

# ON THE FRINGES

# MATRICIALS

A Review of the Second Chance Matric Programme



**YOUTH  
CAPITAL**

## KEY TERMS

### SECOND CHANCE MATRIC PROGRAMME

A collection of pathways, instituted by the Department of Basic Education, through which individuals who have not met the requirements for the National Senior Certificate or the Senior Certificate, or want to improve their matric results, can write Grade 12 examinations outside the regular schooling system.

### NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC)

Written either by full-time or part-time candidates, who are under 21 years old. Some full-time NSC candidates are school-going learners, writing their matric examinations as part of the end-of-year examinations. But there are also full-time and part-time NSC candidates that are 'on the fringe', working towards their matric outside the schooling system. To qualify for the NSC, second-chancers must have reached Grade 12 inside the schooling system, and have left school less than three years ago.

### SENIOR CERTIFICATE (SC)

An alternative route to matric for individuals who are 21 years old or older, completed at least Grade 9 whilst in school, and have been out of the formal schooling system for more than 3 years. It is also possible to register for the SC examinations with an NQF qualification that is equivalent to Grade 9.

### NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE FOR ADULTS (NASCA)

Provides a general educational pathway for adults to demonstrate their skills without prior certification, through recognition of prior learning. No formal learning programme is compulsory, but a set of diagnostic tests are required to indicate readiness to take the examinations.<sup>1</sup>

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE (CETC), ALSO CALLED 'COMMUNITY COLLEGE'

A provincial educational institution made up of many Community Learning Centres, which provide second chance opportunities.

### COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE (CLC)

An educational institution through which second chance learners can write or rewrite their examinations. These are organised under a provincial Community College.

### PART-TIME CANDIDATE

A matric candidate taking less than the full set of subjects to obtain a NSC or SC or to improve their matric results.

## ACRONYMS

<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>GEC</b>	General Education Certificate
<b>GHS</b>	General Household Survey
<b>NAMCOL</b>	Namibian College of Open Learning
<b>NASCA</b>	National Senior Certificate for Adults
<b>NSC</b>	National Senior Certificate
<b>RESEP</b>	Research on Social and Economic Policy
<b>SBA</b>	School-Based Assessment
<b>SC</b>	Senior Certificate
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>QLFS</b>	Quarterly Labour Force Survey

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**AT ANY GIVEN TIME,  
ABOUT A QUARTER OF A  
MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE WORKING TOWARDS  
A MATRIC CERTIFICATE  
OUTSIDE THE FULL-TIME  
SCHOOLING SYSTEM.  
THIS MEANS THAT CLOSE  
TO A THIRD OF THE ANNUAL  
MATRIC COHORT IS  
'ON THE FRINGE', TAKING  
A 'SECOND CHANCE' AT A  
GRADE 12 QUALIFICATION.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.**

Certification drastically improves young people's life chances: for education, employment, and earnings. Second chance opportunities offer those young people who have been pushed or pulled out of school, or those who made it to Grade 12 final exams but failed or got poor results, another opportunity to obtain a matric certificate or improve their results.

At any given time, about a quarter of a million young people are working towards a matric certificate outside the full-time schooling system. This means that close to a third of the annual matric cohort is 'on the fringe', taking a 'second chance' at a Grade 12 qualification.

Completing matric, especially without the structure and support of a school classroom, takes resourcefulness, sacrifice, and commitment. Despite the obstacles and setbacks they face, hundreds of thousands of young people undertake second chance pathways to improve their Grade 12 results, or obtain a matric qualification.

Every year, around 40,000 young people obtain a matric certificate through the Department of Basic Education's Second Chance Matric Programme, which offers various pathways to certification. But, because second chance matriculation is rarely reported on publically, this cohort of highly-dedicated youth remains in the background.

The disruptions to education caused by COVID-19 mean that it is more urgent than ever that we support alternative pathways to certification. For more young people to access and succeed in second chance opportunities, matrics 'on the fringe' must be made visible.

As a country, we should be getting behind our 'second-chancers' – expanding, supporting, and celebrating their journeys to certification.

# INTRO.

Youth Capital is a youth-lead campaign with an Action Plan for change to shift gears on youth unemployment in South Africa (see page 25). Our aim is for every young person to have the skills and opportunity to get their first decent job. We believe all pathways to certification matter.

This brief is a call to get behind matrics 'on the fringe.'

Each year, there is a swarm of media attention around South Africa's national Grade 12 examinations. Matric pass rates are widely publicised, analysed, and discussed. What is not reported on is the complex system through which those who previously failed their final exams, are unhappy with their results, or never reached Grade 12 in the first place, are trying again. At any given time, there are about 250,000 young people working towards a matric certificate outside the full-time, in-school system. Since an average of 800,000 candidates write matric examinations each year, this means that about a third of the total matric cohort are 'on the fringe.' Yet, as second-chancers, the educational journeys of these young people often go unrecognised. Despite their grit and perseverance, second chance matrics are rarely reported on publically.

A recognised, national certificate can transform young people's futures: signalling their knowledge and skills to employers, creating pathways to further education, and ultimately improving their chances of finding work, keeping a job, and earning a higher salary. However, about 50% of young people who start school leave without any certification.<sup>2</sup>

Getting more young people certified means expanding and supporting the many pathways towards a matric qualification. These include the National Senior Certificate (NSC), the Senior Certificate (SC), and the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA).

Right now, there are more than 8.8 million young people (aged 15-34) who are not in education, training, or employment.<sup>3</sup> Most have not completed Grade 12.<sup>4</sup> A matric qualification is a powerful passport to education, earnings, and economic participation.<sup>5,6</sup>

Given the impact that COVID-19 and lockdown has had on schooling, more young people are likely to seek alternative routes to a matric qualification. This may be especially true for future matriculants, whose foundational learning has been disrupted by the pandemic.

It is more important than ever to report on, support, and expand second chances for young people.

“ Not all setbacks are the same. Some, like myself only had to improve their marks whereas someone else has to deal with the reality of failing their matric. You have to plant the seed of a second chance in the heads of learners well in advance, so that in those critical days after the news [of their results] has been broken to them, they are aware of the alternatives and know who and what to consult (when the time comes), instead of leaving them feeling alone, disappointed, and completely lost. ”

A second-chancer

## ABOUT THIS BRIEF:

The purpose of this brief is to shine a spotlight on second chance matriculation, which has been off the radar for too long. It explores what second chance options are available to young people, what obstacles they face in accessing and succeeding in them, and how to better support them in their pursuit of an alternative route to certification.

The findings presented here are drawn from a technical report, produced by Stellenbosch University's Research on Social and Economic Policy (RESEP) on behalf of Youth Capital. RESEP researchers analysed government administrative data and reports, surveyed online second chance material, and conducted a small qualitative study with second chance learning centres and candidates in the Western Cape.

Because second chance pathways are poorly reported, the available quantitative data is limited. But it is also complex, because of the multiple routes to second chance matriculation. This brief presents an analysis of government administrative data, including the General Household Survey (GHS), Department of Basic Education (DBE) reports, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), and the Community Survey. It does not follow a single learner cohort. Instead, it offers an evidence-based estimate of young people's pathways to second chance matriculation – using what we do know, to make well-informed assumptions about what we don't know.

## THIS BRIEF DOES NOT INCLUDE:

**TVET STUDENTS:** The focus of this brief is on the general matric qualification. It does not discuss those young people who achieve vocational, matric-equivalent qualifications, such as those offered by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. Some TVET programmes are ranked at Level Four of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF4), which is equivalent to a matric certificate.

**GRADE 12'S REPEATING FULL-TIME AT SCHOOL:** Grade 12 learners who either do not write or do not pass their exams can, legally, repeat Grade 12 as full-time students, enrolled as regular school-goers. But many schools don't allow this. Evidence shows that only 5% of Grade 12 learners are repeaters. In comparison, Grades 9-11 have far higher repetition rates (over 15%). In this brief, second chance learners are defined as those working towards a matric certificate outside the conventional, full-time schooling system.

**THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE FOR ADULTS:** NASCA has been designed as a matric qualification for adults, although it has not yet been instituted. There is some suggestion that NASCA will be issued for the first time in 2021. But since this is a new certification, we cannot report on the pathways of NASCA second-chancers.

**SECOND CHANCE EXPERIENCES DURING THE PANDEMIC:** Our data paints a picture of young people's pre-pandemic pathways to second chance matriculation. It does not reflect the disruptions caused by COVID-19, which are likely to deepen the need for second chance opportunities and support, as well as for improved e-services for matrics more broadly.

# WHO ARE SECOND-CHANCERS?

Second-chancers are working towards a matric certificate or improved matric results outside of the full-time, conventional schooling system. They are enormously resilient. All second-chancers have faced setbacks, disappointments, and disruptions in their educational journey. But despite this, they are trying again, working outside the in-school system, with little support or recognition.

While Grade 12's enrolled full-time in a school have staff on-hand to assist them, 'fringe' matrics are often working on their own to navigate through second chance information, register for a second chance pathway, find the correct preparation materials, and get themselves ready to write the examinations. Many are also juggling other responsibilities, including childcare or work opportunities.

To write matric as a second-chancer, candidates must register online or through an education district office. To prepare for examinations, second chance candidates can receive support through three types of institution:

- ⚙️ *A non-government, subsidised community college. Since 2015, over 3,000 Community Learning Centres across the country are organised into nine provincial 'Community Colleges', officially called Community Learning and Training Centres.*
- ⚙️ *A private college, which charges registration and tuition fees.*
- ⚙️ *A traditional high school (although not all high schools seem to provide for or support this).*

Regardless of which route second-chancers take, those who do not manage to pass their exams receive a statement of results. This statement assists in articulation pathways into post-school opportunities. Second-chancers have the following routes to qualification available to them:

## **FULL-TIME NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC)**

As long as candidates are under 21 years old, and left Grade 12 less than three years ago, they can re-enrol for a full-time NSC. These candidates take the full complement of matric subjects. This route is rare, both inside the conventional schooling system, and in the second chance system.

## **PART-TIME NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC)**

Those who failed their matric exams, passed but want to improve their results, or reached Grade 12 but never wrote their exams; can register as part-time candidates to write the NSC. They must be under 21 years old, and have left Grade 12 less than three years ago. Part-time NSC candidates may write all, or just some, matric subjects. Among those who repeat their NSCs part-time, about

half write their exams through a regular high school, usually the one they attended.  
Others rewrite through Community Colleges.

Every year, there are about 170,000 young people who write the NSC examinations as part-time candidates. Usually, they are not writing the full complement of subjects at once. Part-time NSC candidates are also more likely to be repeating science subjects than arts or social science subjects. On average, these candidates take three subjects each year, which means that many would not accumulate enough credits in one examination period to qualify for a matric certificate.

Every year, about 11,000 (6%) part-time candidates achieve their NSC. Part of the reason for this low success rate is that many (30%) drop out of the programme before writing their examinations.

Among those who do achieve their NSC as part-time candidates, 40% obtain a Bachelor-level pass, which makes them eligible to study at university. This means that second-chancers who obtain the NSC as part-time candidates are 10% less likely to achieve a Bachelor-level pass than their (in-school) full-time counterparts. But given the daily support offered by the formal schooling system, this is not surprising.

### **PART-TIME SENIOR CERTIFICATE (SC)**

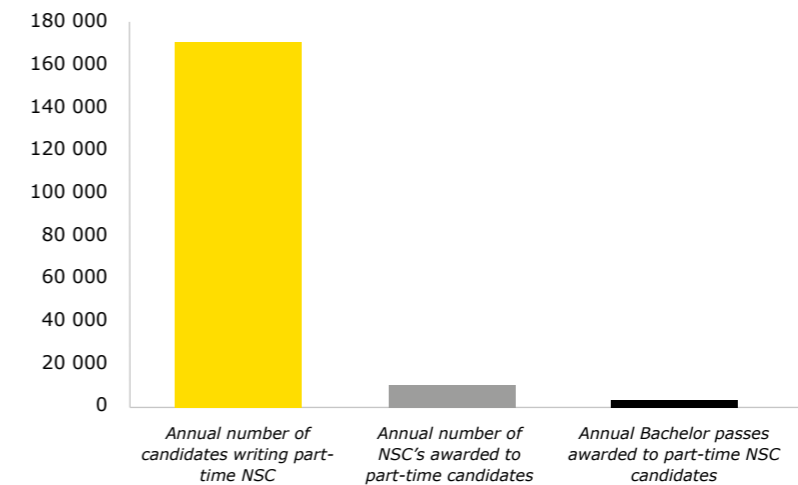
The SC is for candidates who are 21 years old or older. It caters for those who completed Grade 9 but dropped out of school before reaching the Grade 12 examinations, as well as those who wrote their matric exams more than three years ago, and either failed or passed but want to improve their results. Some may also want to change or add subjects to their matric qualification. The SC is an equivalent qualification to the NSC, but while the NSC combines examinations and the School-Based Assessment to reach a final result, the SC is based only on examinations.

*See page 12 for more on the difference between the NSC and the SC.*

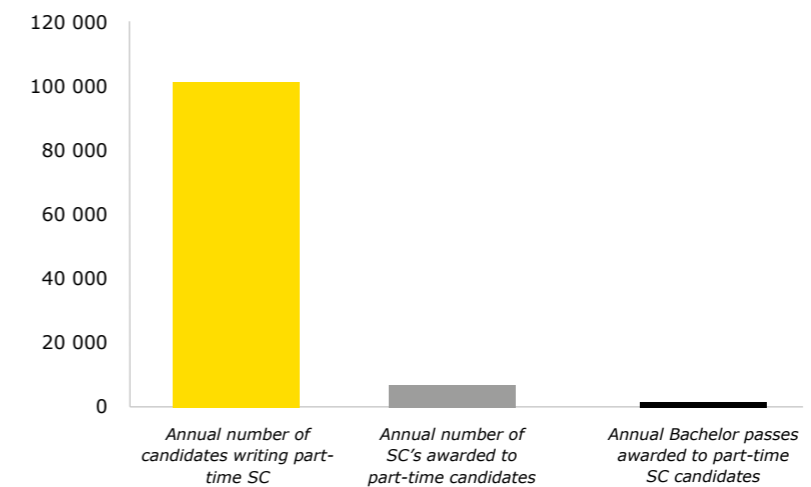
About 100,000 candidates sit for the SC examinations each year. Most have never written the NSC, and many may never have reached Grade 12. Like part-time NSC candidates, those who write the SC are unlikely to write all of their subjects at once. Each year, about 6,000 candidates obtain their SC: about 1,000 (16%) of these are Bachelor-level passes.

More than half of SC candidates receive some kind of institutional support through Community Colleges.

### **PART-TIME NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (NSC)**



### **PART-TIME SENIOR CERTIFICATE (SC)**



# NSC

- Available to those whose Grade 12 School-Based Assessment (SBA) is less than three years old.

- Official languages.
- Non-official languages.
- A choice of 30 non-language subjects.

- At least seven subjects, one of which must be Life Orientation.
- Candidates can take as many subjects as they want.

- Must pass six subjects.
- Must achieve over 40% for at least three subjects. One of these must be an official language at Home Language level.
- Must achieve over 30% for three additional subjects.
- Candidates can achieve any result for the seventh (worst) subject.

- 25% SBA and 75% written examinations.
- SBA results are derived from assignments done during the year and marked by teachers.

- Strong results offer a route to university.

- Written as part of the traditional, full-time schooling system OR as part of a part-time second chance programme, either through a regular school or Community College.

- Either in October/November, or May/June.

# SC

- Available to those who never reached Grade 12, or whose School-Based Assessment has expired.
- Candidates must be at least 21 years old.
- Candidates must have passed Grade 9 (and have a school report to prove it).

- Official languages only.
- A choice of 15 non-language subjects.

- At least six subjects. Does not include Life Orientation.
- Candidates can take as many subjects as they want.
- Subjects passed within the NSC system can be counted as credits towards the SC.

- Must pass six subjects.
- Must achieve over 40% for at least three subjects. One of these must be an official language at Home Language level.
- Must achieve over 30% for at least two further subjects. One must be an official language at First Additional or Home Language level.
- Candidates cannot achieve less than 20% in their sixth (worst) subject.

- 100% written examinations.

- Strong results offer a route to university.

- Written outside the full-time schooling system, usually through Community Colleges, but also through regular schools.

- Only May/June.

# NASCA

- No School-Based Assessment or prior qualifications required, but NQF level two or three is recommended.
- Candidates must be at least 18 years old.
- All candidates undergo a pre-screening to assess their readiness for the learning expected of them. There is also a pre-test to give candidates an indication of their readiness for the NASCA exams.
- NASCA is also intended as a mechanism for recognising prior learning.

- A language.
- Mathematics or Quantitative Literacy.
- A choice of seven additional subjects.

- Four subjects of 30 credits each. These subjects are more substantial than NSC subjects which are 20 credits.
- NASCA requires:
  - a minimum of two compulsory subjects: one language and either Mathematics or Quantitative Literacy; and
  - a minimum of two additional subjects selected from: an additional official language, Natural Sciences (Biology, Physics, and Chemistry), Information and Communications Technology, Human and Social Sciences (History and Geography), Economic and Management Sciences (Economics, Business, and Finance).
- There is no limit to the number of subjects that can be taken, but candidates must complete within six years of registration.

- Must pass four subjects.
- Must achieve at least 50% in all subjects.
- Subjects can be rewritten. The best result will be reflected as the final mark.

- 100% written examinations.

- Strong results offer a route to university.

- Offered as a set of challenge examinations. Candidates can prepare however they choose, including face-to-face, distance, private tuition, or self-study.

- Not yet clear.

Who can register?

What subjects are available?

What subjects do you need to pass?

What grades do you need to pass?

What are results based on?

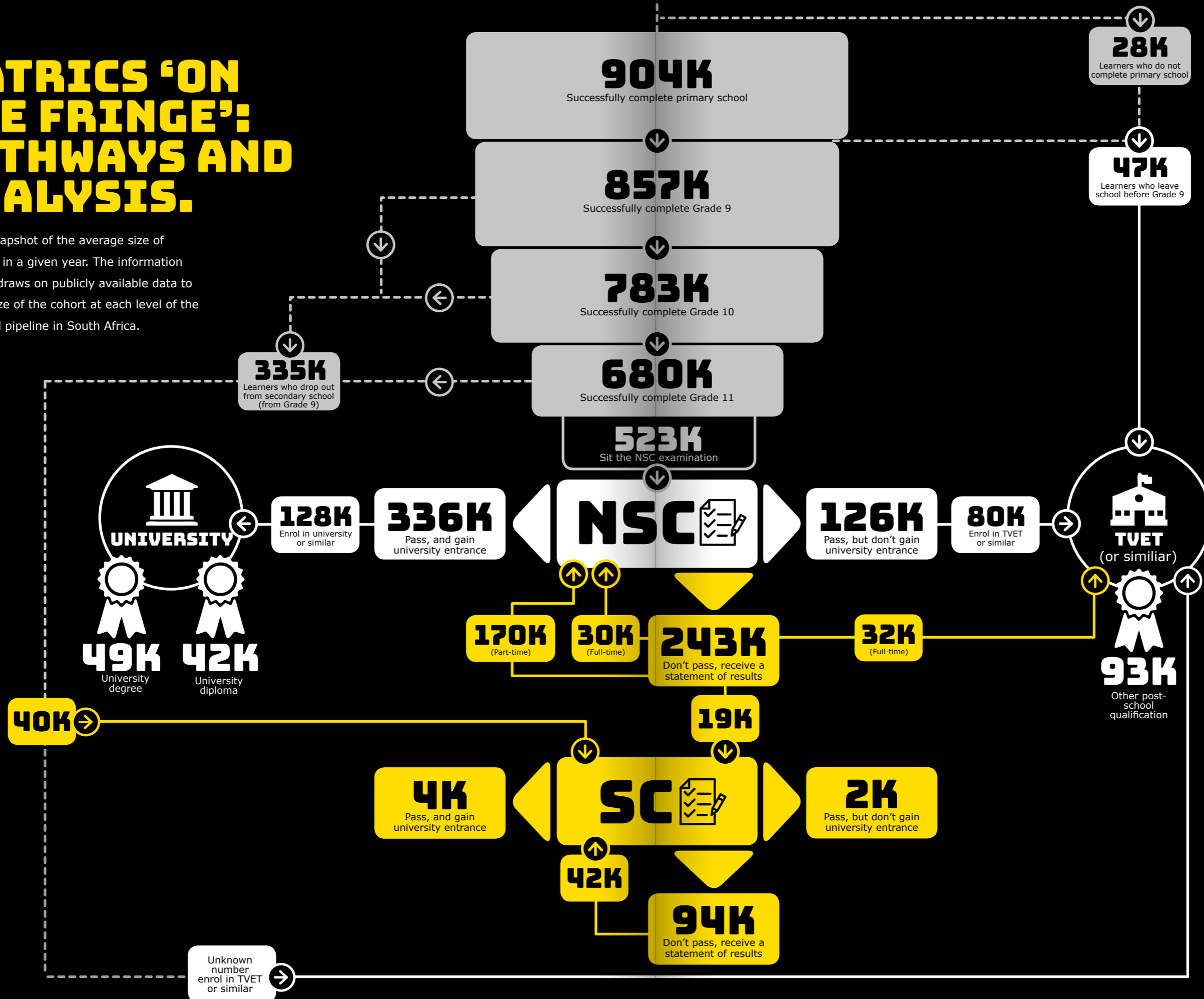
What are the chances of university admission?

Where are exams written?

When are exams written?

# MATRICES 'ON THE FRINGE': PATHWAYS AND ANALYSIS.

This is a snapshot of the average size of the cohort, in a given year. The information presented draws on publicly available data to infer the size of the cohort at each level of the educational pipeline in South Africa.



- KEY**
- Learners in formal schooling
  - Young people in post-school education and training
  - Matrics 'on the fringe'

# EMERGING TRENDS FOR SECOND- CHANCERS.

## GENDER MATTERS

We know that girls are more likely to reach matric than boys, and also outperform boys in their academic results. This trend continues for post-school qualifications. Similarly, women dominate in second chance matric programmes. Among those enrolled as part-time NSC candidates, 60% are women. But, despite being more qualified, women (aged 31-35) have a lower ratio of employed to unemployed members, when compared to men of the same age cohort.<sup>7</sup>

*IMPLICATIONS: For second chance opportunities to matter, we must pay attention to the gender-specific barriers that keep women from the workforce, despite their qualifications. These might include added domestic or childcare responsibilities, or forms of gender discrimination.*

## COSTS

Pursuing matric 'on the fringe' requires financial resources. The costs include registration fees, transport to-and-from classes, learning materials, data, tuition fees, and certification fees. The costs second-chancers carry depend on which schools or Community Learning Centres they attend. Some Community Learning Centres are heavily subsidised (either by government and/or NGOs), which means learners have very few costs and it becomes easier to access second chance opportunities. Others (and especially private colleges) have high costs.

*IMPLICATIONS: Without funding, many young people would not be able to afford these expenses. All costs associated with second chance programmes must be kept to a minimum to increase access for all young people.*

## GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

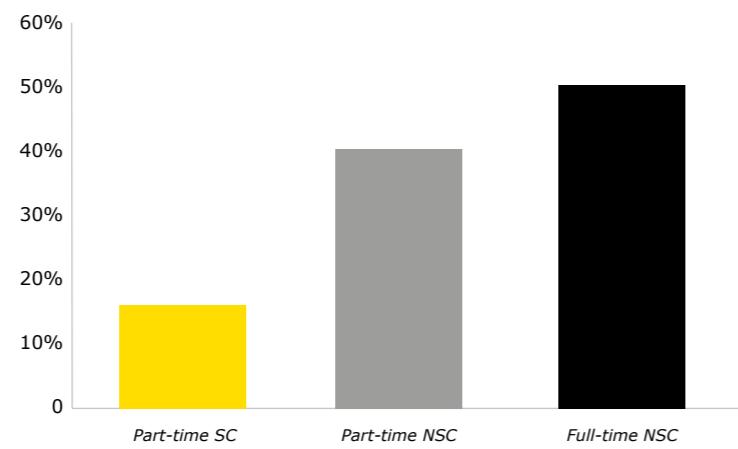
Young people in urban areas are more likely to matriculate, and more likely to achieve a post-school qualification. This is true both for those in full-time schooling and those pursuing matric 'on the fringe'. Urban-based second-chancers continue to perform better than their rural-based counterparts, despite rural areas having greater access to in-person learning centres.

*IMPLICATIONS: There should be a particular focus on understanding and supporting second chance pathways for youth in rural areas.*

### LABOUR MARKET VALUE OF A BACHELOR-LEVEL PASS

Among young people who are aged 31-35 and have a matric qualification, those with a Bachelor-level pass are 8-14% more likely to be employed than those without one. This suggests that the Bachelor-level pass might signal the quality of the matric qualification to potential employers. A Bachelor-level pass could also mean that young people might have spent at least some years at university, which may have helped them build valuable networks, even if they did not complete a degree.

**PERCENTAGE OF PASSES ACHIEVED AT BACHELOR-LEVEL**



**IMPLICATIONS:** *These findings suggest that second chance opportunities that allow young people to better their matric results could have a powerful impact on their futures, even if they don't enrol for or complete a university degree.*

### AGE MATTERS

RESEP's qualitative research suggests that among those working towards a Senior Certificate, older candidates face greater challenges with computer literacy. This means they often need greater institutional support. Older candidates are also more likely to change subjects. As one second chance learning centre founder explains: the burden of some modules may be worth carrying between the ages of 19 and 25, but at 45 it may just be too much.

**IMPLICATIONS:** *A concerted, national effort should be made to encourage younger youth who did not reach, finish, or pass Grade 12 to pursue a matric certificate through the Second Chance Matric Programme.*

### CIRCUMSTANCES MATTER

RESEP's qualitative research shows that second-chancers who are also working full-time jobs might find it difficult to take time off to travel to departmental offices for registration and certification. In some cases, Community Learning Centres have done this on their behalf. For those working full-time, night schools have been very helpful. But night-time classes also pose challenges for safety, security, and childcare.

**IMPLICATIONS:** *Having access to an e-service that serves as a one-stop shop that enables young people to register for a second chance pathway, obtain information, access preparation material, and collect their certificate would help to mitigate against circumstances that make it difficult to participate in the Second Chance Matric Programme.*

**“** *It is not always true that young people who fail matric are academically challenged. Some of them have achieved a second chance NSC with excellent results. This is partly because they are removed from the difficult conditions under which they first wrote matric, and partly because of the added support and tutoring offered by some second chance learning centres.* **”**

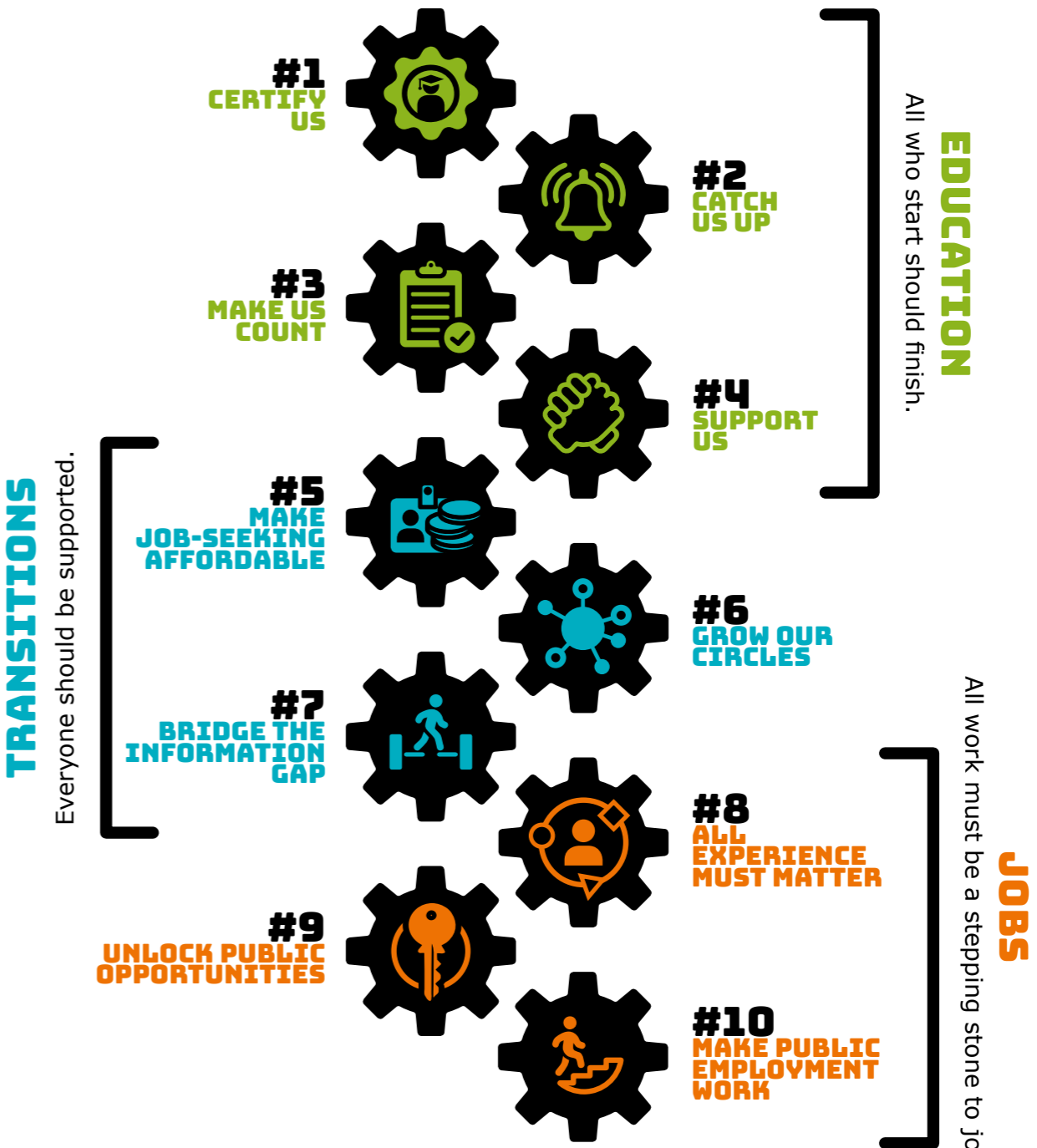
A second-chancer

**WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

**GOVERNMENT,  
CIVIL SOCIETY,  
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**THE SECOND CHANCE  
MATRIC PROGRAMME  
IS AN IMPORTANT  
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ARE PURSUING MATRIC  
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# AN ACTION PLAN TO SHIFT GEARS ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT.



In 2020, Youth Capital published *Shift*: an Action Plan with three focus areas and ten calls to action. This Action Plan looks at how to best support young people in their journey from education to sustainable livelihoods. It was formulated to join the dots between research, policies, and the lived experiences of young people regarding the challenges that underpin youth unemployment.

This research brief aligns with the Action Plan’s focus on Education.

# WHAT CAN GOVERNMENT DO?



Young people who are working hard towards a second chance matric are all-too-often off the radar. By making them visible, more young people would discover pathways to a 'second chance'.

Second chance registration and results, as well as second chance pathways to matriculation, must be properly recorded and reported on. 'Fringe' matrics are just as important as Grade 12 school-goers, who write their matric amidst all the fanfare of end-of-year examinations. Second chance results should be annually publicised, and draw as much concern, support, and celebration as full-time, in-school matriculation.

Up-to-date, quality reporting about second-chancers would also surface challenges in the second chance system, signalling where further support is needed, and improving their chances of success. Monitoring second-chancers should include keeping track of those accessing matric e-services, and gathering their feedback about the effectiveness of these services. Given that many register for a second chance matric qualification, but do not write the exams, it is important that we follow and support registered learners on their journey.

**“** *Not much [tracking] is being done for second-chancers. Because they are not seen, no one knows what support they need.* **”**

A second-chancer



# TWO NEW PATHWAYS TO GETTING YOUTH CERTIFIED.

## ⚙️ THE GENERAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE (GEC)

Second chance matric pathways broaden opportunities for young people to get certified. But the value of certification extends beyond the matric qualification. Learners who leave school before reaching Grade 12 also need recognised certification. This would improve their prospects for further learning and earning opportunities.

The GEC, scheduled to roll out in 2023,<sup>8</sup> is a qualification that would be awarded for completing Grade 9. It would ensure that young people who do not reach, finish, or pass Grade 12 have a nationally recognised certificate that provides an alternative pathway to further education and training as well as future employment.

## ⚙️ THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE FOR ADULTS (NASCA)

The introduction of NASCA could provide an essential route to matric for those young people who left school before receiving any national certification. It is also especially attuned to recognising knowledge and skills acquired outside the formal schooling system. It would give many young people a way to signal their knowledge and capabilities to potential employers. There is now strong evidence that this type of signalling significantly improves young people's job prospects.<sup>9</sup>

Both the NASCA and the GEC have the potential to help bridge young people onto career pathways, while also enhancing their livelihoods and civic participation. But to have these effects, these certification pathways need to be properly implemented, monitored, and supported.

# ⚙️ SUPPORT US

## ⚙️ HELP SECOND-CHANCERS NAVIGATE SECOND CHANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Government is currently developing e-services for matric learners ([www.eservices.gov.za](http://www.eservices.gov.za)). At the moment, this service should allow young people to get their matric certificate re-issued, register for a second chance matric, get their exam results checked, or have their papers remarked. But there is much more they need to know. National and provincial government websites should serve as a central point where young people can access up-to-date and complete information about second chance eligibility, registration, preparation, and certification. At the moment, information for potential second chance candidates is scattered across different sites and is often confusing, undated, or incomplete. This makes it time-consuming and sometimes costly for potential candidates to navigate links and download material.

### A STRENGTHENED E-SERVICE FOR SECOND-CHANCERS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- ✓ A webpage summarising what matric mark thresholds universities use for entry into key academic programmes.
- ✓ A 'Do I now qualify for a Matric?' calculator. The rules around subject combinations and marks needed for matriculation, or a Bachelor-level pass, can be confusing. A calculator that processed someone's credits and results, and indicated how near or far one was to qualifying for a matric, is likely to be used by many part-time candidates, even if it is just to verify that they have understood the rules correctly.
- ✓ Better, data-efficient preparation material.
- ✓ All the relevant information pertaining to registration (how to register, where to go, and subject choice).

## ⚙️ HELP SECOND-CHANCERS PREPARE

Even though there is a lot of matric preparation material out there, it is not well organised or centralised. It also isn't always clear who the materials are for, when they were last updated, or where further information can be found. There is some video learning available: one is a collaboration between the Free State Department of Education and the University of the Free State; the other is a collaboration between the Western Cape Education Department and Stellenbosch University. Video learning is very useful, but at the moment, the data needed to access it is very costly. It would be helpful if government developed a zero-rated central site for online learning.

“ There is not enough information on how to go about rewriting. The online portal is not helpful either. Sometimes the website does not work; so you have to keep checking every few hours. ”

A second-chancer

### HELP SECOND-CHANCERS SUCCEED

For young people to succeed in second chance matric study, they need resources. Some second-chancers need financial support to afford travel, educational materials, and sometimes tuition fees.

Community Learning Centres also need support to create a suitable learning environment.

In RESEP’s qualitative study of second-chancers in the Western Cape, one second chance learning centre had their local DBE office reach out to them and offer support. Since the start of their partnership with the DBE, the learning centre has received textbooks and other study materials to help with their tutoring programme. The local DBE office has also offered mobile resources to help with registration, in the hopes this would lessen the transport costs carried by candidates.

Government could also fund more public Community Learning Centres to grow second chance opportunities. While the number of private colleges offering second chance options seems to be growing, these remain unaffordable for most young people. Since about half of part-time NSC candidates write their examinations through regular high schools, government should also be supporting schools as nodes of connection for second chance matrics.

“ When you have to study again, doing it on your own is difficult. I did not have tutors. I had to do everything on my own. I made use of question papers and text books. ”

A second-chancer

## SECOND-CHANCERS IN NAMIBIA: WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) offers part-time second chance opportunities for learners to achieve a matric certification. Second-chancers in Namibia make up just over 50% of their age cohort. In South Africa, second-chancers enrolled in Community Colleges come to around 10% of their age cohort.

NAMCOL runs 20 centres across the country. In both countries, these centres tend to use the premises of regular schools.

In South Africa, Community College managers are hired by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), but are partly accountable to the governing council overseeing each college. Everyone, including those working in Community Learning Centres, is on the DHET payroll. This means that managers of provincial colleges have very little power in deciding on their own staff. NAMCOL is directly responsible for hiring staff, and many are hired on a non-permanent contract basis. This means that full-time teachers are still able to give some of their extra hours to NAMCOL, and earn additional income.

NAMCOL has clear registration processes, with structured support for second-chancers, and a face-to-face orientation workshop at the start of each academic year. However, this comes with added costs, including a fee per subject. Unlike in South Africa, where young people choose from a wide range of materials, each of NAMCOL’s second chance matrics is given a specific preparation pack. NAMCOL also loads all its tutorial videos on a YouTube channel.

NAMCOL learners submit two assignments each year, which are marked by NAMCOL as a way to give learners feedback before the final examinations. South Africa could add this to its system to help students prepare.

# WHAT CAN CIVIL SOCIETY DO?

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?



## MAKE US COUNT AND SUPPORT US

Civil society organisations can pressure and collaborate with government to track second-chancers' journeys to certification and report on their results. They can offer analysis, of these reports, that help target support to second chance matrices. Civil society organisations also have a role to play in bolstering online resources for second-chancers. Furthermore, by better tracking their own second-chancers, non-government Community Learning Centres can model diligent recording and reporting of 'fringe' matrices, and find innovative ways to use data to inform support interventions.



## SUPPORT US

Setting out on the journey towards a second chance matric can be a lonely, confusing process. Matrics 'on the fringe' receive far less attention or guidance than Grade 12 school-goers. To add to this, finding out what second chance opportunities are available and how to access them can take a lot of time and money. Young people need support (whether in the form of time, data, or computer access) to find the right second chance pathway for them. **Having even just one supportive adult who checks-in on a second-chancer's progress, provides mentorship, and supports them to navigate to matric completion, can make all the difference to their success.**

# CONCLUSION.

Young people know the power of getting certified. They know that an official educational qualification that signals their knowledge and skills can change the course of their lives.

COVID-19 and lockdown have caused major disruptions to young people's education that will likely affect their roads to certification. This means we must nurture and grow alternative pathways to matriculation.

The hundreds of thousands of youth enrolled in the Second Chance Matric Programme are demonstrating remarkable tenacity. Some have never reached Grade 12; but are working, outside the support of a classroom, towards a qualification. Others are rewriting their matric examinations: trying again (at times repeatedly) to get certified. We must stand behind them.

Backing matrics 'on the fringe' starts with making them visible: recording and reporting on their journeys so that we can better support them to certification. Routes to a second chance matric certificate should be accessible, affordable, widely-publicised, and easy to navigate.

Government, civil society, and individuals all have a role to play in helping 'fringe' matrics register as well as prepare for, and ultimately obtain, their certification.

Young people pursuing second chance opportunities are a testament to the ambition and perseverance of South Africa's youth. They have aspirations to better their futures and to become thriving adults. These are the futures on which our country's success depends: it is up to us to support them on their journeys.



# ENDNOTES.

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