



education

Department:
Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ABRIDGED REPORT

2008 NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION RESULTS

December 2008

ABRIDGED REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS – 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2008 is a year of enormous significance for education in the Republic of South Africa. The new National Senior Certificate (NSC) curriculum that was introduced in 2006 at the Grade 10 level, culminated in the writing of the first National Senior Certificate examination in November 2008.

The 2007 Senior Certificate examination was the end of an era of a tradition of Senior Certificate public examinations that have been in existence since 1848. The 2007 examination was the last examination that was based on the differentiated system of higher and standard grades and the last examination that allowed candidates to write examination question papers that are set at provincial level. The move to the new examinations and assessment regime has built on the good practices and processes of these many years.

The new curriculum is designed to embody the values, knowledge and skills envisaged by the democratic South Africa in its constitution. It provides learners with the opportunity to perform at the maximum level of their potential and focuses on high knowledge, high skills while promoting positive values and attitudes.

New curriculum processes cannot be judged on the examination results of the first few years of implementation. Successful curriculum implementation is based on a gradual process of building, review and improvement. Therefore, the 2008 National Senior Certificate results provide the baseline data against which subsequent examination performances can be compared. This report provides a summary of the administrative processes that were implemented in the 2008 NSC examinations and also provides the key results of this examination.

2. THE NEW CURRICULUM AND NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE

2.1. The Focus of the New Curriculum and Assessment

The new curriculum is designed to participate in a changing 21st Century world and capacitates citizens to participate meaningfully in the economic growth and social development of the South

African society. Therefore, constitutional and human rights principles are ingrained in the outcomes of the new curriculum. The fundamental subjects including Languages, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation are compulsory subjects because they provide core skills for the intellectual and social development of learners.

With a change in the curriculum, comes a change in the assessment and the fundamental shift in the new assessment is a focus on clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment standards. This provides the teachers and learners and examiners with a clear indication of the assessment targets, so as to facilitate a common standard across the system.

To obtain the National Senior Certificate a learner must achieve 40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language Level, and 30% in three subjects, provided that a complete portfolio of evidence in the school-based assessment component is submitted in the subject failed. No aggregate mark or aggregate % is used for promotion purpose, as was the case with the Senior Certificate.

An endorsed National Senior Certificate can be offered by a candidate who experiences special educational needs and who offers the approved subjects for the National Senior Certificate with the concession of offering only five subjects. (First Additional Language, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation and 2 subjects selected from group B) Such a candidate will be awarded the endorsed National Senior Certificate if he/she has achieved 30% in five subjects.

The various achievement levels and their corresponding percentage bands are shown in the table below. The percentage obtained determines which achievement level in the scale of achievement will be allocated to a learner.

Achievement level	Rating	Marks %
7	Outstanding Achievement	80 – 100
6	Meritorious Achievement	70 – 79
5	Substantial Achievement	60 – 69
4	Adequate Achievement	50 – 59
3	Moderate Achievement	40 – 49
2	Elementary Achievement	30 – 39
1	Not Achieved	0 - 29

The NSC will also indicate the kind of admission that a candidate qualifies for in terms of higher education. These include admission to Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelors degree. The detailed requirements for each of these categories are as follows:

(a) Higher Certificate

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by the Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi).

Institutional and programme needs may require appropriate combinations of recognized NSC subjects and level of achievements.

(b) Diploma

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (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 recognized NSC subjects.

Institutional and programme needs may require appropriate combinations of recognized NSC subjects and level of achievements.

(c) Bachelor's Degree

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (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 4 (Adequate Achievement, 50-59%) or better in four subjects.

Adequate Achievement (50-59%) in four designated NSC subjects provides the primary basis for admission to a Bachelor's Degree programme. An institution is entitled to specify subject requirements and/or an appropriate level of subject achievement for a particular programme.

1.2. Preparation for the New Curriculum and the new Assessment Regime

Preparation for the NSC examination in 2008 commenced in 2006 and this included various strategies that targeted learners, teachers, subject advisors and the system as a whole. The legislative framework which includes Regulations, Policies and Guidelines were developed and a massive advocacy campaign was implemented to ensure that these policies were uniformly understood and implemented across all participants in the system.

In order to capacitate teachers a teacher development programme was launched and sustained over the last three years across all nine provinces. In addition, learner and teacher support material was developed and distributed to schools. Publishers were also provided with clear guidelines for the development of appropriate textbooks which were subsequently screened and listed on a prescribed list for purchase by schools.

The Department of Education developed and published Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) for all 29 subjects of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The SAGs provide clear guidance on assessment in Grades 10 to 12. In addition Examination Guidelines were developed in specific subjects, where the scope and depth of the content required specification.

A critical intervention of the DoE was the development of exemplar question papers for Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12 for all subjects. This provided learners taking the subject for the first time with a model question paper and the anticipated standards for the subject.

In order to establish whether the new assessment was appropriate a pilot project was initiated in Grade 10 in 2006 and in Grade 11 in 2007. The project was piloted in 96 schools across the country and responses were obtained from teachers, learners and subject advisors on the form and standard of the assessment. In addition the learner responses were analysed per question to establish the item difficulty, item reliability and item discrimination of each of these items. The feedback from these responses was used to improve the quality and standard of the question papers for subsequent examinations.

2. EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

2.1. Structure and Composition of Assessment.

The assessment for the NSC subjects includes the formal examinations, which count 75% and school based assessment (SBA), which counts 25%. In subjects with a practical component a Practical Assessment Task (PAT) which is completed over the academic year is also included as part of the assessment.

2.2. Common National Examinations

The 2008 NSC examinations was the first national public examination written in South Africa. Prior to 2008, five and then eleven subjects were set nationally and other subjects were set by the PEDs. However, with the implementation of the NSC, all subjects have been set nationally by a panel of examiners.

For the first time a common examination time table was followed throughout the entire country. This implies that candidates in any part of the country wrote the same examination at the same time. In 2008, the examination commenced on 3 November 2008 and concluded on 3 December 2008. In previous years the examinations commenced in early October thus reducing the time available for teaching and learning. This new arrangement confirms the DoE's commitment to increasing the time available for teaching and learning.

2.3. The Examinations

A total of 108 question papers were set by a panel of examiners and then internally moderated. These panels comprised some of the most experienced and qualified educators from amongst teachers, subject advisors and lecturers. A total of 192 examiners and 38 internal moderators were appointed and they commenced with the development and setting of Grade 10 and 11 pilot papers, then proceeded to Grade 10, 11 and 12 exemplars, to the development of assessment guidelines and the final examination papers for Grade 12 in 2008.

All assessment instruments were provided in English and Afrikaans and 90 out of the 108 papers were adapted for braille for blind learners and 85 out of the 108 papers were adapted for the hearing impaired.

The question papers were finally approved by external moderators appointed by Umalusi. The papers were evaluated for compliance with policies and guidelines, content coverage, cognitive skills, language usage, predictability, technical criteria, and suitability of the marking guidelines.

2.4. Writing of the Examinations

The time-table for the 2008 NSC examination was scheduled for four weeks rather than the six weeks of the previous Senior Certificate Examinations. The examinations were all written under strictly controlled conditions. Extensive training sessions were convened for chief invigilators and the number of examination irregularities decreased in 2008.

2.5. Marking

The key imperative in the marking of the first NSC examination was to ensure that the mark allocated for each response to each question paper is commensurate with the quality of the performance. In order to ensure high quality marking a number of measures were implemented and these included:

- Greater care in the appointment of markers.
- National Marking Guideline discussions for all subjects hosted by the DoE to ensure that the marking guideline incorporates comments from all PEDs.
- National training of chief markers which was then cascaded to provincial training sessions.

- Greater oversight and moderation of the marking process.
- More efficient, checking and control measures.
- National moderation conducted at marking centres by the DoE.

2.6. Resulting and Release of Results

The Department of Education has developed a new computer system which is based on the latest technology to ensure the highest level of processing efficiency and accuracy. The prerogative of finally declaring that the results are approved for publication is that of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training. The 2008 National Senior Certificate results have been declared fair, credible and an unqualified approval for the release of the results was granted.

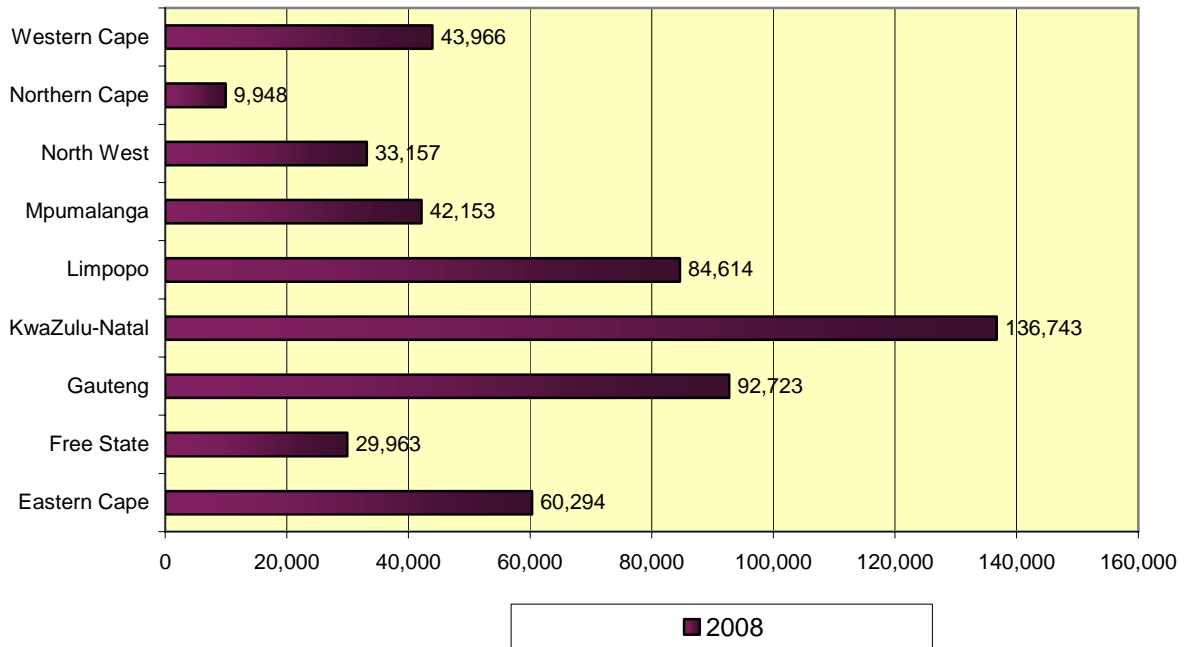
3. PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS – 2008

3.1. Enrollment Statistics

A total of 588 643 candidates registered for the 2008 National Senior Certificate examination. 533 561 candidates wrote the full examination and were finally resulted. 56 351 candidates either missed one or more components of the examination or failed to produce the school based assessment and hence they were not resulted.

The graph below represents the number of candidates that wrote the examination in 2008.

GRAPH 1: NUMBER OF CANDIDATES WHO WROTE PER PROVINCE- 2008



3.2. Overall National Results

Of the 533 561 candidates that wrote the examination, 333 604 candidates obtained a National Senior Certificate. This total number includes candidates that obtained admission to a Bachelor's degree of study, Diploma or Higher Certificate and an NSC certificate.

Table 1 indicates the overall national results:

Table 1: Overall National Results

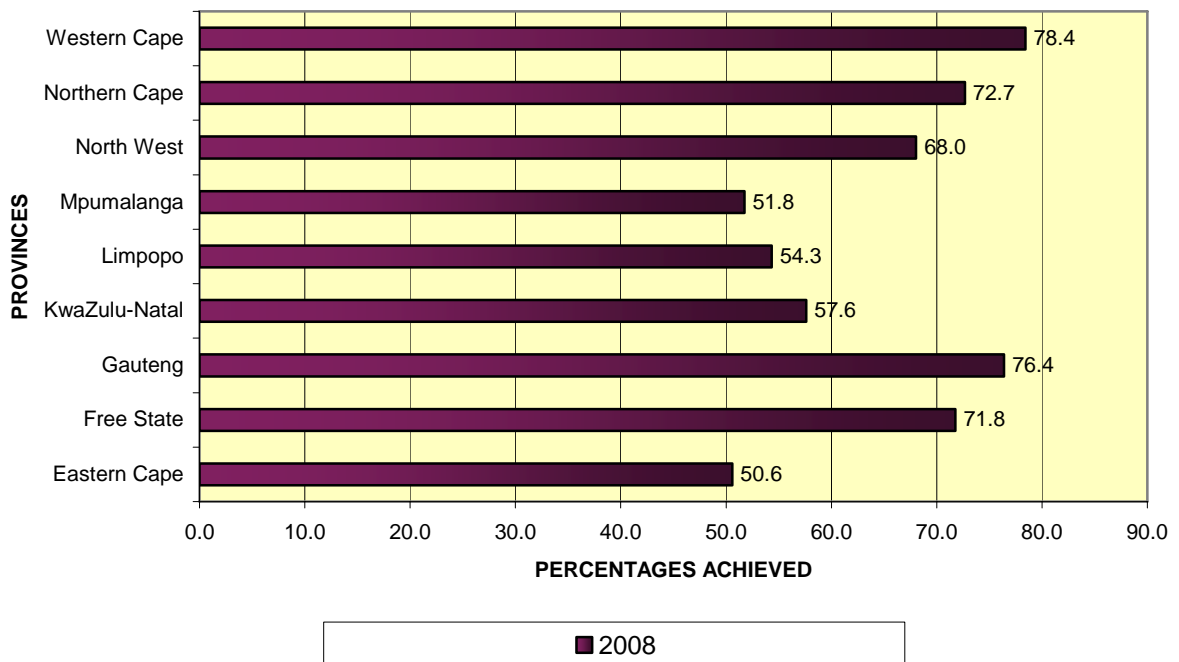
	No	%
No wrote	533 561	
Total Achieved	333 604	62.5
Total Not Achieved	60 322	11,2
Admission to Bachelors	107 642	20.2
Admission to Diploma	124 395	23.3
Admission to Higher Certificate	102 310	19.2
No qualified for supplementary	139 000	26,1

The table below represents the performance of the nine provincial education departments:

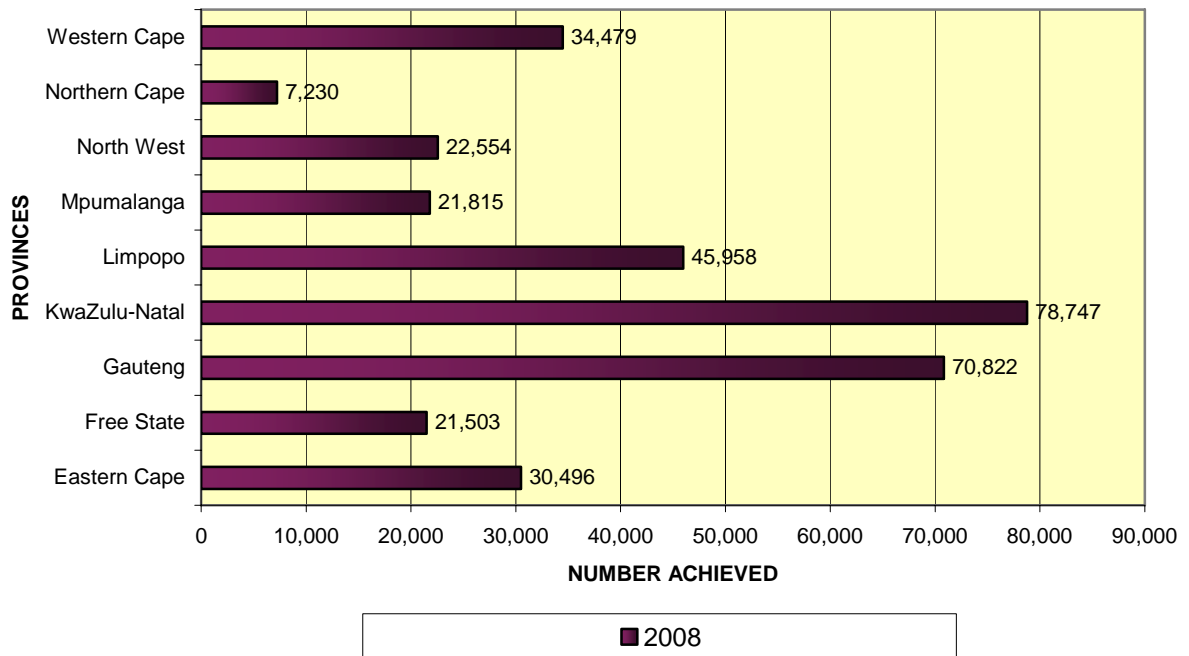
Table 2: Performance of the Provincial Education Departments

	Wrote	Achieved NSC in 2008	Achieved % 2008
Eastern Cape	60 294	30 496	50.6
Free State	29 963	21 503	71.8
Gauteng	92 723	70 822	76.4
KwaZulu Natal	136 743	78 747	57.6
Limpopo	84 614	45 958	54.3
Mpumalanga	42 153	21 815	51.8
North West	33 157	22 554	68.0
Northern Cape	9 948	7 230	72.7
Western Cape	43 408	34 479	78.4
Total	533 561	333 604	62.5

GRAPH 2: ACHIEVEMENT RATE PER PROVINCE - 2008



GRAPH 3: NUMBERS ACHIEVED PER PROVINCE - 2008



3.3. Admission to Degree Study

In 2008, 20% of the candidates that wrote achieved a pass that allows admission to degree study. This means learners had to achieve a minimum of 50% in four subjects from a designated list of subjects. Over 107 000 candidates achieved this pass. Table 3 shows the numbers and percentage per province.

Table 3 Number with pass for degree study in 2008 by province

Province	Admission to Degree Study (No)	Admission Degree Study (%)
Eastern Cape	8 662	%
Free State	6 286	%
Gauteng	28 313	30%
KZN	24 930	%
Limpopo	10 627	%
Mpumalanga	5 497	%
N Cape	1 994	%
North West	6 654	%
Western Cape	14 499	33%
Total	107 462	20%

3.4. Performance in Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy

The candidates for the NSC in 2008 were the first cohort to write mathematics or mathematical literacy. A great deal of support went into the teaching of these two gate way subjects. In addition, the DoE set a target of 50 000 learners passing mathematics with more than 50%. This target was exceeded as is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Mathematics passes over 50% and 60% in 2008

Province	Target HG 2008	Maths>50% in 2008	Maths>60% in 2008
Eastern Cape	3 000	5 362	3 299
Free State	3 000	3 612	2 344
Gauteng	14 000	15 300	10 941
KwaZulu-	11 000	14 927	9 647
Limpopo	4 000	7285	4 462
Mpumalanga	3 000	4 016	2 550
North Cape	1 000	898	602
North West	3 000	3 607	2 368
W. Cape	8 000	8 031	6 110
TOTAL	50 000	63 038	42 323

Table 5 Mathematical Literacy entries and passes in 2008

Province	ML wrote in 2008	ML pass 2008	ML over 80% 2008
Eastern Cape	24 639	17 655	1 237
Free State	15 782	14 447	1 683
Gauteng	46 519	41 326	5 074
KZN	63 271	46 928	2 501
Limpopo	38 875	27 548	475
Mpumalanga	26 973	17 503	683
North Cape	6 289	13 800	565
North West	16 566	5 661	934
W. Cape	24 550	22 362	3 405
TOTAL	263 464	207 230	16 557

3.5. Performance in Key Subjects

Subject	Wrote	Achieved 30%	Achieved 40%	Did not Achieve
English First Additional Language	464 179	438 822	327 335	24 998
Physical Science	218 156	119 823	62 530	98 060
Life Sciences	297 417	209 707	117 787	87 583
Geography	213 369	171 338	87 308	41 864
Accounting	176 078	108 099	55 164	67 848
History	93 666	64 355	35 290	29 263
Business Studies	204 7994.	151 777	87 553	53 002
Economics	218 156	119 823	62 530	98 060

4. CONCLUSION

The 2008 National Senior Certificate examination has been conducted in a credible and fair manner and the results confirm that the new curriculum is beginning to contribute to quality education. The 2008 NSC examination has also highlighted areas that need attention and these will form the basis of the improvement plan for 2009.