

Matric marking will be completed on time, department says

The Department of Basic Education believes that it is still on track to wrap up the marking of matric papers before the end of the month.



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Marking got off to a bad start, as some markers pulled out, citing the fear of Covid-19.

However, the department's Director-General, Mathanzima Mveli, is confident with the progress made after a meeting over the weekend with key stakeholders, including school governing bodies, principal associations, and civil society and teacher unions.

"The purpose of the meeting was to share the progress of the marking process but to also obtain feedback on areas that need improvement," he added.

According to the DG, the department has taken all the input and will now work hard to put safety at the heart of the department.

Meanwhile, Mveli has described the engagement as fruitful and useful.

“It is because of this commitment from colleagues in the marking centres that, as a sector, we feel that we are still on schedule to complete marking as scheduled on 22 January 2021,” he said, adding that the markers who have withdrawn have been replaced.

The DG confirmed that all the marking has started in all provinces.

To date, Mveli said he has visited 97 centres in six provinces and will now monitor the progress in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal later this week.

For the first time in history, Mveli said the department has placed health and safety as priority number one.

“There has been anxiety and fear among markers and their families to the extent that some of the marking personnel opted to withdraw from the process,” he acknowledged.

“While some withdrew due to the fear, others withdrew because they themselves tested positive for Covid-19 or somebody in the family had tested positive.”

Covid-19 compliance issues

He said the majority of the infections have been reported in the Eastern Cape, where most of the markers who contracted the virus reported that they had recently attended weddings, funerals or a family ceremony.

“This confirms to us once again that social gatherings and the lack of compliance in such settings remain our single biggest challenge when it comes to the fight against Covid-19,” he added.

Mveli has called on everyone to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as it has an impact on government’s efforts of flattening the curve.

In addition, the official said they have impressed upon colleagues at marking centres to do everything possible to avoid infections and pleaded with management to monitor compliance to avoid outbreaks.

“I must say that I am impressed with what I have seen in different provinces regarding the wearing of masks, social distancing and the availability and use of sanitisers.”

However, Mveli said the department was concerned with the developments in one centre at Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal.

“It seems one of our colleagues went to the centre already feeling sick and unfortunately passed away in hospital as a result of Covid-19 related complications. We are told that another colleague, also a marker, has now tested positive.”

On behalf of the department, the DG has conveyed condolences to all the families who have lost their loved ones to Covid-19.

He also paid tribute to the late Eastern Cape Education Department Head, Themba Kojana, who passed away due to Covid-19.

“We worked well together, we were both Deputy Director-Generals at DBE and when I was appointed DG, shortly thereafter he was appointed as HOD in the Eastern Cape,” he recalled.

Mveli also conveyed Minister Angie Motshekga’s special message of gratitude and thanks to all the markers who have chosen to take up the task of marking under extremely difficult conditions.

"We know it was not an easy decision to take, it is only the love for the country that can make one decide to do it. We truly appreciate the contribution," Mwelil said.

The DG reminded everyone to continue to wear their masks, sanitise, wash hands, keep social distancing, avoid large gatherings, and stay safe.

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