

Panel Discussion 2: How I anticipate the class of 2020 being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and what does it mean for the 2021 university intake? A learner perspective

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Introduction

Newspaper headlines: 4 October 2020

NEWS 

Dismal year for matric results forecast

Lower pass rate, fewer distinctions - thanks to Covid

Imagine those who worked so hard after going back to school in June 2020 had to read this article: How do you think they would feel? How do you feel?

Survey of 6 learners (from 4 schools)

Code	School
A	1
B	2
C	3
D	3
E	4
F	4

Grade 12 year thus far

A: Academically it has been good but school year as a whole has been **bad**

D: It has been very **stressful**. I did not know whether we were going to complete the year

E: There has been **too much pressure**; lot of work done in short time

F: My grade 12 year is the **most tiring class** I have ever been into. The work we are given is **too much**

Grade 12 year thus far

B: This year has been weird to say the least. There were many things that we have been looking forward to our entire high school careers that we were not able to experience. This was very disappointing. However, this year has also allowed me to **introspect** and become a **better person** so I guess it wasn't all bad.

C: In the first term of matric everything was going fine, but when the coronavirus hit it took a toll on my matric year. It took **away most of the things** that could've been done and achieved, i.e. The School Musical, Sport, Choir, etc. When I went back to school for the first time after the long lay-off, I was **anxious** and it became draining after a while because of the **pressure** being put on us as matriculants. We had to work at a **faster** pace to finish our syllabus. Finding out that **my peers felt the exactly** the same as I did and experienced mostly the same things as I did, did put me at **ease** though because then I didn't feel alone.

Work done during the lockdown

- All schools gave the children work
- Mathematics; Physical Sciences; English; Business Studies; Accounting; History; Life Orientation; Life Sciences
- **Zoom** and **Microsoft teams** meetings; feedback through **WhatsApp videos**; additional feedback given when children returned

Trial examinations

A: **It went well**; now I feel like finals is just revision

B: The trial exams **were quite good** (except for maths) and have **boosted my confidence** for finals. The timetable was **just packed** but the finals one is quite spaced out.

C: The trial examination **was challenging** as it was the first proper exam I wrote as a matriculant, but it has shown me what I still need to work on for the final exams. So yes it has given **me sufficient preparation** for final exams.

Trial examinations

D: **Difficult**, these trials exams have definitely prepared me for the finals because now I know what to focus on more

E: **Difficult**; no practice of exams in grade 12 year

F: **Trials examinations were challenging** because I had no **background of writing an examination** as the June Examination was not written. Now that we have written the trial examinations, I am now prepared for the final examinations

University programmes

A: Actuarial Sciences

B: BA Drama, BA and BA Law

C: B. Music

D: B.Com (Finance)

E: B.Sc or B.Psych

F: B.Sc (Eng): Mechatronics

Mathematics is a pre-requisite for **4 of these 6 university programmes/degrees**

Admission Points Score (for university acceptance)

A: Yes: I have been **working very hard** and I have already been accepted

B: Yes: because **I will work very hard** to achieve the goals that I have set for myself and meet the requirements so that I can study something that I am passionate about.

C: Yes: **I have achieved the required points with my Grade 11 marks, my trial marks** and I am aiming to do better for finals.

D: Yes: **The more I study the more prepared I become.** When looking at trial exams results I noticed that I meet the required points.

E: Yes: **My results have been consistent;** I make sure I get to do well at all time

F: Yes: I am well prepared because **I saw my strengths and weaknesses during the trial examinations**

Other comments

B: It's been a **tough year** but I truly believe we will make it. Thank you to my school and DBE.

C: This year has been a **challenging year** but it has taught me many things. Even though half of my matric year was taken away, I learnt how to **work on my own** which is preparation **for the years to come**. It has shown me that I can overcome anything and that **nothing can stop me from achieving my goals**. I have shown and proved to myself **that I can persevere through tough times and I am true to myself**. The **support of my family, teachers and friends** also contributed greatly to help me to achieve my goals.

F: **The COVID-19 pandemic has taught me to be independent** and a hard worker. I had no choice but not to depend on my teachers

Other data (another school): 2021 Programme

2021 Programme	APS
Bachelor's degree	Yes
Gap year	No
None	No – poor marks
Degree in Science or pharmacy	Yes – I have a never give up attitude
Degree	No – very stressful; no leniency in test papers
Mechatronics	Yes
None	Need to work harder and stay focused
Electrical Engineering/Teaching	Not sure; wanted to study Engineering but Mathematics & Science marks have dropped
Biokinetics	Yes: would have enough time to prepare for exams
None	Not applicable
HRM or Psychology	Yes: positivity and hard work is the key

2021 programme

2021 Programme	APS
Degree in commerce	Yes – I met the requirement as I applied during the lockdown
Teaching	Yes – provisionally accepted
Music degree	Yes. Mathematics mark dropped but with hard work I can make it
None	This year is a mess; might have to rewrite so applying to university may be futile
None; intend au pairing	Not applicable
Degree	Not sure: It will depend on the results
Degree in finance	<u>Yes</u> ; the more I study, the more prepared I become; when looking at the trial results, I noticed I met the required points
Music Degree	Yes, I have achieved the required points with my Grade 11 marks, my trial marks and I am aiming to do better for finals.

19 learners: 13 have plans to study for a university programme in 2021; 10 made the APS; 3 not sure; 6 – definitely not; poor marks; difficult papers; rewrite in 2021

The class of 2020: Cons

- **Disrupted** school year (even after returning)
- **Not enough time** to plan for lockdown; but work done (at different levels); data challenges; working from home (relaxed mode); easy to switch off
- **“Rushed”** work after return in June 2020 in preparation for trial examinations; “gaps” in learning
- **Cancellation** of all extra-murals; only focus on academics
- **No June examination**; first exam experience in grade 12 year was the trials; difficult
- **At risk learners**: some learners have given up; may have to repeat some subjects in 2021

Class of 2020: Pros

- Academic year has been “salvaged”
- “Strong” students have applied during the lockdown; accepted on grade 11 results; final results should confirm acceptance
- Some expect good results expected in trial examinations (cramped time-table)
- Determination/persevering attitudes of top students
- Independent learning
- Used to online/virtual classes

University intake of 2021

- **2020 Grade 12 exams** – one big examination; more than a million writing (include those who should have written in June)
- **Drop in overall passes is expected** (progressed learners must write remaining subjects)
- Some learners did not come back after schooling resumed
- Grade 12 of 2021 is likely to be **“severely” impacted** upon*

University intake of 2021

- Students are likely to be **more independent**; work on their own; should fit in with **both virtual and face-to-face classes**
- **2020 was about completing the year** and doing well in exams; **“rushed”** 2020 may result in **knowledge gaps** (may or may not be crucial: will depend on the programme chosen)
- **Preparedness of the academic staff** to work with such students (coming from such **diverse** backgrounds and **different 2020 experiences**)

Conclusion

- 2020 will be remembered for years to come as a very **eventful but disruptive year** for the whole world
- The 2020 education year for, especially, **grade 7 and grade 12** has been “salvaged” up to a point
- **Big challenges** with regard to **other grades; grade 8 & 9** (one of the last grades to go back to school) and for **grade 10 & 11 of 2020** - no final examination (**just a big test**); **expect gaps** in their knowledge and development
- **A significant impact** on the university intake for 2022.
- **Need strategies** to address learner gaps across the phases in 2021 and beyond

Thank you