**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 211**

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**211. Mr G R Davis (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

What is the complete process followed in the development and evaluation of subject examination papers for the National Senior Certificate, including, but not limited, to the (a) setting of examination question papers, (b) moderation of examination question papers, (c) evaluation of candidate performance and (d) standardisation of marks attained by candidates? NW224E

**RESPONSE:**

1. Setting of examination question papers:

All National Examination papers are set at the Department of Basic Education (DBE) office in a secure environment. Each question paper is set by a panel comprising 3 to 4 subject experts of which one is the chief examiner. Setting takes place during scheduled writing sessions. The same panel is responsible for the setting of the March supplementary, June Senior Certificate (SC) and November National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. These papers are set concurrently to ensure comparable standards. Each question paper is compiled based on a test blue print (analysis grid) which provides the framework for the question paper, specifying the content covered, mark allocation and cognitive levels. An accompanying marking guideline is developed concurrently during the development of the question paper.

1. Moderation of examination question papers:

On completion of the setting process, the question paper, marking guidelines and analysis grids are submitted to an internal moderator, appointed by the DBE. The internal moderator reviews and moderates the question papers following agreed criteria which include: content coverage, cognitive levels, mark allocation, accuracy of marking guidelines etc. Technical criteria such as format, font, clarity of diagrams, etc. are also considered. The internal moderators’ comments are discussed with the examining panel, in order for the examining panel to effect changes. The panel effects the internal moderator’s recommended changes. The paper is then again presented to the internal moderators. This process is only completed once the internal moderator/s is satisfied with the quality and standard of the papers. The internal moderator then approves the paper/s for external moderation.

The external moderators are appointed by Umalusi. They are invited through Umalusi to moderate the papers. External moderation also takes place within the secure environment of the DBE. Moderation is based on pre-determined criteria utilised for the moderation of all subjects. The external moderator reviews the question paper, marking guidelines and accompanying analysis grids and provides a detailed report with recommendations for improvement.

Once all the external moderation changes are effected and the external moderators are satisfied with the standard of the papers; the papers are approved and signed off.

Final editing and quality assurance is done by a team of expert editors appointed by the DBE to ensure that the question papers are error free. The papers are also translated, and adapted for the blind and deaf where required.

1. Evaluation of candidate performance:

The final score obtained by a candidate in a subject comprises various components such as School Based Assessment, Practical Assessment Tasks and Orals, where applicable, as well as Examination marks

Marking of the final NSC examination scripts is conducted across all 9 Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) at designated marking venues. Prior to marking, all Chief markers and internal moderators convene at the DBE where they participate in the standardisation of the marking guidelines and are trained on the implementation of the approved marking guidelines. The chief markers and internal moderators replicate the training received at the DBE at their various PEDs with their markers prior to marking. The marking process is monitored by the DBE which deploys onsite moderators to moderate the marking to ensure that all PEDs are adhering to the marking guidelines and marking within the agreed Tolerance Range. The Exam marks scores are thereafter captured unto the system.

1. Standardisation of marks attained by candidates:

Standardisation of marks is an Umalusi function. The DBE, however, provides Umalusi with reports from marking and other qualitative inputs on the standard and quality of the question paper for consideration during standardisation. This is in view of the fact that the fairness of the paper and the appropriateness of its standard can only be determined once it has been written.