

**CURRO HOLDINGS
COVID-19 ADVISORY GUIDELINES**

CURRO EXAMINATION PROTOCOLS

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM
1 October 2020

Curro examination protocols 01102020V1



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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 October/November examinations. It is imperative for executive heads entrusted with the responsibility of administering and managing the writing of examinations to ensure that the necessary precautions aimed at protecting both staff and learners from contracting COVID-19, are observed at all examination centres.

Protecting the integrity of the examination

Executive heads bear the responsibility of protecting the integrity of the assessment process. It is the integrity of the qualification that we are all committed to protect, to ensure that the 'coming of age' qualification that the learners receive is viewed with respect.

This protocol must be read in conjunction with the following documents:

1. **Curro Standard Operating Procedures for Grades 1 to 12**, revised version dated 1 October 2020;
2. **CIRCULAR NO. 133/2020 Conduct of the 2020 November NSC examinations and COVID-19** issued by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB, dated 19 August 2020)
3. **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.

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 of the document

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure the safety of both learners and staff from contracting COVID-19, and to encourage hygienically approved practices that would minimise the rate of infection, during the writing of examinations. The need to maintain social distancing, to sanitise hands and to wear personal protective equipment, such as face masks, as a strategy instituted by the World Health Organisation (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 learners into the examination room
- d. Invigilation of the writing of the examination
- e. Management of irregularities associated with the writing

- f. Management of COVID-19 cases
- g. 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, executive heads and teachers 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 and teachers.
- c. This examination protocol must be implemented in conjunction with the rules and regulations pertaining to examinations.
- d. In the implementation of these protocols, fairness and equity must be observed, particularly with regard to the most vulnerable learners.
- e. Any action that would compromise the integrity and credibility of the examination, must be avoided.
- f. This protocol relating to examinations is aligned to the Curro SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) followed by the school during the normal teaching and learning and this protocol will include additional measures where necessary, given the specific requirements of examinations.

4 Basic safety and health requirements to be observed across all examination centres

It is advisable that parents and learners are fully briefed on the precautions that will be taken at the examination venue and also their obligations, should there be a positive test for COVID-19 among the learners or invigilators.

The following are the basic health and safety requirements that must be observed at all schools. These cannot be compromised irrespective of the circumstances:

- 4.1 All learners and invigilators must wear masks at all times.
- 4.2 All examination rooms must be fully ventilated.
- 4.3 All learners and invigilators are to observe the 1 metre social distancing protocol. School halls are not limited to 50 learners during writing, provided that they adhere to the 1 metre social distancing protocol and the number of invigilators complies with the 1:30 ratio.
- 4.4 All learners and invigilators are expected to sanitise their hands before and after handling examination material.
- 4.5 The wearing of surgical gloves is **NOT** recommended by either invigilators or learners.
- 4.6 All staff and learners arriving at an examination venue must be screened.
- 4.7 The screening of learners must be completed 30 minutes before the commencement of the examination session.
- 4.8 Each examination venue should keep a register of learners with comorbidities.

5 Preparation of schools as examination centres

- 5.1 It is advisable for you to have alternate venues that can be used for the remaining examinations in the event of the presence of a positive COVID-19 case.
- 5.2 If possible, find a medical facility that can conduct COVID-19 tests and provide results within a short space of time.
- 5.3 Every effort should be made to minimise the impact, should a learner or invigilator test positive during the examination session. This requires that the number of learners writing in a venue should be minimised as far as possible. Furthermore, it requires that the school has venues available that can accommodate the affected learners, should a venue need to be 'deep-cleaned'.

The following are considerations for limiting the number of learners in a venue:

- 5.3.1 Where possible, use individual classrooms or a range of venues at the school, observing social distancing of desks.
 - 5.3.2 Large venues could be cordoned off into sections, with each section being treated as a separate venue. Where possible, each section should have its own 'entrance', sanitisers, etc. In this way, if there is a positive case of COVID-19, it is only the one section of the venue that is affected.
- 5.4 A COVID-19 screening team must be established for each examination venue.
 - 5.5 All invigilators, learners, and any other examination official entering the examination centre must be screened before entering the examination venue (preferably at the main gate).
 - 5.6 The screening team must ensure that invigilators and learners complete the daily attendance and symptoms screening questionnaire on Synergy.
 - 5.7 Please arrange access to additional thermometers at the screening stations in order to confirm any temperature readings above 37,5 °C in order to avoid unwarranted delays of learners' admission to exam venues.
 - 5.8 An adequate number of examination rooms must be identified for the learners writing. The number of examination rooms at an examination venue must be based on the highest number of learners writing at that venue and must be based on the COVID-19 protocol on social distancing.
 - 5.9 Sufficient and appropriate furniture must be made available to accommodate the highest number of learners writing at that venue.
 - 5.10 The Grade 12 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).
 - 5.11 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.
 - 5.12 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.
 - 5.13 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.
 - 5.14 Should a COVID-19 case be discovered in an examination room, such a room must be decontaminated before it can be utilised for writing again.

- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 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 There should be multiple notices about the necessity for social distancing and constant sanitising of hands. Learners must be encouraged not to congregate together before or after any examination.
- 6.2 The management of separate venues for learners with comorbidities is for the attention of the school.

SPECIFIC IEB REQUIREMENTS

NB:

- The IEB must be informed before the commencement of the examinations of the learners who will be writing in separate venues at the school because of COVID-19 as opposed to those granted an accommodation for a separate venue. Sharona Nundkumar will distribute a form for completion by the school to serve this purpose.
- All venues in which Grade 12 learners are writing examinations, including sub-venues or separate venues for learners with comorbidities, must abide by the invigilation requirements as set out in the *IEB Invigilation Manual*.
- In all venues used for the writing of Grade 12 IEB examinations, an audio-video monitoring system must be installed. It may be possible to rent additional cameras for larger venues, should you wish to do so.

- 6.3 Each venue should have a seating plan as appropriate for the examination session. The separate venue allocation should also be included on the seating plan.
- 6.4 Disinfect and sanitise all surfaces, in all examination rooms daily, **before** and **after** the first session and **after** each subsequent session.
- 6.5 Physical distancing of the learners' furniture should be maintained at 1 metre (m).
- 6.6 Ensure adequate ventilation and lighting in the examination room.
- 6.7 Set up a sanitisation station at the entrance of each examination room.
- 6.8 A reserve supply of masks must be kept in the examination room, should learners arrive without masks.
- 6.9 Adequate COVID-19 signage must be displayed in every examination room.
- 6.10 Strictly adhere to a ratio of 1 invigilator to 20 learners when a normal classroom is used as an examination room.
- 6.11 In the case of a hall being used as an examination venue, divide the space in accordance with the 1 metre social distancing requirement and accommodate learners accordingly. Remember that the number of learners should not be more than 30 per invigilator.
- 6.12 Invigilators and learners must always wear masks.

- 6.13 Learners may take 'mask breaks' between examination sessions, especially when they feel a bit suffocated. Invigilators must monitor the 'mask breaks' by learners and ensure that social distancing of at least 2 metres, preferably outdoors, is maintained at all times.

7 Admitting learners into the examination room

- 7.1 Learners must arrive at the examination centre at least one hour before the start of the examination and must be seated in the examination room, at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination.
- 7.2 A learner or invigilator who shows any symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to the examination venue. If signs of possible infection are detected, the learner or invigilator may be asked to return home immediately.
- 7.3 Learners must sanitise their hands before admission into the examination room.
- 7.4 Masks are to be worn at all times by all persons entering the examination room.
- 7.5 The seating plans must adhere to the 1 metre social distancing protocol.
- 7.6 The social distancing protocol must be maintained at all times, including when learners present their IDs and admission letters, before entering the examination room.
- 7.7 Learners should be allowed to bring their own sanitisers into the examination room. The sanitiser 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.
- 7.8 A learner who presents with COVID-19 symptoms, including a consistent temperature reading of more than 37,5 °C, will not be allowed to proceed to the examination room.
- 7.9 Learners whose temperatures are higher than the acceptable level (above 37,5 °C) will be isolated and rescreened every ten minutes for thirty minutes. Such learners will only be allowed into an examination room if their temperature decreases to the acceptable level (below 37,5 °C).
- 7.10 A learner whose temperature is consistently above 37,5 °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 learner's temperature test normal (below 37,5 °C) **and** he/she has answered 'no' to the five questions, **within the first hour** of the examination session, the learner must be allowed entry into the examination room and must be compensated for the lost time.
- 7.11 Should a learner's temperature remain high (above 38 °C), he/she will be taken to the isolation room/sickbay of the centre. The parent(s)/guardian(s) should be called, and they should be referred for assistance by health practitioners. The learner will then be marked absent **with a valid reason: '999'**.
- 7.12 Should a learner refuse to be screened, he/she will not be allowed entry into the examination centre.
- 7.13 Learners may be requested to remove their masks for identification purposes before being admitted into the exam room.
- 7.14 In respect of learners who are outside the borders of the country, the current situation is that they need to return to South Africa to write the final examinations at the centre at which they are registered.

8 Invigilation

Please note that the normal requirements as per the *IEB Invigilation Manual* also apply to those schools offering this examination.

- 8.1 Training of additional invigilators will be advisable to manage learners in separate venues and other situations that might arise.
- 8.2 All invigilators are to sanitise prior and after handling of question paper packs and individual question papers.
- 8.3 An invigilator must ensure that he/she personally distributes question papers to learners, and not request learners to pass question papers from one to another.
- 8.4 Learners must report to the invigilator if he/she feels ill.
- 8.5 Invigilators must also report to the chief invigilator if they are not feeling well.
- 8.6 There is to be NO sharing of writing materials/instruments among learners.
- 8.7 Should a learner require a bathroom break, she/he must be accompanied by a same-gender invigilator. On their return from the bathroom, both the learner and the invigilator must sanitise their hands.
- 8.8 Invigilators must check that learners are not carrying crib notes in/on their masks.
- 8.9 Disposable cups must be provided for learners who may need to drink water during writing.
- 8.10 A learner 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 learner found with crib notes/unauthorised material:**

Invigilator must confiscate the crib notes/unauthorised material. The invigilator must sanitise 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 sanitiser on to notes/answer scripts, to avoid tampering with evidence.

9.2 **A learner found with a cellphone during writing:**

The invigilator must confiscate the cellphone. The cellphone must be sanitised by the learner before it is handled by the invigilator and retained in a plastic bag/envelope for safekeeping as evidence. The invigilator must sanitise his/her hands before and after handling the cellphone.

10 Management of COVID-19 cases

- 10.1 Section 13, on pages 18 to 23 of Curro's *Standard Operating Procedures for Grades 1 to 12*, revised version dated 1 October 2020, must be strictly applied in cases where learners or staff (invigilators) are tested positive for COVID-19 or display symptoms of COVID-19.

- 10.2 Only the executive head, with the approval of the relevant business executive (in conjunction with the Curro C19 advisory task team), can authorise the closure of a classroom/examination room or section of a school.
- 10.3 Learners who have been 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).
- 10.4 Grade 12 learners 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.
- 10.5 Learners who have tested positive for COVID-19, and who have recovered (which is confirmed by a COVID-19 test report), may continue with the writing of the remaining subjects on the timetable. However, learners who decide not to continue with the writing of the remaining subjects should be accommodated in the May/June 2021 examinations.

11 Management of scribes and readers

- 11.1 Scribes and readers should be appointed by the executive head.
- 11.2 The examination room where the services of a scribe or reader is needed must be decontaminated and surfaces should be sanitised before every sitting in the same way as the other examination rooms.
- 11.3 No scribe or reader should be allowed into the examination centre without a face mask.
- 11.4 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.
- 11.5 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.
- 11.6 Scribes/readers whose temperatures are high (above 37,5 °C) will be isolated and rescreened every ten minutes for thirty minutes. Should the temperature test normal (below 37,5 °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.
- 11.7 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 learners. The invigilator must comply with all the protocols as outlined under invigilation above (no. 8).
- 11.8 Arrangements should be made to have additional scribes/readers on short-notice standby to substitute for a person who displays any COVID-19 symptoms.

12 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)/Independent Examinations Board (IEB) 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. Executive heads 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 minimise the proliferation of COVID-19 infections.