

Matric mid-year exams cancelled: How to make the most of this time...

The matric mid-year exams offer valuable preparation for the end-of-year finals; however as a result of the impact of Covid and lockdowns, these exams have been cancelled to allow for additional teaching time so that students can complete the whole curriculum.



Photo by Julia McCameron from [Pexels](#)

An education expert says while it is unfortunate that matrics will once again lose the opportunity to write an official mid-year exam as a result of our current circumstances, learners can, with the right approach, turn this negative into a positive and use the extra time to their advantage.

“Unfortunately, like the Class of 2020 before them, the Class of 2021 are again facing the most important year of their school careers under very difficult and unusual circumstances,” says Nola Payne, head of Faculty: Information and Communications Technology at The Independent Institute of Education.

“As pointed out by Minister Angie Motshekga, many Grade 12s would have lost as much as 60% of teaching time this year, on top of the fact that they didn’t finish last year’s curriculum. Additionally, they also had to sacrifice holiday time to make up for lost teaching days. All things considered, it is clear that this year’s matrics are again under a lot of strain, and being called upon to perform to the best of their ability under rather difficult circumstances,” says Payne.

However, there are ways in which they can mitigate the impact of their circumstances, and ensure they make as much as possible with what they do have available before sitting for their final exams later this year, she says.

“It is important to realise that you are not alone, and that it is okay to not feel okay all the time. But then also to make the choice that you are going to do the best that you can with the resources and support you do have available, and even to get a little creative in the process,” says Payne.

Step 1: Make the best of teaching time

“Get as much as possible from your contact classes, and be sure to do all you can to grasp key concepts. If you don’t understand something, keep asking for assistance and clarification until you do. If you are studying at home and you find there is something you don’t understand, keep a list of questions to ask your teachers when you are back in class again.

“Don’t just move on to the next thing and think you are going to come back to challenging work later – steadfastly build on your knowledge so that you can continue with confidence.”

Step 2: Take care of your mental and emotional well-being

Matric is a tough year even under normal circumstances. This year’s matrices didn’t only have to face the unprecedented challenges of last year, but have now had to contend with an environment filled with uncertainty, unusual requirements such as masking and interrupted teaching time, and fear of the future for close on a year and a half.

“Unfortunately, things didn’t return to normal at the strike of midnight on 31 December 2020, and the tough times continue to this day. The events of the past year have left their mark on the psyches of all, and matrices should understand that it is okay to not be okay given the circumstances.

“So if you are feeling overwhelmed or anxious, recognise and acknowledge this fact, and reach out to a trusted adult for support and assistance. Try to look after your physical well-being as much as possible, by getting enough sleep, fresh air, and exercise if you are up to it. When things get too much, take a timeout, practise deep breathing, and return to the task at hand when you are feeling better.”

Step 3: Get creative with your learning

Payne says that even though most matrices in South Africa won’t be writing their mid-year exams, anyone can still set up their own mock exams – alone or with friends.

“Make a fun activity of it, by getting past exam papers from your school library, your teacher or online, and simulate an exam environment. Sit down with your clock and all the supplies necessary, and pretend you are in fact writing an exam within the allotted time.

“This will give you a good framework from which to proceed with your learning, because you’ll be able to see whether you need to work faster, get a feel for the different formats of questions, and also insight into which work requires additional attention. After completing the paper, you and your study partners can go over the questions together, which is an additional learning opportunity.”

Step 4: Find and use the additional resources

Last year, and continuing this year, the national and provincial education departments ensured that they loaded a host of

additional resources on their websites – from exam and study tips to past papers and other resources. Additionally, the public broadcaster regularly schedules lectures which can be viewed for free.

“Look further than just your own province’s website and see whether you can find additional resources on the websites of education departments in other provinces,” says Payne.

“There is also a myriad of videos on YouTube which can assist with those subjects or concepts in which you need additional help.”

Step 5: Keep the end goal in mind

Things are tough right now, and the circumstances not ideal for performing at your best. However, by keeping the future in mind and connecting that to your daily efforts, you’ll be able to keep the momentum while building on the small victories of each day, says Payne.

“Always remember what you are working towards. By doing your best every day, you’ll be able to finish your year to the best of your ability, which will open up opportunities for the future. Start considering your options for next year, and remember that universities and private higher education institutions are aware of the continuing difficulties facing this year’s matrics. If you need help with your future vision, or even motivation to complete the year with a bang, don’t hesitate to visit a respected campus near you for help, support and guidance.”

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