



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PROTOCOL ON THE WRITING OF THE 2020 NOVEMBER
EXAMINATION
IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS**

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DEFINITION

| | Term | Meaning |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Decontamination | A process for rendering medical or other devices safe for re-use on the same or another patient. It includes thorough cleaning, and disinfection or sterilization depending on the device's heat tolerance. Disinfection is part of decontamination and these two terms should not be used interchangeably. |

1. Introduction

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the need for an alternative approach to the general conduct, administration, and management of national examinations. It is imperative for officials entrusted with the responsibility of administering and managing the writing of examinations to ensure that the necessary precautions aimed at protecting both officials and candidates from contracting COVID-19, are observed at all examination centres.

This protocol must be read in conjunction with the *Standard Operating Procedure for the containment and management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities*, issued by the Department of Basic Education, dated 31 August 2020, which is available on the DBE website. It is also assumed that in cases where the school is being used as an examination centre, the *Standard Operating Procedure for the containment and management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities*, is being followed and therefore the contents of this Protocol will emphasise certain requirements and also indicate the additional requirements that must be adhered to. In cases where an examination centre is not an existing operational school, it is incumbent on the Chief Invigilator at such a centre to ensure that the *Standard Operating Procedure for the containment and management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities*, is strictly followed.

This protocol on the writing of the 2020 November examination does not replace the *Regulations Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate examinations*, which is the primary legislation governing the management and administration of the NSC examinations.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure the safety of both candidates and officials from contracting the COVID-19 virus, and to encourage hygienically approved practices that would minimize the rate of infection, during the writing of examinations. The need to maintain social distancing, to sanitize hands and to wear personal protective equipment, such as face masks, as a strategy instituted by the World Health Organization (WHO) to combat the spread of COVID-19 has a direct impact on the processes to be followed during the writing of examinations. This protocol aims at providing standardised procedures that are to be implemented as precautionary measures at all examination centres when managing the following processes relating to the writing of examinations:

- (a) Preparation of the Examination Centre
- (b) Preparation of the examination room
- (c) Admitting candidates into the examination room.
- (d) Invigilation of the writing of the examination.
- (e) Management of Irregularities Associated with the Writing

- (f) Monitoring of the writing.
- (g) Management of COVID-19 Cases.
- (h) Management of Scribes and Readers

3. Guiding Principles

The following set of guiding principles served as the basis for the development of these examination protocols and must guide the implementation of these examination protocols:

- (a) Maintaining the safety and well-being of learners, officials and educators is priority and this will guide all decisions and actions to be taken in the management of the examinations.
- (b) A nationally coordinated approach will be implemented in the management of the safety and protection of learners, officials and educators. Given the diversity of the South African environment and varying contextual factors, the DBE will provide the national directives which must be adhered to in all examination centres.
- (c) This examination protocol must be implemented in conjunction with the rules and regulations pertaining to examinations.
- (d) The National Regulations and Protocols developed by the Department of Health, will serve as the basis of the protocol developed for the management of examinations.
- (e) In the implementation of these protocols, fairness and equity must be observed, particularly with regard to the most vulnerable learners.
- (f) Any action that would compromise the integrity and credibility of the examination, must be avoided.
- (g) This protocol relating to examinations is aligned to the protocol followed by the school during the normal teaching and learning and this protocol will include additional measures where necessary, given the specific requirements of public examinations

4. Basic Safety and Health Requirements to be observed across all Examination Centres

The following are the basic health and safety requirements that must be observed at all examination centres and these cannot be compromised irrespective of the circumstances:

- 4.1 All candidates and invigilators must wear masks at all times, unless directed by the invigilator to take a mask break.
- 4.2 All examination rooms must be fully ventilated.
- 4.3 All candidates and invigilators are to observe the 1 m social distancing protocol. School halls are not limited to 50 candidates during writing, provided that they adhere to the 1 m social distancing protocol and the number of invigilators complies with the 1:30 ratio.

- 4.4 All candidates and invigilators are expected to sanitize their hands before and after, handling examination material.
- 4.5 The wearing of surgical gloves is **NOT** recommended by either invigilators or candidates.
- 4.6 All officials and candidates arriving at an examination centre must be screened.
- 4.7 The screening of candidates must be completed 30 minutes before the commencement of the examination session.
- 4.8 Each examination centre should keep a register of learners with co-morbidities.

5. Preparation of the Examination Centre

- 5.1 A COVID-19 screening team must be established for each examination centre.
- 5.2 A dedicated SMT member or a senior teacher, or an invigilator in the case of designated centres must lead the screening team.
- 5.3 All the invigilators, candidates, monitors and any other examination official entering the examination centre must be screened before entering the examination centre (preferably at the main gate).
- 5.4 The screening team must ensure that invigilators, candidates and monitors complete the health-profile form every day that they enter the centre (**ANNEXURE A**).
- 5.5 An adequate number of examination rooms must be identified for candidate accommodation. The number of examination rooms at an examination venue must be based on the highest number of candidates writing at that venue and must be based on the COVID-19 protocol on social distancing.
- 5.6 Sufficient and appropriate furniture must be made available to accommodate the highest number of candidates writing at that venue.
- 5.7 The Grade 12 NSC examination rooms must be cordoned off from the rest of the classrooms which may be used by internal classes. (Schools may use a demarcation tape to cordon off the examination rooms).
- 5.8 The number of invigilators to be used, including the relief invigilators, must correlate with the number of examination rooms to be used per examination session.
- 5.9 A reserve list of invigilators must be available, to accommodate an invigilator that has to be isolated due to displaying COVID-19 related symptoms, or testing positive before the conclusion of the examination session.
- 5.10 Decontamination of the identified examination rooms/halls must be conducted before the commencement of examinations and such examination rooms/halls must be locked to avoid any unauthorised entry prior to examinations/sessions.
- 5.11 A decontamination service provider needs to be appointed so that the services of such a service provider could be used at short notice in the event of an emergency. District Offices should assist schools in this regard.

- 5.12 Should a COVID-19 case be discovered in an examination room, such a room must be decontaminated before it can be utilized for writing again.
- 5.13 It is imperative to remember that **all** ablution facilities are deep-cleaned and that they are well-equipped with consumables such as liquid soap, paper towels, etc.
- 5.14 An alternative venue close to the examination centre must be identified for writing purposes, just in case the examination centre has to be closed due to a COVID-19 case being identified at the centre.

6. Preparation of the Examination Room

- 6.1 Disinfect and sanitize all surfaces, in all examination rooms daily, **before** and **after** the first session and **after** each subsequent session.
- 6.2 Physical distancing of the candidates' furniture should be maintained at 1 metre (m).
- 6.3 Ensure adequate ventilation and lighting in the examination room.
- 6.4 Set up a sanitization station at the entrance of each examination room.
- 6.5 A reserve supply of masks must be kept in the examination room, should candidates arrive without masks.
- 6.6 Adequate COVID-19 signage must be displayed in every examination room.
- 6.7 Strictly adhere to a ratio of 1 invigilator to 20 candidates when a normal classroom is used as an examination room.
- 6.8 In the case of a hall being used as an examination venue, divide the space in accordance with the 1 m social distancing requirement and accommodate candidates accordingly. Remember that the number of candidates should not be more than 30 per invigilator.
- 6.9 Invigilators and candidates must always wear masks. Candidates must be advised to take "mask breaks" regularly during writing especially when they feel a bit suffocated. Invigilators must monitor the "mask breaks" by candidates.

7. Admitting candidates into the examination room

- 7.1 Candidates must arrive at the examination centre at least one and half hours before the start of the examination and must be seated in the examination room, atleast 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination.
- 7.2 Candidates must sanitize their hands before admission into the examination room.
- 7.3 Masks are to be worn at all times by all persons entering the examination room.
- 7.4 The seating plans must adhere to the 1m social distancing protocol.
- 7.5 The social distancing protocol must be maintained at all times including when candidates present their IDs and admission letters, before entering the examination room.

- 7.6 Candidates should be allowed to bring their own sanitizers into the examination room. The sanitizer bottles should not have any labels or have anything written on it and must always be visible to the invigilators. These must be either on the desk or on the floor.
- 7.7 A candidate who presents with COVID-19 symptoms, including a consistent temperature reading of more than 38 °C will not be allowed to proceed to the examination room.
- 7.8 Candidates whose temperatures are higher than the acceptable level (above 38 °C) will be isolated and re-screened every ten minutes for thirty minutes. Such candidates will only be allowed into an examination room if their temperature decreases to the acceptable level (below 38 °C).
- 7.9 A candidate whose temperature is consistently above 38 °C after the regular 10 minute checks in the first 30 minutes, must be kept in isolation for an additional 30 minutes and re-tested. Should the candidate's temperature test normal (below 38 °C) **and** he/she has answered "no" to the five questions, **within the first hour** of the examination session, the candidate must be allowed entry into the examination room and must be compensated for the lost time.
- 7.10 Should a candidate's temperature remain high (above 38 °C), he/she will be taken to the isolation room/sick bay of the centre. The parent(s)/guardian(s) should be called, and they should be referred to a local clinic for assistance by health practitioners. The candidate will then be marked absent **with a valid reason: "999"**.
- 7.11 Should a candidate refuse to be screened, he/she will not be allowed entry into the examination centre.
- 7.12 Candidates will be requested to remove their masks for identification purposes before being admitted into the exam room.

8. Invigilation

- 8.1 All invigilators are to sanitize prior and after handling of question paper packs and individual question papers.
- 8.2 An invigilator must ensure that he/she personally distributes question papers to candidates, and not request candidates to pass question papers from one to another.
- 8.3 Candidates must report to the invigilator if he/she feels ill.
- 8.4 Invigilators must also report to the Chief Invigilator if they are not feeling well.
- 8.5 There is to be NO sharing of writing materials/instruments among candidates.
- 8.6 Should a candidate require a bathroom break, she/he must be accompanied by a same-gender invigilator. On their return from the bathroom, both the candidate and the invigilator must sanitize their hands.
- 8.7 Invigilators must check that candidates are not carrying crib notes in/on their masks
- 8.8 Disposable cups must be provided for candidates who may need to drink water during writing.
- 8.9 A candidate may be allowed to bring along his/her own water bottle provided it has no labels and no writing and is visible to the invigilators and monitors. In such a case, the water bottles must be placed on the floor.

9. The handling of irregularities

- 9.1 *A candidate found with crib notes/unauthorised material:* Invigilator must confiscate the crib notes/unauthorised material. The invigilator must sanitize his/her hands before and after handling the crib notes/unauthorised material. The crib notes/unauthorised material must be attached to the answer script, if possible. A copy must be safely retained as evidence. Exercise caution and refrain from spraying sanitizer on to notes/answer scripts, to avoid tampering with evidence.
- 9.2 *A candidate found with a cellphone during writing:* The invigilator must confiscate the cellphone. The cellphone must be sanitized by the learner before it is handled by the invigilator and retained in a plastic bag/envelope for safe-keeping as evidence. The invigilator must sanitize his/her hands before and after handling the cellphone.

10. Monitoring

- 10.1 Monitors should arrive at least **one and a half hours** before the start of the examination.
- 10.2 All monitors are to be screened before entering an examination centre. No monitor will be allowed into the examination centre without being screened. Should a monitor refuse to be screened he/she will not be allowed access into the examination centre.
- 10.3 The screening of the monitors is additional to providing answers to the five COVID-19 protocol questions. Should a monitor answer “yes” to any one or more of the five questions, the monitor will not be allowed to fulfill his/her duty at the examination centre.
- 10.4 Monitors whose temperatures are high (above 38 °C) will be isolated and rescreened every ten minutes and will be re-screened. Should the temperature test normal (below 38 °C) on re-screening **and** the monitor’s responses to the COVID-19 protocol questions are fine, the monitor will then be allowed access into the examination centre.
- 10.5 All monitors are to sanitize their hands before entering an examination room and whilst busy executing their duties in an examination room e.g. when checking the IDs and admission letters of candidates.
- 10.6 Monitors without face masks will not be granted access to an examination room.
- 10.7 All monitors must adhere to the social distancing protocol of 1 m during monitoring.
- 10.8 Monitoring instruments are to be completed electronically and e-mailed to the responsible PED official.
- 10.9 Monitors are permitted to bring their own sanitizers into an examination room.

11. Management of COVID-19 Cases.

- 11.1 Section 16, on Page 36 of the *Standard Operating Procedure for the containment and management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities*, entitled: *Steps to be followed to manage COVID-19 in schools*, must be strictly applied in cases where candidates or examination officials are tested positive for COVID-19 or display symptoms of COVID-19.
- 11.2 Only the head of department (HOD) or the delegated official (e.g. District Director), on the advice of the Department of Health, can authorize the closure of a classroom/examination room or section of a school.
- 11.3 The district office should ensure that the examination centre where confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 infections were identified is supported and assisted in conducting the decontamination of the specific examination room(s) or section of the school overnight or as soon as practically possible to ensure that the conduct of the examination not negatively impacted.
- 11.4 Candidates who have diagnosed with COVID-19 and had to be in self-isolation for the period of ten days must be marked as '999' on the attendance register: (Absent with a valid reason).
- 11.5 Candidates who missed the writing of certain papers due to testing positive for COVID-19 should automatically be registered for the subjects that they have missed, to write during the May/June 2021 examinations.
- 11.6 Candidates who have tested positive for COVID-19, and have recovered which is confirmed by a COVID-19 test report, may continue with the writing of the remaining subjects on the timetable. However, candidates that decide not to continue with the writing of the remaining subjects should be accommodated in the May/June 2021 examinations.

12. Management of scribes and readers

- 12.1 Scribes and Readers should be appointed centrally by the provincial office and deployed to specific centres by request.
- 12.2 The examination room where the services of a scribe or reader is needed must be decontamination and surfaces should be sanitized before every sitting in the same way as the other examination rooms.
- 12.3 All scribes and readers should always wear clear face shields. The wearing of face shields will ensure that candidates are able to hear and see when the scribes/readers are speaking.
- 12.4 No scribe or reader should be allowed into the examination centre without a face shield.
- 12.5 All scribes and readers are to be screened before entering an examination room. No scribe/reader will be allowed into the examination room without being screened. Should a scribe/reader refuse to be screened he/she will not be allowed access into the examination room.
- 12.6 The screening of the scribes/readers is additional to providing answers to the five COVID-19 protocol questions. Should a scribe/monitor answer "yes" to any one or more of the five COVID-19 protocol questions, the scribe/reader will not be allowed access into the examination room.

- 12.7 Scribes/readers whose temperatures are high (above 38 °C) will be isolated and rescreened every ten minutes for thirty minutes. Should the temperature test normal (below 38 °C) on re-screening **and** the scribe's/reader's responses to the COVID-19 protocol questions are fine, the scribe/reader will then be allowed access into the examination room.
- 12.8 The Chief Invigilator should ensure that there is an invigilator at each of the examination rooms where either the scribe or reader has been assigned to provide their services to the candidates. The invigilator must comply with all the protocols as outlined under Invigilation above (No. 8).

13. Conclusion

This protocol on the writing of the examination amid the COVID-19 pandemic is not a replacement of the policy document and regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination. These protocols deal specifically with the challenges raised by COVID-19 environment. Thus, the standard requirements as per the regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate still apply, except for those clauses which are directly affected by the need to comply with international COVID-19 protocols. Examination officials and other members of staff involved in the administration of examinations should ensure that procedures as contained in this protocol are adhered to during the writing of examinations in an attempt to minimize the proliferation of COVID-19 infections.

ANNEXURE A: COVID-19 SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

| | Yes | No |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Do you have a fever? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you have one or more of the following respiratory symptoms including; cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulty?: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. To your knowledge have you, within the past 14 days, had close contact* with: a) a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus)? b) any person who has travelled out of the borders of South Africa to/from an area with known risk of/reported cases of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) <i>* Contact should have been: within the 24 hours before the individual showed symptoms or thereafter; for a prolonged period of time and direct i.e. less than 2 meters</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Have you, within the past 14 days, travelled: a) in an area with known community spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)? b) out of the borders of South Africa? <i>If Yes, which areas, please provide details of your travel; mode of transport, areas/countries visited</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name: Dr MJ Maboya.....

Signature: 

Date: 28/09/2020.....