



NEWSFLASH

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COVID-19, SCHOOLS AND THE EXPECTED RECOVERY PLAN (part 2)

There are many uncertainties about the impact of the current restriction on education and schools. Following numerous speculative media reports in the mainstream and social media, there is certainly a need to communicate more concrete information. The SAOU forms part of the inner circle of planning and is therefore happy to provide answers to some of the most relevant questions, provided that it must be recognized that –

- the lockdown ends on 30 April;
- the information shared forms part of planning;
- answers to all problem situations do not exist yet; and
- no final decisions have been made.

1. Will the traditional June exam continue?

According to a letter received from the Department of Basic Education on 20 April 2020, the June exam is combined with the November exam of 2020. It is to make up for the lost school days. It will be possible for schools to catch up to 2 to 3 weeks (10-15 school days).

2. Is a rescheduling of the NSC exam considered?

All possible options will be considered for the NSC examination to take place on the scheduled dates due to the ensuing implications for the marking process and the publication of the results. If any shift does occur, it will be at most one week.

3. Is a phased reopening of schools under consideration?

The main focus of reopening schools will not only be the catch-up to the curriculum, but also to ensure the safety of the teaching staff and learners in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Health. Preliminary planning is that Grade 12 and Grade 7 will be phased in first, and 1-2 weeks later Grades 11 and 6. The preliminary intervals for phasing in between grades are 1 to 2 weeks. There are many voices who suggest that Grade 1 should receive first attention in order to allow the resumption of learning of reading and writing skills to take place as soon as possible.

4. Are extended school days and utilisation of Saturdays expected to make up for lost school days?

These are certainly the options being considered. The following may be expected:

- a. That the school day for primary schools be extended by about 30 minutes and for secondary schools by about 60 minutes.
- b. There are pleas that Saturdays are also being utilised. However, the SAOU does not support the utilisation of Saturdays.

5. The maintenance of social distancing will be difficult to maintain when learners rotate between classes. What is being considered?

The proposal is that learners should not rotate between classes, but rather that teachers must. The SAOU's contention is that such an approach may be practical up to Grade 9, but for the FET Phase (Gr 10 – 12) such an approach may be impractical.

6. Is the trimming of the curriculum being considered?

Against the background of the phasing in of the various grades over a period of more than a month, it is a given that the available school days are reduced proportionately. It is therefore essential that the most

important concepts to be covered in respect of the next higher grade, it is important that such concepts be identified. The SAOU forms part of this process of judicial trimming and, as more information becomes available, share it with members.

7. **Is the use of double shifts for classes (“platooning”) an option being considered?**

Due to the complexity of maintaining the requirements of the Department of Health regarding social distance (1.5 m), this is an option being considered. The underlying problem is that this can lead to the overworking of educators as it implies double shifts. As a result, the SAOU is not in favour of it.

8. **Is the abolition of extra-curricular programs for sport and culture considered?**

Due to the fact that especially organised team sports lead to large numbers of spectators, as well as other major sporting events (Olympics and Wimbledon) being postponed, it is foreseen that school sports will not take place for the foreseeable future. A final decision is still awaited.

9. **Will adjustments be made to SA-SAMS?**

In view of the possible abolition of the June examination and the reduction of the curriculum being considered, SA-SAMS will necessarily have to be adapted.

10. **Has a national recovery plan been developed?**

A tentative recovery plan has already been developed, but due to the uncertainty over the lifting of the lockdown and the instructions of the Department of Health, it is not possible to provide final details of the recovery plan. The Minister of Basic Education will make the formal announcement based on the President's decision. However, it is important to note that the SAOU has stated that a rigid one-size-fits-all approach will not be acceptable.

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