 822	187 485	75.7	234 894	173 195	73.7
Economics	150 114	110 869	73.9	137 478	94 779	68.9	165 642	112 922	68.2	155 908	101 787	65.3
Geography	239 657	191 834	80.0	236 051	191 966	81.3	303 985	234 209	77.0	302 600	231 588	76.5
History	109 046	94 982	87.1	115 686	99 823	86.3	154 398	129 643	84.0	157 594	132 457	84.0
Life Orientation	569 530	568 311	99.8	542 956	540 810	99.6	660 202	658 308	99.7	663 975	661 903	99.7
Life Sciences	301 718	222 374	73.7	284 298	209 783	73.8	348 076	245 164	70.4	347 662	245 070	70.5
Mathematical Literacy	324 097	282 270	87.1	312 054	262 495	84.1	388 845	277 594	71.4	361 865	257 881	71.3
Mathematics	241 509	142 666	59.1	225 458	120 523	53.5	263 903	129 481	49.1	265 810	135 958	51.1
Physical Science	184 383	124 206	67.4	167 997	103 348	61.5	193 189	113 121	58.6	192 618	119 427	62.0

There was a significant improvement in Accounting which improved by 9.9%.

Table 8.3.4: Candidates' performance in non-language subjects (2013 to 2016)

Subjects	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved at 30% & above	% Achieved
Accounting	145 427	95 520	65.7	125 987	85 681	68.0	140 474	83 747	59.6	128 853	89 507	69.5
Agricultural Management Practices	1 417	1 412	99.6	1 615	1 599	99.0	2 040	2 011	98.6	2 631	2 586	98.3
Agricultural Sciences	83 437	67 308	80.7	78 063	64 486	82.6	104 251	80 125	76.9	106 386	80 184	75.4
Agricultural Technology	688	687	99.9	705	700	99.3	777	763	98.2	944	923	97.8
Business Studies	218 914	179 329	81.9	207 659	161 723	77.9	247 822	187 485	75.7	234 894	173 195	73.7
Civil Technology	9 073	8 849	97.5	9 210	8 961	97.3	10 446	10 085	96.5	10 613	10 303	97.1
Computer Applications Technology	44 848	41 348	92.2	40 910	37 379	91.4	41 026	36 778	89.6	38 359	34 927	91.1
Consumer Studies	39 504	39 231	99.3	38 511	37 820	98.2	46 063	45 019	97.7	43 214	42 048	97.3
Dance Studies	449	443	98.7	544	543	99.8	528	525	99.4	461	461	100.0
Design	2 178	2 153	98.9	2 135	2 097	98.2	2 170	2 132	98.2	2 031	1 993	98.1
Dramatic Arts	7 695	7 666	99.6	8 214	8 149	99.2	8 735	8 597	98.4	9 198	9 041	98.3
Economics	150 114	110 869	73.9	137 478	94 779	68.9	165 642	112 922	68.2	155 908	101 787	65.3
Electrical Technology	5 124	4 988	97.3	5 332	5 143	96.5	6 092	5 780	94.9	6 487	6 166	95.1
Engineering Graphics and Design	27 027	26 076	96.5	26 540	24 934	93.9	29 014	27 706	95.5	30 182	28 416	94.1
Geography	239 657	191 834	80.0	236 051	191 966	81.3	303 985	234 209	77.0	302 600	231 588	76.5
History	109 046	94 982	87.1	115 686	99 823	86.3	154 398	129 643	84.0	157 594	132 457	84.0
Hospitality Studies	8 778	8 686	99.0	8 428	8 298	98.5	8 902	8 769	98.5	8 032	7 867	97.9
Information Technology	4 874	4 651	95.4	4 820	4 464	92.6	4 326	4 028	93.1	4 346	3 926	90.3
Life Orientation	569 530	568 311	99.8	542 956	540 810	99.6	660 202	658 308	99.7	663 975	661 903	99.7
Life Sciences	301 718	222 374	73.7	284 298	209 783	73.8	348 076	245 164	70.4	347 662	245 070	70.5
Mathematical Literacy	324 097	282 270	87.1	312 054	262 495	84.1	388 845	277 594	71.4	361 865	257 881	71.3
Mathematics	241 509	142 666	59.1	225 458	120 523	53.5	263 903	129 481	49.1	265 810	135 958	51.1
Mechanical Technology	6 223	5 891	94.7	6 375	6 108	95.8	6 950	6 523	93.9	7 218	6 761	93.7
Music	1 762	1 702	96.6	1 744	1 659	95.1	1 874	1 769	94.4	1 845	1 788	96.9
Physical Sciences	184 383	124 206	67.4	167 997	103 348	61.5	193 189	113 121	58.6	192 618	119 427	62.0
Religion Studies	5 241	4 810	91.8	5 802	5 325	91.8	7 037	6 330	90.0	8 272	7 496	90.6
Tourism	110 565	106 449	96.3	116 179	113 251	97.5	144 643	139 447	96.4	143 650	139 293	97.0
Visual Arts	6 871	6 755	98.3	6 892	6 814	98.9	6 611	6 459	97.7	6 292	6 182	98.3



Table 8.3.5: Candidates' performance in Mathematics and Physical Science by gender (2012 to 2016)

Years	Subject Gender	Mathematics			Physical Science		
		Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
2012	Total Wrote	122 620	103 254	225 874	94 279	84 915	179 194
	Achieved at 30% & above	60 322	61 648	121 970	55 575	54 343	109 918
	% Achieved	49.2	59.7	54.0	58.9	64.0	61.3
2013	Total Wrote	132 784	108 725	241 509	97 995	86 388	184 383
	Achieved at 30% & above	72 069	70 597	142 666	64 376	59 830	124 206
	% Achieved	54.3	64.9	59.1	65.7	69.3	67.4
2014	Total Wrote	123 045	102 413	225 458	88 729	79 268	167 997
	Achieved at 30% & above	59 814	60 709	120 523	52 449	50 899	103 348
	% Achieved	48.6	59.3	53.5	59.1	64.2	61.5
2015	Total Wrote	144 405	119 498	263 903	102 983	90 206	193 189
	Achieved at 30% & above	63 898	65 583	129 481	58 036	55 085	113 121
	% Achieved	44.2	54.9	49.1	56.4	61.1	58.6
2016	Total Wrote	146 270	119 540	265 810	103 010	89 608	192 618
	Achieved at 30% & above	67 830	68 128	135 958	61 438	57 989	119 427
	% Achieved	46.4	57.0	51.1	59.6	64.7	62.0

In both subjects males performed better than females in term of pass rates.



The following two tables (and the previous table) provide important details relating to Mathematics and Physical Science. These are priority subjects in terms of the sector plan for basic education government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) and the National Development Plan. In both Mathematics and Physical Science the number of learners achieving 40% and above increased between 2014 and 2016. Analysis of achievement above this mark threshold reveals that at levels of performance considered important for mathematically-oriented programmes at university there has been progress too. This would be in line with the positive trends seen in South Africa's TIMSS results (see section 6).

In Mathematics 33 511 learners achieved a mark of 60% or more in the 2016 examinations following figures of 30 287 in 2014 and 31 811 for 2015. An increasing number of learners are hence equipped to fill critical skills gaps in the economy and contribute to the economic development of the country as a whole needs. By far most of the improvement has been amongst black African learners. For instance the increase of 1 700 between 2015 and 2016 with respect to learners achieving a mark of 60 per cent or more in mathematics becomes an increase of 1 308 if one considers just black African learners. The trends thus point to a narrowing of the serious race-based inequalities in schools. It is moreover important to note that historically black African schools currently account for around two-thirds of black African learners who achieve a mark of 60 or more in Mathematics. Township and rural schools are making important contributions, and these are in fact the schools which have shown the largest improvements in recent years.

In Physical Science the number of learners (of any population group) achieving 60 per cent or more reached 28 511 in 2016. The highest figure seen since the NSC was introduced in 2008.

Table 8.3-6: Candidates' performance in Mathematics by province and level of achievement (2014 to 2016)

Province	Mathematics														
	Total Wrote			Total achieved at 30% and above			% achieved at 30% and above			Total achieved at 40% and above			% achieved at 40% and above		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Eastern Cape	31 091	39 084	39 628	13 054	14 597	14 858	42.0	37.3	37.5	7 812	8 526	8 781	25.1	21.8	22.2
Free State	10 135	11 066	10 366	6 665	7 646	7 387	65.8	69.1	71.3	4 506	5 089	5 037	44.5	46.0	48.6
Gauteng	35 572	37 053	38 639	24 661	25 789	26 542	69.3	69.6	68.7	18 035	18 450	19 164	50.7	49.8	49.6
Kwazulu-Natal	71 634	85 057	81 323	29 188	28 265	30 827	40.7	33.2	37.9	17 405	17 025	18 699	24.3	20.0	23.0
Limpopo	32 122	40 673	43 589	18 265	21 188	23 498	56.9	52.1	53.9	11 485	13 185	14 633	35.8	32.4	33.6
Mpumalanga	17 767	20 596	23 316	10 050	11 441	12 494	56.6	55.5	53.6	6 330	7 423	7 973	35.6	36.0	34.2
North West	9 478	10 761	10 596	5 846	6 416	6 647	61.7	59.6	62.7	3 819	4 016	4 291	40.3	37.3	40.5
Northern Cape	2 411	3 054	2 789	1 529	1 742	1 694	63.4	57.0	60.7	1 022	1 101	1 116	42.4	36.1	40.0
Western Cape	15 248	16 559	15 564	11 265	12 397	12 011	73.9	74.9	77.2	8 636	9 482	9 390	56.6	57.3	60.3
National	225 458	263 903	265 810	120 523	129 481	135 958	53.5	49.1	51.1	79 050	84 297	89 084	35.1	31.9	33.5



Table 8.3.7: Candidates' performance in Physical Science by province and level of achievement (2014 to 2016)

Province	Physical Science														
	Total Wrote			Total achieved at 30% and above			% achieved at 30% and above			Total achieved at 40% and above			% achieved at 40% and above		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Eastern Cape	21 855	27 749	27 574	11 263	12 731	13 687	51.5	45.9	49.6	57.93	68.72	7 640	26.5	24.8	27.7
Free State	8 641	9 628	8 436	5 959	6 709	6 365	69.0	69.7	75.5	3 699	4 172	4 236	42.8	43.3	50.2
Gauteng	29 093	30 548	32 001	19 881	20 690	21 909	68.3	67.7	68.5	13 353	14 076	14 933	45.9	46.1	46.7
Kwazulu-Natal	45 143	50 163	48 394	25 177	25 988	27 954	55.8	51.8	57.8	14 077	15 126	17 615	31.2	30.2	36.4
Limpopo	26 691	33 680	34 969	17 801	20 063	21 777	66.7	59.6	62.3	10 384	11 928	13 257	38.9	35.4	37.9
Mpumalanga	15 210	17 528	18 917	8 921	10 981	12 034	58.7	62.6	63.6	5 234	6 756	7 496	34.4	38.5	39.6
North West	8 191	9 090	8 605	5 243	5 639	5 993	64.0	62.0	69.6	3 012	3 265	3 702	36.8	35.9	43.0
Northern Cape	2 082	2 777	2 558	1 258	1 507	1 469	60.4	54.3	57.4	765	920	873	36.7	33.1	34.1
Western Cape	11 091	12 026	11 164	7 845	8 813	8 239	70.7	73.3	73.8	5 715	6 584	6 292	51.5	54.7	56.4
National	167 997	193 189	192 618	103 348	113 121	119 427	61.5	58.6	62.0	62 032	69 699	76 044	36.9	36.1	39.5

Table 8.3.8: Candidates' performance in Accounting by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	Accounting									
	2015					2016				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	18 021	9 497	5 271	52.7	29.2	16 452	10 163	5 986	61.8	36.4
Free State	7 268	5 307	3 442	73.0	47.4	6 517	5 628	3 975	86.4	61.0
Gauteng	24 203	17 133	12 013	70.8	49.6	21 522	17 793	13 053	82.7	60.6
Kwazulu-Natal	39 671	20 430	11 627	51.5	29.3	36 367	21 721	13 116	59.7	36.1
Limpopo	22 945	12 679	6 737	55.3	29.4	22 205	14 415	8 364	64.9	37.7
Mpumalanga	10 116	6 461	3 886	63.9	38.4	9 574	6 990	4 455	73.0	46.5
North West	6 019	3 701	2 000	61.5	33.2	5 262	4 150	2 733	78.9	51.9
Northern Cape	1 799	999	613	55.5	34.1	1 558	1 153	743	74.0	47.7
Western Cape	10 432	7 540	5 317	72.3	51.0	9 396	7 494	5 489	79.8	58.4
Total	140 474	83 747	50 906	59.6	36.2	128 853	89 507	57 914	69.5	44.9



Table 8.3.9: Candidates' performance in Business Studies by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	Business Studies									
	2015			2016						
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	29 344	20 212	12 776	68.9	43.5	28 400	18 376	11 207	64.7	39.5
Free State	13 518	11 021	7 687	81.5	56.9	11 520	9 937	6 918	86.3	60.1
Gauteng	48 925	43 488	32 448	88.9	66.3	45 593	39 715	29 440	87.1	64.6
Kwazulu-Natal	69 615	48 097	33 032	69.1	47.4	65 390	44 346	30 007	67.8	45.9
Limpopo	28 300	17 765	9 465	62.8	33.4	27 787	16 396	8 890	59.0	32.0
Mpumalanga	19 868	15 024	9 103	75.6	45.8	20 097	14 422	8 668	71.8	43.1
North West	11 270	10 062	7 212	89.3	64.0	10 959	9 406	6 445	85.8	58.8
Northern Cape	4 185	2 974	1 794	71.1	42.9	3 685	2 894	1 815	78.5	49.3
Western Cape	22 797	18 842	13 936	82.7	61.1	21 463	17 703	12 835	82.5	59.8
Total	247 822	187 485	127 453	75.7	51.4	234 894	173 195	116 225	73.7	49.5

Table 8.3.10: Candidates' performance in Economics by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	Economics									
	2015					2016				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	23 020	12 419	6 117	53.9	26.6	21 948	11 966	5 631	54.5	25.7
Free State	8 384	5 511	2 728	65.7	32.5	7 112	4 885	2 413	68.7	33.9
Gauteng	29 015	23 748	15 223	81.8	52.5	26 242	20 984	13 577	80.0	51.7
Kwazulu-Natal	41 626	25 291	13 746	60.8	33.0	37 911	24 812	14 512	65.4	38.3
Limpopo	30 742	21 036	12 128	68.4	39.5	31 928	17 048	8 335	53.4	26.1
Mpumalanga	13 630	9 696	5 216	71.1	38.3	13 102	9 001	4 673	68.7	35.7
North West	7 348	5 999	3 539	81.6	48.2	6 729	5 209	2 942	77.4	43.7
Northern Cape	1 894	1 351	798	71.3	42.1	1 712	1 270	681	74.2	39.8
Western Cape	9 983	7 871	5 285	78.8	52.9	9 224	6 612	4 030	71.7	43.7
Total	165 642	112 922	64 780	68.2	39.1	155 908	101 787	56 794	65.3	36.4



Table 8.3.11: Candidates' performance in Geography by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	2015						2016					
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%		
Eastern Cape	35 312	23 610	14 000	66.9	39.6	34 928	24 226	14 584	69.4	41.8		
Free State	12 847	10 727	7 453	83.5	58.0	10 550	9 561	7 171	90.6	68.0		
Gauteng	49 348	42 289	29 139	85.7	59.0	50 006	43 058	29 221	86.1	58.4		
Kwazulu-Natal	78 898	54 674	34 430	69.3	43.6	76 277	54 988	34 723	72.1	45.5		
Limpopo	55 617	42 776	28 348	76.9	51.0	58 745	41 642	24 561	70.9	41.8		
Mpumalanga	25 643	21 367	14 588	83.3	56.9	26 454	20 384	12 374	77.1	46.8		
North West	18 413	15 162	9 026	82.3	49.0	19 425	15 494	8 753	79.8	45.1		
Northern Cape	6 252	4 794	2 723	76.7	43.6	5 963	4 764	2 617	79.9	43.9		
Western Cape	21 655	18 810	13 505	86.9	62.4	20 252	17 471	11 692	86.3	57.7		
Total	303 985	234 209	153 212	77.0	50.4	302 600	231 588	145 696	76.5	48.1		

Table 8.3.12: Candidates' performance in History by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	History					
	2015			2016		
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	
Eastern Cape	22 827	16 546	10 828	72.5	47.4	23 297
Free State	6 073	5 084	3 904	83.7	64.3	4 654
Gauteng	30 508	28 281	23 214	92.7	76.1	30 574
Kwazulu-Natal	39 930	31 766	23 048	79.6	57.7	41 818
Limpopo	18 478	14 301	9 444	77.4	51.1	19 812
Mpumalanga	7 190	6 360	5 059	88.5	70.4	7 942
North West	7 118	6 465	4 862	90.8	68.3	8 067
Northern Cape	3 945	3 426	2 227	86.8	56.5	3 713
Western Cape	18 329	17 414	15 060	95.0	82.2	17 717
Total	154 398	129 643	97 646	84.0	63.2	157 594
						132 457
						101 347
						84.0
						82.3
						64.7
						74.0
						59.6
						36.0
						81.6
						61.3
						66.8
						82.4
						92.3
						89.5
						95.7
						84.0
						64.3



Table 8.3.13: Candidates' performance in Life Science by province and level of achievement (2015-2016)

Province	Life Science					
	2015			2016		
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	
Eastern Cape	50 440	30 183	18 210	59.8	36.1	50 281
Free State	15 214	12 648	9 283	83.1	61.0	13 067
Gauteng	50 265	40 909	29 702	81.4	59.1	50 868
Kwazulu-Natal	86 927	56 718	36 570	65.2	42.1	85 943
Limpopo	62 531	42 817	25 933	68.5	41.5	65 349
Mpumalanga	29 513	23 006	14 996	78.0	50.8	31 409
North West	18 081	13 399	8 113	74.1	44.9	17 745
Northern Cape	7 180	4 105	2 211	57.2	30.8	6 458
Western Cape	27 925	21 379	15 186	76.6	54.4	26 542
Total	348 076	245 164	160 204	70.4	46.0	347 662
						No. Pass 30 - 100%
						No. Pass 40 - 100%
						% Pass 30 - 100%
						% Pass 40 - 100%
						157 177
						70.5
						45.2

Table 8.3.14: Candidates' performance in Mathematical Literacy by province and level of achievement (2015–2016)

Province	Mathematical Literacy									
	2015					2016				
	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%	Wrote	No. Pass 30 - 100%	No. Pass 40 - 100%	% Pass 30 - 100%	% Pass 40 - 100%
Eastern Cape	48 877	27 193	14 278	55.6	29.2	44 924	25 194	14 240	56.1	31.7
Free State	21 933	17 068	11 368	77.8	51.8	17 262	15 291	11 506	88.6	66.7
Gauteng	72 765	62 474	45 629	85.9	62.7	67 597	58 253	43 375	86.2	64.2
Kwazulu-Natal	79 549	45 871	24 818	57.7	31.2	71 430	43 060	25 729	60.3	36.0
Limpopo	61 282	41 807	21 981	68.2	35.9	60 824	37 940	20 379	62.4	33.5
Mpumalanga	34 608	25 877	15 218	74.8	44.0	33 128	22 977	14 040	69.4	42.4
North West	22 744	18 830	11 747	82.8	51.6	22 483	17 872	11 234	79.5	50.0
Northern Cape	8 842	6 372	3 659	72.1	41.4	8 107	6 294	3 982	77.6	49.1
Western Cape	38 245	32 102	23 517	83.9	61.5	36 110	31 000	23 300	85.8	64.5
Total	388 845	277 594	172 215	71.4	44.3	361 865	257 881	167 785	71.3	46.4



Table 8.3.15: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)

Subject	2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved with distinctions	% with Distinction	Wrote	Achieved with distinctions	% with Distinction
Accounting	140 474	5 820	4.1	128 853	6 576	5.1
Afrikaans First Additional Language	86 987	5 629	6.5	83 883	6 167	7.4
Agricultural Sciences	104 251	305	0.3	106 386	326	0.3
Business Studies	247 822	5 783	2.3	234 894	4 999	2.1
Economics	165 642	1 309	0.8	155 908	1 586	1.0
English First Additional Language	543 941	5 178	1.0	547 292	6 664	1.2
Geography	303 985	4 635	1.5	302 600	4 183	1.4
History	154 398	5 540	3.6	157 594	5 973	3.8
Life Sciences	348 075	9 325	2.7	347 662	9 203	2.6
Mathematical Literacy	388 845	6 130	1.6	361 865	4 364	1.2
Mathematics	263 903	7 791	3.0	265 810	8 070	3.0
Physical Sciences	193 189	5 903	3.1	192 618	7 043	3.7

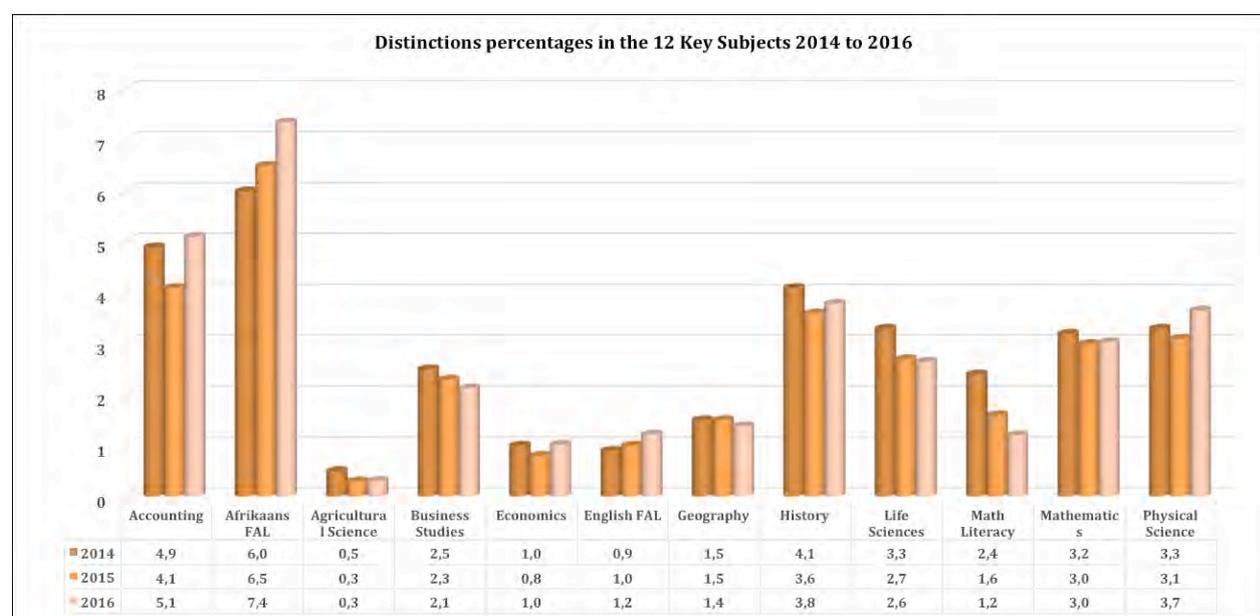


Figure 8.3: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)



8.4 Performance of learners with special needs

Table 8.4.1: Special Needs Education (SNE) candidates (including concession candidates) - Full-Time 2014 - 2016

Province Name	Years	Total Wrote	Achieved Bachelor	Achieved Diploma	Achieved H-Cert	Achieved NSC	Achieved Endorsed NSC	Did Not Achieve
EASTERN CAPE	2014	146	22	57	14	0	1	53
	2015	185	19	61	31	0	0	74
	2016	249	21	70	38	0	2	118
FREE STATE	2014	58	6	28	11	5	46	8
	2015	54	11	25	13	1	0	4
	2016	93	11	57	4	0	21	0
GAUTENG	2014	730	203	375	52	37	69	63
	2015	564	207	285	38	0	0	34
	2016	597	210	255	39	0	63	30
KWAZULU-NATAL	2014	103	20	64	6	0	4	13
	2015	646	153	229	115	0	0	149
	2016	664	156	240	86	0	0	182
LIMPOPO	2014	51	3	8	10	6	6	24
	2015	21	3	2	1	0	0	15
	2016	97	6	12	5	0	1	73
MPUMALANGA	2014	7	4	3	0	0	0	0
	2015	6	3	3	0	0	0	0
	2016	6	4	2	0	0	0	0
NORTH WEST	2014	23	4	14	3	0	0	2
	2015	30	7	15	2	0	0	6
	2016	14	4	9	0	0	1	0
NORTHERN CAPE	2014	19	6	9	0	2	1	2
	2015	19	4	11	1	1	0	2
	2016	25	8	11	2	0	3	1
WESTERN CAPE	2014	183	40	79	8	24	27	32
	2015	166	36	102	12	0	0	16
	2016	221	57	94	12	0	34	24
NATIONAL	2014	1 320	308	637	104	74	154	197
	2015	1 691	443	733	213	2	0	300
	2016	1 966	477	750	186	0	125	428



8.5 Performance of repeat candidates

Table 8.5.1: Overall performance of Repeat candidates (Full Time) in the 2016 NSC examination

Provinces	2016			
	Total Enrolled	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved
Eastern Cape	6 446	6 080	3 955	65.0
Free State	4	3	2	66.7
Gauteng	4	1	1	100.0
Kwazulu-Natal	3 592	3 215	2 359	73.4
Limpopo	11 494	11 232	6 975	62.1
Mpumalanga	3 147	2 972	2 430	81.8
North West	23	23	18	78.3
Northern Cape	2	1	1	100.0
Western Cape	0	0	0	
National	24 712	23 527	15 741	66.9

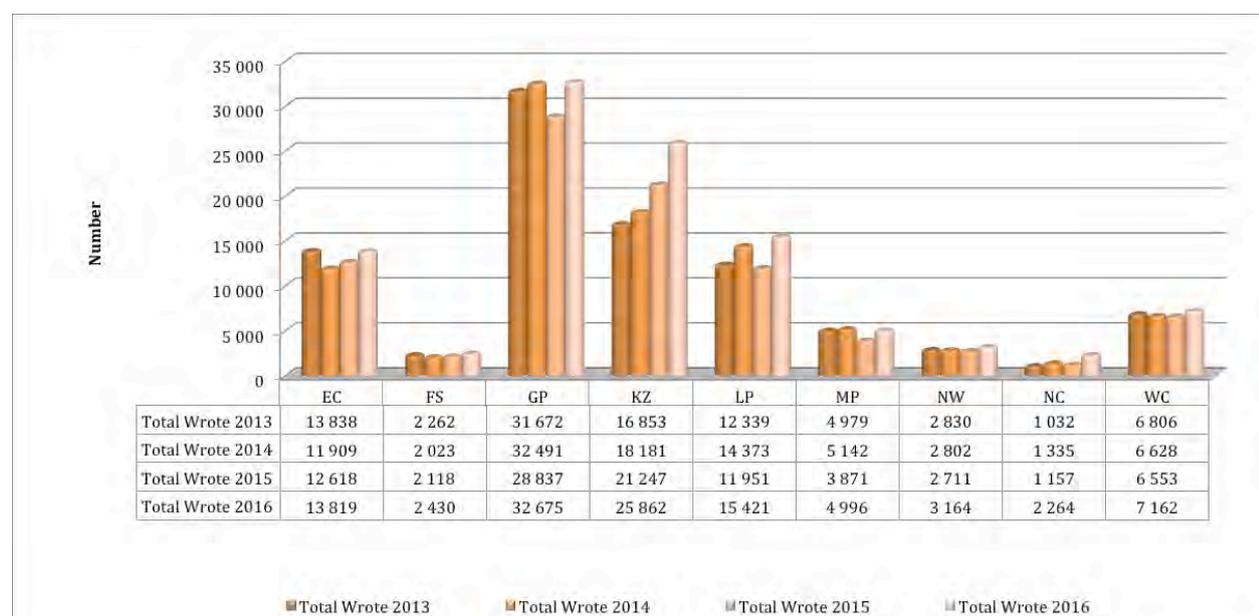


Figure 8.4: Number and percentage of distinctions per subject (80% - 100%)



8.6 Performance of part-time candidates

Table 8.6.1: Candidates Enrolled / Wrote (Part-time) (2014 – 2016)

Province Name	2014		2015		2016	
	Total Entered	Total Wrote	Total Entered	Total Wrote	Total Entered	Total Wrote
Eastern Cape	21 503	11 909	19 312	12 618	20 847	13 819
Free State	3 101	2 023	3 470	2 118	3 775	2 430
Gauteng	42 538	32 491	39 181	28 837	42 025	32 675
KwaZulu-Natal	26 666	18 181	31 176	21 247	37 915	25 862
Limpopo	19 673	14 373	16 137	11 951	21 124	15 421
Mpumalanga	8 008	5 142	5 569	3 871	7 189	4 996
North West	3 794	2 802	3 386	2 711	3 884	3 164
Northern Cape	2 583	1 335	1 838	1 157	3 976	2 264
Western Cape	11 842	6 628	11 312	6 553	12 633	7 162
National	139 708	94 884	131 381	91 063	153 368	107 793



Table 8.6.2: Part-Time Candidates' performance at 30% and above in selected subjects. Part-Time (2012 to 2016)

Subjects (Part-Time)	2012			2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & Above	% Achieved
Accounting	1 248	341	27.3	14 030	3 336	23.8	15 274	4 410	28.9	13 362	4 480	33.5	15 328	6 142	40.1
Agricultural Sciences	327	125	38.2	6 582	2 140	32.5	6 340	2 893	45.6	4 820	2 635	54.7	6 713	3 596	53.6
Business Studies	1 668	577	34.6	16 024	6 902	43.1	16 905	6 687	39.6	16 231	8 052	49.6	17 942	8 016	44.7
Economics	1 044	333	31.9	13 530	3 818	28.2	14 894	4 217	28.3	15 309	6 065	39.6	17 257	6 293	36.5
Geography	1 612	517	32.1	17 474	6 617	37.9	18 272	8 005	43.8	17 541	9 026	51.5	21 245	10 404	49.0
History	572	286	50.0	3 984	1 729	43.4	4 312	1 609	37.3	4 643	2 768	59.6	5 459	3 122	57.2
Life Orientation	790	757	95.8	2 000	1 877	93.9	1 416	1 343	94.8	2 480	2 430	98.0	1 879	1 860	99.0
Life Sciences	2 749	1 055	38.4	32 820	12 409	37.8	34 688	15 651	45.1	32 114	17 774	55.3	39 008	20 092	51.5
Mathematical Literacy	1 681	1 021	60.7	18 204	9 919	54.5	19 265	10 382	53.9	19 868	10 484	52.8	27 575	13 083	47.4
Mathematics	4 722	1 273	27.0	47 067	15 766	33.5	45 114	12 421	27.5	44 376	15 695	35.4	50 925	19 273	37.8
Physical Sciences	3 715	994	26.8	38 537	13 356	34.7	36 862	11 703	31.7	35 219	13 726	39.0	39 801	17 315	43.5

8.7 Performance of progressed learners

Table 8.7.1: Number wrote and achieved NSC - Progressed Learners Excluded (2015 and 2016)

Province	2015				2016				% Difference
	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Ranking	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Ranking	
EASTERN CAPE	75 317	46 828	62.2	8	73 739	46 655	63.3	9	1.1
FREE STATE	26 082	22 875	87.7	2	21 504	20 032	93.2	1	5.5
GAUTENG	103 870	89 237	85.9	3	96 425	83 862	87.0	3	1.1
KWAZULU-NATAL	152 579	93 993	61.6	9	134 665	93 537	69.5	7	7.9
LIMPOPO	88 524	63 454	71.7	7	85 858	58 586	68.2	8	-3.4
MPUMALANGA	49 888	40 939	82.1	5	45 647	37 105	81.3	6	-0.8
NORTH WEST	9 659	7 454	77.2	6	27 392	23 603	86.2	4	9.0
NORTHERN CAPE	29 743	24 996	84.0	4	8 811	7 243	82.2	5	-1.8
WESTERN CAPE	50 119	44 080	88.0	1	48 627	42 665	87.7	2	-0.2
NATIONAL	585 781	433 856	74.1		542 668	413 288	76.2		2.1

Table 8.7.2: Number wrote and achieved NSC - Progressed Learners Only (2015 and 2016)

Province	2015				2016				Difference
	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Ranking	Total Wrote	Total Achieved	% Achieved	Ranking	
EASTERN CAPE	11 705	2 625	22.4	9	9 163	2 513	27.4	9	5.0
FREE STATE	5 105	2 600	50.9	2	5 282	3 597	68.1	1	17.2
GAUTENG	4 568	2 149	47.0	4	7 404	4 519	61.0	3	14.0
KWAZULU-NATAL	10 070	4 765	47.3	3	12 983	4 495	34.6	7	-12.7
LIMPOPO	13 022	3 492	26.8	8	15 949	5 009	31.4	8	4.6
MPUMALANGA	5 091	2 290	45.0	5	8 604	4 696	54.6	4	9.6
NORTH WEST	3 543	2 122	59.9	1	4 653	2 845	61.1	2	1.3
NORTHERN CAPE	1 963	613	31.2	7	1 230	659	53.6	5	22.3
WESTERN CAPE	3 589	1 404	39.1	6	2 242	1 051	46.9	6	7.8
NATIONAL	58 656	22 060	37.6		67 510	29 384	43.5		5.9

KwaZulu-Natal is the only province whose pass rate declined (-12.7%). Northern Cape had the highest gain in the pass rate of 22.3% followed by Free State and Gauteng.



8.8 District Performance

Table 8.8.1: District Performance in the National Senior Certificate (2013 to 2016)

EASTERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved									
	72 138	46 840	64.9	66 935	43 777	65.4	87 090	49 475	56.8	82 902	49 168	59.3
Butterworth	4 407	2 596	58.9	3 619	2 068	57.1	4 253	2 333	54.9	3 860	2 173	56.3
Cofimvaba	1 839	1 300	70.7	1 648	1 100	66.7	1 871	1 158	61.9	1 852	1 170	63.2
Cradock	853	627	73.5	690	568	82.3	1 004	719	71.6	815	662	81.2
Dutywa	3 540	2 152	60.8	3 418	1 978	57.9	4 933	2 573	52.2	5 156	2 553	49.5
East London	6 138	4 488	73.1	5 922	4 434	74.9	7 470	4 619	61.8	6 807	4 547	66.8
Fort Beaufort	1 911	1 082	56.6	1 674	952	56.9	2 046	1 016	49.7	1 946	990	50.9
Graaff-Reinet	824	557	67.6	861	545	63.3	961	578	60.1	778	591	76.0
Grahamstown	1 060	662	62.5	935	672	71.9	1 099	666	60.6	922	648	70.3
King Williams Town	5 232	3 414	65.3	5 013	3 204	63.9	5 759	3 396	59.0	5 815	3 456	59.4
Lady Frere	1 417	942	66.5	1 353	864	63.9	1 907	882	46.3	1 633	809	49.5
Libode	5 580	3 356	60.1	4 717	2 944	62.4	6 925	3 363	48.6	7 222	3 456	47.9
Lusikisiki	3 792	2 240	59.1	2 522	1 541	61.1	3 870	1 827	47.2	4 202	1 878	44.7
Maluti	1 799	1 267	70.4	1 914	1 181	61.7	2 522	1 409	55.9	2 131	1 321	62.0
Mbizana	3 210	1 885	58.7	3 068	1 845	60.1	4 078	2 178	53.4	4 816	2 654	55.1
MT Fletcher	1 654	1 081	65.4	1 638	1 063	64.9	2 282	1 270	55.7	1 961	1 198	61.1
MT Frere	2 329	1 370	58.8	3 483	1 920	55.1	4 837	2 666	55.1	5 220	3 230	61.9
Mthatha	6 718	4 518	67.3	5 497	3 716	67.6	6 889	4 385	63.7	6 556	4 355	66.4
Ngcobo	1 729	1 174	67.9	1 809	1 192	65.9	2 634	1 266	48.1	2 837	1 338	47.2
Port Elizabeth	7 575	5 609	74.0	7 613	5 655	74.3	9 349	6 168	66.0	8 635	5 482	63.5
Queenstown	2 732	1 800	65.9	3 028	1 757	58.0	3 161	1 791	56.7	2 745	1 736	63.2
Qumbu	2 547	1 339	52.6	1 329	997	75.0	2 842	1 360	47.9	2 004	1 308	65.3
Sterkspruit	2 133	1 219	57.1	2 225	1 346	60.5	2 939	1 465	49.8	1 757	1 146	65.2
Uitenhage	3 119	2 162	69.3	2 959	2 235	75.5	3 459	2 387	69.0	3 232	2 467	76.3

(b) FREE STATE DISTRICTS

FREE STATE DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved									
	27 105	23 689	87.4	26 440	21 899	82.8	31 161	25 416	81.6	26 786	23 629	88.2
Fezile Dabi	4 679	4 025	86.0	4 316	3 611	83.7	4 957	4 271	86.2	4 660	4 277	91.8
Lejweleputswa	5 594	4 842	86.6	5 554	4 489	80.8	6 307	5 210	82.6	5 462	4 711	86.3
Motheo	8 519	7 488	87.9	8 913	7 196	80.7	10 862	8 147	75.0	8 613	7 378	85.7
Thabo Mofutsanyana	7 282	6 438	88.4	6 563	5 747	87.6	7 907	6 904	87.3	7 104	6 392	90.0
Xhariep	1 031	896	86.9	1 094	856	78.2	1 128	884	78.4	947	871	92.0

(c) GAUTENG DISTRICTS

GAUTENG DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	97 897	85 122	87.0	99 478	84 247	84.7	108 442	91 327	84.2	103 829	88 381	85.1
Ekurhuleni North	9 116	8 039	88.2	8 767	7 780	88.7	9 731	8 447	86.8	9 820	8 549	87.1
Ekurhuleni South	10 308	8 711	84.5	11 134	8 878	79.7	11 237	9 337	83.1	10 290	8 893	86.4
Gauteng East	6 507	5 696	87.5	6 898	5 599	81.2	7 958	6 518	81.9	7 658	6 110	79.8
Gauteng North	1 728	1 529	88.5	1 836	1 591	86.7	2 129	1 800	84.5	2 304	1 822	79.1
Gauteng West	6 333	5 703	90.1	5 904	5 471	92.7	7 169	6 463	90.2	7 204	6 571	91.2
Johannesburg Central	7 702	6 537	84.9	8 344	6 775	81.2	9 195	7 087	77.1	7 464	6 241	83.6
Johannesburg East	6 969	6 137	88.1	7 689	6 452	83.9	7 913	6 638	83.9	6 802	5 918	87.0
Johannesburg North	6 355	5 518	86.8	6 644	5 686	85.6	7 414	6 213	83.8	7 007	6 012	85.8
Johannesburg South	6 272	5 296	84.4	6 099	5 376	88.1	6 424	5 629	87.6	6 876	5 906	85.9
Johannesburg West	4 556	4 082	89.6	4 804	4 145	86.3	5 154	4 466	86.7	4 871	4 233	86.9
Sedibeng East	2 576	2 337	90.7	2 427	2 213	91.2	2 848	2 575	90.4	2 899	2 493	86.0
Sedibeng West	5 354	4 440	82.9	5 897	4 619	78.3	5 748	4 721	82.1	5 916	4 847	81.9
Tshwane North	6 466	5 684	87.9	6 210	5 214	84.0	6 959	5 657	81.3	6 454	5 439	84.3
Tshwane South	10 353	9 163	88.5	10 296	8 959	87.0	10 862	9 433	86.8	10 675	9 234	86.5
Tshwane West	7 302	6 250	85.6	6 529	5 489	84.1	7 701	6 343	82.4	7 589	6 113	80.6



(d) KWAZULU-NATAL DISTRICTS

KWAZULU-NATAL DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	145 278	112 403	77.4	139 367	97 144	69.7	162 658	98 761	60.7	147 648	98 032	66.4
Amajuba	6 908	5 482	79.4	7 463	4 891	65.5	9 217	5 415	58.8	6 627	5 119	77.2
Ilembe	8 358	6 054	72.4	7 963	4 714	59.2	9 141	4 747	51.9	9 292	4 870	52.4
Pinetown	19 248	15 694	81.5	18 592	14 099	75.8	20 098	12 993	64.6	19 057	12 650	66.4
Harry Gwala	5 889	4 162	70.7	6 382	4 126	64.7	6 985	4 380	62.7	6 759	4 323	64.0
Ugu	10 171	7 648	75.2	9 542	6 921	72.5	11 910	7 177	60.3	10 487	6 859	65.4
Umgungundlovu	12 866	10 245	79.6	12 249	9 271	75.7	13 218	8 986	68.0	11 958	9 129	76.3
Umkhanyakude	10 461	7 757	74.2	10 308	7 413	71.9	14 054	8 810	62.7	12 783	8 844	69.2
Umlazi	23 099	19 340	83.7	21 056	16 272	77.3	21 648	15 726	72.6	20 400	15 186	74.4
Umninyathi	8 471	6 083	71.8	7 545	4 163	55.2	10 047	4 679	46.6	7 975	4 627	58.0
Uthukela	9 284	7 315	78.8	8 853	6 493	73.3	11 095	6 778	61.1	9 816	6 650	67.7
Uthungulu	16 137	11 733	72.7	15 034	9 626	64.0	18 360	10 023	54.6	17 172	10 893	63.4
Zululand	14 386	10 890	75.7	14 380	9 155	63.7	16 885	9 047	53.6	15 322	8 882	58.0

(e) LIMPOPO DISTRICTS

LIMPOPO DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved
	82 483	59 184	71.8	72 990	53 179	72.9	101 575	66 946	65.9	101 807	63 595	62.5
Capricorn	22 232	15 592	70.1	19 449	13 916	71.6	24 839	16 572	66.7	27 261	16 592	60.9
Greater Sekhukhune	15 469	10 173	65.8	14 690	9 389	63.9	21 531	11 843	55.0	22 439	11 634	51.8
Mopani	17 256	11 949	69.2	13 963	10 369	74.3	19 152	13 193	68.9	18 833	12 367	65.7
Vhembe	20 396	16 436	80.6	18 403	14 932	81.1	26 535	19 809	74.7	25 544	17 968	70.3
Waterberg	7 130	5 034	70.6	6 485	4 573	70.5	9 518	5 529	58.1	7 730	5 034	65.1

(f) MPUMALANGA DISTRICTS

MPUMALANGA DISTRICTS	2013		2014		2015		2016		
	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved							
	50 053	38 836	45 081	35 615	54 980	43 229	54 251	41 801	77.1
Bohlabela	11 057	7 966	9 753	7 491	11 341	8 700	12 454	9 009	72.3
Ehlanzeni	14 586	12 079	13 792	11 324	16 203	13 349	15 814	12 568	79.5
Gert Sibande	10 992	8 396	10 376	8 005	13 555	9 844	11 934	9 057	75.9
Nkangala	13 418	10 395	11 160	8 795	13 881	11 336	14 049	11 167	79.5

(g) NORTH WEST DISTRICTS

NORTH WEST DISTRICTS	2013		2014		2015		2016		
	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved							
	29 140	25 414	26 066	22 061	33 286	27 118	32 045	26 448	82.5
Bojanala Platinum	11 873	10 366	9 979	8 598	12 364	10 541	12 496	10 493	84.0
Dr. K. Kaunda	5 626	4 883	5 309	4 450	6 523	5 388	6 132	5 041	82.2
Dr. R.S. Mompoti	4 891	4 058	4 622	3 658	5 800	4 490	6 136	4 672	76.1
Ngaka M. Molema	6 750	6 107	6 156	5 355	8 599	6 699	7 281	6 242	85.7

(h) NORTHERN CAPE DISTRICTS

NORTHERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2013		2014		2015		2016		
	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved	Wrote	Achieved % Achieved	
	10 403	7 749	8 794	6 715	11 623	8 064	10 041	7 902	78.7
Frances Baard	4 114	3 007	3 461	2 632	4 452	3 043	3 690	2 893	78.4
John Taolo Gaetsewe	2 172	1 545	1 421	1 034	2 376	1 473	2 096	1 477	70.5
Namaqua	919	822	921	755	1 008	771	884	804	91.0
Pixley Ka Seme	1 342	962	1 178	881	1 550	1 171	1 254	1 040	82.9
Z F Mgcawu	1 856	1 413	1 813	1 413	2 237	1 606	2 117	1 688	79.7



(i) WESTERN CAPE DISTRICTS

WESTERN CAPE DISTRICTS	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Wrote	Achieved	% Achieved									
	47 615	40 542	85.1	47 709	39 237	82.2	53 721	45 489	84.7	50 869	43 716	85.9
Cape Winelands	6 823	5 918	86.7	6 932	5 773	83.3	8 070	6 743	83.6	7 562	6 405	84.7
Eden & Central Karoo	5 231	4 580	87.6	5 452	4 373	80.2	5 871	5 001	85.2	5 478	4 644	84.8
Metro Central	7 963	6 829	85.8	8 049	6 619	82.2	8 639	7 566	87.6	7 978	7 026	88.1
Metro East	7 670	6 180	80.6	7 129	5 809	81.5	8 299	6 684	80.5	9 268	7 659	82.6
Metro North	8 741	7 500	85.8	9 227	7 498	81.3	10 063	8 501	84.5	8 057	7 118	88.3
Metro South	7 539	6 285	83.4	7 319	5 986	81.8	8 605	7 267	84.5	8 334	7 108	85.3
Overberg	1 549	1 394	90.0	1 505	1 326	88.1	1 862	1 671	89.7	1 698	1 574	92.7
West coast	2 099	1 856	88.4	2 096	1 853	88.4	2 312	2 056	88.9	2 494	2 182	87.5

Table 8.8.2: Summary of District Performance 2015 and 2016

Province	Total Number of Districts	2015					2016				
		Below 50%	50% to 59.9%	60% to 69.9%	70% to 79.9%	80% and above	Below 50%	50% to 59.9%	60% to 69.9%	70% to 79.9%	80% and above
Eastern Cape	23	7	8	7	1	0	5	4	10	3	1
Free State	5	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Gauteng	15	0	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	2	13
Kwazulu-Natal	12	1	4	6	1	0	0	3	6	3	0
Limpopo	5	0	2	2	1	0	0	1	3	1	0
Mpumalanga	4	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	4	0
North West	4	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	3
Northern Cape	5	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	2
Western Cape	8	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
Total	81	8	14	17	13	29	5	8	19	17	32

Table 8.8.3: Names of Districts performing below 50%

	Total Wrote	Number Achieved	% Achieved
EASTERN CAPE			
DUTYWA	5 156	2 553	49.5
LADY FRERE	1 633	809	49.5
LIBODE	7 222	3 456	47.9
LUSIKISIKI	4 202	1 878	44.7
NGCOBO	2 837	1 338	47.2

Table: 8.8.4: Names of Districts performing above 90%

Province	District Names	% Achieved
WESTERN CAPE	Overberg	92.7
FREE STATE	Xhariep	92.0
FREE STATE	Fezile Dabi	91.8
GAUTENG	Gauteng West	91.2
NORTHERN CAPE	Namaqua	91.0
FREE STATE	Thabo Mofutsanyana	90.0



9. KEY GAINS

There are significant lessons that can be extracted from the outcome of the 2016 NSC results. The increase in pass rate is largely due the 2016 cohort benefitting from the maturity of the system garnered over the last seven years. The more tangible system gains can be summarised as follows:

- (a) More learners are achieving higher-level Grade 12 outcomes which are considered sufficient by universities for entry into specific university programmes. Given, the widely acknowledged skills gaps in economy. This development is crucial. To illustrate the trend full-time Grade 12 candidates achieving 60% in physical science was higher in 2016 than in any other year since 2008 since the NSC was introduced. The number of candidates achieving 60% in mathematics has been rising steadily since at least 2008 and the 2016 results covered in the current report demonstrate a continuation of the trend. Various sources of evidence confirm that the trend is real and is not for instance a manifestation of changing standards in the examination. The DBE's own detailed analysis has confirmed that gradually the gap between the system's best performing schools and schools which have historically performed at much lower levels. is narrowing. The international TIMSS results confirm that South Africa's Grade 9 learners have improved substantially in Mathematics and Science since 2002 meaning learners are entering Grade 12 better prepared than before. The largest gains have been seen in historically disadvantaged schools indicating there is a move to a reduction in South Africa's unacceptably high race-based educational inequalities. At the highest levels of achievement in mathematics and physical science there are around equal numbers of males and females which bodes well for more gender equality in traditionally male-dominated areas of work.
- (b) For the last twenty years there has been a general trend towards more youth obtaining a Grade 12 school qualification. The trend has accelerated since 2015 with the introduction of new progression rules aimed at preventing dropping out before Grade 12. The marks that learners obtain in their National Senior Certificate are often too low. Clearly the schooling system needs to work hard at ensuring that more learners obtain higher marks. However the simple fact of having a certificate undeniably opens up opportunities for youth in terms of seeking employment and pursuing post-school studies. Moreover keeping youth in the system allows them to improve their capabilities in specific subjects over time through supplementary examinations, part-time studies and recently introduced modularized approaches to building one's NSC.
- (c) In relation to SBA, the quality of internal assessment at schools is improving, particularly when one compares SBA marks to Examination marks. There has been a national decline of 0.4% of rejected marks. There has been an improvement in the range where SBA marks are not adjusted, nationally by 1.6% with provincial improvements ranging from 0.3% to 4.5% and one province had a slight decline of 0.4%. In the category of very high differences between SBA means and Examination means there has also been an improvement as the data shows a decline of 5.9% nationally and ranging from 0.1% to 13.9% in provinces. In the category where SBA means are lower than the Examination means the national percentage has increased by 2.9%. This shows an increase in the standard of assessment at these schools.



10. LIMITATIONS

The Quality Assurance Council, Umalusi, plays a critical role in protecting the integrity of the NSC examinations. After the Council has completed a rigorous verification of all examination processes, it declared the examination free and fair. However, the NSC has certain limitations which are being addressed by the DBE.

(a) Limited pre-testing of items

The NSC is a public examination utilising secure test items unseen to candidates. The risk of test item exposure does not allow for pre-testing of items. Examination panels comprising subject experts do not make use of statistical information on test item discrimination and difficulty levels to refine question papers. Instead they are assisted by intensive post-test analyses of the previous year's (2015) NSC question papers and international benchmarking exercises. Examination panels carefully consider the analyses conducted by Umalusi and other independent assessment experts in the setting of question papers. Pre-test writing of question papers in key subjects by independent subject experts provides feedback on the face-validity of questions. Using this information, the question papers are further refined. This is a practice which will be extended in future years.

(b) Subjectivity in determining cognitive and difficulty levels

The construct of question papers is based on test specifications, which shows the details of the cognitive and difficulty levels. Examination panels use pre-determined cognitive levels and difficulty levels listed in subject assessment guidelines to classify items to a test specification grid. This is done according to specific assessment weightings to ensure that balanced examination papers are set comprising a variety of critical thinking and problem solving skills. There is currently a lack of explicit criteria in CAPS to exemplify and differentiate the various categories used to describe cognitive and difficulty levels. Examination panels use their individual subject expertise to match test items to listed categories and this process allows for potentially different analyses of test item classifications by different individuals. The DBE has initiated a process of enhancing assessment guidelines to provide further clarity on this matter.

(c) Marker competency

The reliability of the marking system is primarily dependent on the professional competency and calibre of markers. Uniform and consistent application of the marking guidelines across all learners' scripts is required to ensure reliability of marking. Intensive training of all appointed chief markers and internal moderators is done to ensure an acceptable "Tolerance Range" is reached on marking each examination question and any discrepancy is closely monitored by the Examination panel. It is expected that the same level of intensity is conducted in the training of markers at provincial level. Where markers are not able to achieve scores aligned to the acceptable tolerance range, they have to be retrained or reassigned to mark a different set of questions. Inappropriate marker competency delays the marking process and disrupts the marking organisation on specific questions. The introduction of the tolerance range in the marking system has reduced the number of discrepancies identified by external moderators in previous years, however, this valuable quality assurance mechanism has to be applied with greater intensity in future years.

(d) Limited presentation of data

The national report presents only a snapshot of data analysis at national, provincial and district levels. The analysis is restricted to full-time candidates that have written six or more subjects. The results of part-time candidates who usually only register for one or more subjects are not considered in the same way as full-time candidates and is limited to subject performance. The results of the 2016 cohort are compared in relation to performance levels of the three previous years. The data is presented to provide an aggregated national picture on the number of NSC passes, qualification type, gender, school performance, quintile, national subjects, special needs education and district performance. It does not provide pedagogical information on learning gaps. A national diagnostic report on specific subjects at a later stage will provide input to teaching and learning at classroom level.

The above limitations are typical of internationally conducted "high stakes" public examinations and are not unique to the NSC.



11. CONCLUSION

Twenty years ago former President Mandela indicated that the signing of the Constitution in Sharpeville “*marked the closure of a chapter of exclusion and a reaffirmation of our determination to build a society of which all of us can be proud*”. The cornerstone of this determination has been an impervious goal to profit the children of South Africa with knowledge and skills that translate into economic freedom within a democratically transformed society. Hence, the Government of the Republic of South Africa esteems the provision of quality basic education free of discrimination as its apex priority and as a national imperative advanced by citizenry and provided for in the Constitution. The Minister directs that standards of education provision, delivery and performance of learners be monitored and evaluated by the Department annually or at other specified intervals with the object of assessing progress in complying with the provisions of the Constitution and with national education policy. The outcome of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) has since its introduction in 2008 been regarded as the primary indicator of progress made in the system.

The improvements and the performance of the System is encouraging and the DBE will continue to analyze the data in a more in-depth manner and lessons that emerge will be incorporated in the ongoing improvement strategies of the sector.

The effort of the Class of 2016 in taking our young democracy to greater heights must be commended. Success in the NSC is valuable and provides a gateway to access higher education institutions and the world of work. Further support for those who did not achieve the NSC can be accessed through the Second Chance Matric Programme that was launched by the DBE in 2016. The DBE will build on the gains of 2016 to prepare the Class of 2017 so that they can be sufficiently prepared and benefit from a system on the rise.





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