**BASIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE COMMENDS DEPARTMENT AND STUDENTS OF 2020 FOR A JOB WELL DONE**

Analysis done by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) indicates that, under normal circumstances, the class of 2020 would have outperformed the previous year. This is what the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education heard from the department during a briefing yesterday on the outcomes of the 2020 National Senior Certificate exams.

The analysis looked at the results of Grade 10 and 11 exams for both cohorts. The DBE told the meeting that the class of 2020 will be known for its resilience and utter determination to achieve. The matric class of 2020 outperformed the 2019 year in subjects such as home language, accounting, physical science, geography, history, tourism, life sciences, mathematical literacy and mathematics.

Referring to the disruptions to the academic year caused by Covid-19, the committee Chairperson Ms Bongiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba said: “This is truly a case of quality in the midst of adversity”. The DBE said it attempted to protect Grade 12 learners as much as possible during the year, which produced such encouraging outcomes, however the teaching and learning lost will never be fully recovered.

A total of 1 054 321 candidates registered for the 2020 NSC examinations, making it the largest the country has ever undertaken. This comes as the class of 2020 received an overall National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rate of 76.2%, a drop of 5.1% from 2019. The number of university-entry passes was slightly down for the 2020 cohort, at 36.4% compared to 2019 at 36.9%. Despite these decreases, the class of 2020 exceeded expectations.

Several committee members asked about the retention and drop-out rates of learners. Committee Member Ms Marie Sukers said although she had some concerns, she commended the DBE for the hard work achieved in a difficult year. “We must congratulate you for the hard work you put in to ensure that our learners are able to start tertiary education this year.” This message was echoed by Ms Nombuyiselo Adoons, who said the DBE “pulled through under extraordinary circumstances”.

“We are grateful that the DBE, the provincial education departments, our learners and the sector as a whole, who pulled through under difficult circumstances,” Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba concluded.

Rajaa Azzakani
3 March 2021