**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1748**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 2/09/2016**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 26OF 2016)**

**Ms D Carter (Cope) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

With reference to thousands of students who are being blocked from furthering their studies or getting jobs because they have not yet received certificates confirming their successful completion of Further Education and Training college qualifications since 2009 (details furnished), and in view of his reply to question 337 on 8 March 2016 wherein it was stated that the State Information Technology Agency gave the undertaking that the certification backlog would be eliminated by 30 June 2016, (a) what are the reasons for the seven-year delay in issuing the relevant certificates, (b) what processes has his department put in place to urgently deal with the matter and (c) by what date will the affected students receive their certificates?

**NW2055E**

**REPLY:**

(a) The State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is the Information Technology (IT) provider to all government departments. The responsibility to render the examinationsIT system fully functional, including the processing of certification data, rests with SITA which falls under the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services. The functionality of the examinations IT system includes the programming, enhancement and maintenance thereof.

SITA was initially unable to correct the data processing errors affecting resulting and certification data on the examinations IT system and this is what led to a backlog in the issuing of certificates. SITA acknowledged the capacity and management challenges being experienced in this regard to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training in August 2015.

(b) SITA immediately established a special project team to address the certification backlog in August 2015 and outsourced part of the process to an outside service provider with the requisite experience in the particular programming language in use on the system. The Department and the quality assurance body, Umalusi, also availed dedicated personnel to the project to assist SITA in expediting the correction of the data processing errors on the system.

SITA has also established a new and permanent education portfolio outside of its other regular portfolios and placed a senior manager in charge to drive the IT services rendered to government departments functioning as national assessment bodies.

The students affected by the problem do indeed have statements of results and the Department, on request, provides students with letters confirming that they comply with the requirements for the issuance of a certificate.

The Department has also, with the approval of Cabinet, appointed an outside service provider to develop a new examination IT system which will address the processing of resulting and certification amongst all other functionalities on the system. The development of the resulting and certification functionalities has been prioritised and will be implemented as soon as they are approved for implementation.

(c) Substantial progress has been made with the backlog project for the certification of NC(V) candidates from the November 2007 to March 2015 cycles. To date, 99.7% of the 236821 candidate records not yet processed by August 2015 have been completed which means that only 743 (0.3%) certificate records have yet to be processed. Due to the nature of the errors in the remaining records, each record has to be attended to manually.

The Department packs and dispatches the NC(V) certificates to examination centres upon receipt from Umalusi.Candidates are therefore advised to contact the examination centre where they wrote their examinations to make arrangements for collection of their certificates.

The processing of certification data for the November 2015 cohort of students has been initiated and these certificates will be released during September 2016.

COMPILER/CONTACT PERSONS:

EXT:

DIRECTOR – GENERAL

STATUS:

DATE:

QUESTION 1748 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED/AMENDED

Dr BE NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STATUS:

DATE: