

HESA STATEMENT ON THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC) RESULTS FOR 2009

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) would like to congratulate the 334 718 learners from the NSC Class of 2009 for their achievement in attaining the NSC. HESA's bow also goes to the 417 schools in South Africa which have attained a 100 per cent pass rate and to those schools and learners who have obtained distinctions in the various subject areas. Such achievement could only have been possible through the capability and effectiveness of school leadership, the calibre and conscientiousness of educators, the focus and diligence of learners and the support of parents and surrounding communities.

HESA particularly congratulates those learners who have qualified for admission into higher education in 2010. Moreover, HESA congratulates the Department of Basic Education as well as the provincial departments of education and Umalusi, in its quality assurance role, for ensuring the integrity of the assessment process. HESA hopes that the security breaches in the assessment process, however minor, that have been experienced particularly in the Mpumalanga province, will be dealt with decisively so that the public confidence in the NSC qualification is maintained and the quality of graduates is not in doubt. In this regard, HESA commends the Minister's decision in 'dissolving and reconstituting' the examination units in Mpumalanga.

While HESA recognises that this is only the second cohort of learners to have gone through the NSC curriculum, HESA also shares the Minister of Basic Education's disappointment with the two per cent decline in the overall pass rate in 2009 compared to 2008. This decline poses a challenge to the possibility of attaining one of the key strategic goals of the National Plan for Higher Education (2001), namely to increase the participation rate to 20% by 2014. Globally, there is a strong relationship between participation in higher education and economic development.

The South African public higher education sector, which HESA represents, is preparing itself to admit more than 200 000 students to its Diploma and Bachelors degree programmes. As was the case in 2008, capacity constraints on the part of public higher education sector to accommodate all these students are quite well-known. HESA will

engage with the Minister of Higher Education and Training regarding this challenge in the context of the enrolment planning framework.

Finally, HESA remains concerned about the performance of the Class of 2009 in some of the key subjects, in the domains of Economic and Management Sciences and the Natural Sciences. Mathematics and Physical Science in particular had extremely low pass rates as 29% and 21% of the learners obtained 40% and above in these subjects respectively. Various opportunities (e.g. career advice, foundation programmes, academic literacy interventions, etc.) exist at public higher education institutions to assist students meet the cognitive demands of higher education. Students are strongly advised to make use of these opportunities.

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Contact details: admin@hesa.org.za

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