



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Address by the Basic Education Minister Mrs Angie Motshekga Delivered at the Umalusi 20th Anniversary Celebration & Council Welcome Dinner**

**6 September 2022**

Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology – the Honourable Dr Blade Nzimande,

Deputy Minister of Basic Education – the Honourable Dr Reginah Mhaule,

Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology – the Honourable Mr Buti Manamela,

Honourable T Letsie, attending on behalf of Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education – Honourable Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba,

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology – Honourable Ms NT Mkhathshwa,

Chairperson of the sixth Umalusi Council – Prof Yunus Ballim,

Members of the sixth Umalusi Council,

Former Chairpersons of Umalusi Council – Profs Mabizela and Volmink (in absentia),

Heads of Provincial Education Departments,

Dr Rufus Poliah – attending on behalf of the Director-General of the Department of Basic Education, Mr Mathanzima Mweli, and DBE officials,

Umalusi CEO – Dr Mafu Rakometsi,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to be part of this occasion to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Umalusi while at the same time welcoming the sixth Umalusi Council.

Programme Director, before I talk about Umalusi and its journey of two decades, I wish to start by announcing members of the sixth Umalusi Council.

These men and women have made themselves available to fulfil one of the aims of our Constitution, namely, “to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.”

1. The Councillors are:

Name and Surname	Current Occupation
<b>1. Prof Y Ballim</b>  <b>Council</b>  <b>Chairperson</b>	Professor Emeritus: School of Civil & Environmental Engineering - WITS University
<b>2. Dr W Green</b>	Chief Executive Officer: Council on Higher Education (CHE)

<b>Name and Surname</b>	<b>Current Occupation</b>
3. Mr DB Hindle	Chairperson: ETDP SETA Accounting Authority
4. Prof L Jita	Dean: Faculty of Education, University of the Free State
5. Mr NT Johnstone	CEO: Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)
6. Prof TS Maluleke	Vice Chancellor and Principal – Tshwane University of Technology
7. Adv. MJ Merabe	EXCO member of the South African Education Law Association
8. Ms M Metcalfe	Executive Director at PILO
9. Dr L Mokotjo	Head of Faculty: The Independent Institute of Education
10. Prof TP Msibi	Dean and Head of School - University of KwaZulu Natal
11. Dr C Myburgh	Director: Enrolment and Student Administration, University of Pretoria
12. Mr V Naidoo	Chief Executive Officer: Quality Council for Trades & Occupations (QCTO)
13. Dr MS Rakometsi	Chief Executive Officer: Umalusi
14. Dr J Reddy	Chief Executive Officer: South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
15. Dr KM Dos Reis	Director at Dos Reis and Venter Education Association
16. Ms F Solomon	Vice President – Education: SADTU

This is a Council with a good mix of the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions.

You have been appointed to serve a four-year term from 8 June 2022 to 7 June 2026.

As Council members, you have a straightforward task. Yours is to perform your fiduciary duties diligently.

You have a duty to contribute to ensuring that the Council make good-faith decisions that align the best interests of Umalusi with its mandate of continuous improvement of the quality of education in South Africa.

The role of the Council is to act with due regard to the legal prescripts governing Umalusi's operations.

Members of the previous Council ensured that Umalusi transitioned from obtaining unqualified audit opinion to clean audit reports in 2018/19.

A clean audit is a financially unqualified audit opinion with no material findings on reporting performance objectives.

Having started on this beautiful trajectory of clean audits, I have no doubt that the sixth and successive Councils will maintain the standards set.

Another of your key responsibilities is to advise the Minister concerning different aspects of the mandate of Umalusi.

In this regard, I want to challenge you to provide such advice without fear or favour.

I want to thank you in advance, knowing that you will contribute your expertise to the noble cause of maintaining a robust basic education and training system in our beloved country.

Returning to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, I congratulate Umalusi, the caretaker of one of the nation's most treasured assets - the standards of general and further education and training, for its resilience over the last twenty years.

The twentieth anniversary is a significant moment in the history of any organisation.

From its humble beginnings, Umalusi has grown to be a recognised brand in the basic and post-school education sector in South Africa.

Since its establishment in 2001, seven years after the 1994 democratic changes, Umalusi has significantly contributed to improving the quality of our education and training system.

It has always provided advice on how to set, measure and/or assess and track educational standards within the context of a diverse and unequal society such as South Africa.

Using its robust quality assurance approaches, Umalusi successfully managed, from a quality assurance point of view, the transition from the Senior Certificate (SC) to the National Senior Certificate (NSC) in 2008.

As you are aware, the NSC ensures that every learner in the country writes the same examination and is therefore assessed against a common yardstick.

Umalusi has distinguished itself as a principal vehicle for upholding common standards in South Africa's education and training system differentiated along the lines of public and private provision.

I do agree with the assertion that a leader's tenacity is seen in how he/she responds to difficult situations.

Given the high-stakes nature of the NSC, debates ensue every year after the announcement of NSC results.

Parents, learners, teachers, researchers, government officials, policy-makers, universities and the general public get involved in the debate around the results.

The issues revolve around whether standards are falling or improving and whether adjustments to Grade 12 results constitute inflation of marks.

What I have always found missing in the debates is that standardisation of examination results is an international practice used to mitigate the effect of factors other than the learners' knowledge and aptitude on the learners' performance.

To date, no research has been conducted to prove that there is something fishy about the Umalusi standardisation process.

We are truly indebted to the efforts of Umalusi's Assessment Standards Committee (ASC) of Council for putting so much effort into their work.

We know that members sacrifice their valuable time to ensure that Umalusi remains a trusted authority in fostering high education standards in general and further education and training over the years.

Although I have never attended standardisation meetings, I have it on good authority that the sessions are quite robust, which should be appreciated.

We have, over the years, witnessed Umalusi sailing through relatively uncharted waters and establishing a solid presence in the South African education and training landscape and beyond the borders. Amongst its notable achievements are:

- a) The development of its sub-framework of qualifications,
- b) The development and implementation of accreditation approaches and systems for private providers of education and training, assessment bodies,
- c) The development of policies to guide the quality assurance of assessment function,
- d) The development of certification systems to support the qualifications for which Umalusi is responsible,
- e) The initiation of a robust research programme, and
- f) The hosting of regional and international conferences as well as national and international webinars on professional work.

This clearly shows that Umalusi has come a long way.

Thus, Umalusi should not let itself become complacent or judge its own performance uncritically.

Indeed, as you begin the journey of the next 20 years, you should actively seek criticism and well-founded judgements on what we could have done – and can still do – better.

Umalusi has successfully executed its mandate primarily due to the excellent and professional manner in which members of the first to the fifth Councils have performed their fiduciary duties.

I wish to take this moment to thank the members and Chairpersons of the past Umalusi Council.

Amongst us this evening are Dr Cassius Lubisi and Mr John Pampallis.

Further, I thank the first CEO of Umalusi, Prof Peliwe Lolwana and her team for setting things in motion for us to be where we are today.

Clearly, there is a great deal more to be done.

What is needed now is for Umalusi to ask itself the following question with a sober mind “What more do we still need to do”?

I sincerely believe that the next 20 years will give you an invaluable opportunity to continue the discussion and debate about how much more must be done.

The Council should continue in its pursuit of equity in providing quality education for all in the general and further education and training sub-sector.

Still, be mindful that decisions taken today will lay the foundation for the third decade of excellence in the service of South Africa’s pre-tertiary system.

Lastly, I wish to thank the CEO of Umalusi, Dr Mafu Rakometsi, as well as the Executive and Senior Management of Umalusi for the sterling work that they continue to do.

Your efforts in giving effect to the organisation’s strategic direction are appreciated.

I thank you, enjoy your dinner.