



NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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ANOTHER AMENDED SCHOOL CALENDAR

It was inevitable. A spike in COVID-19 infections, a delay in the 2021 opening of schools and another amended school calendar.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) today, 9 February 2021, announced an amended school calendar for the 2021 academic year, prompted by the postponement of the opening of schools from 27 January to 15 February 2021.

NAPTOSA is not pleased with this development on two levels, namely the effect on our members and the manner in which the Department approached the issue.

We questioned the motivation for, and efficacy of, the decision that SMT members, non-teaching staff and teachers had to return to school three and two weeks prior to the opening of schools, but the DBE nevertheless forged ahead with the implementation thereof. The Department now seems to have ignored this very decision of theirs in issuing an amended school calendar that reduces the holiday periods for 2021.

Also, by amending the school calendar every time there is a new COVID-19 wave means that staff are unable to plan their lives, exacerbating the stress and tension they work under. This is especially relevant in light of predictions of possible further waves of the virus.

As for the Department's approach to this matter, it is nothing short of arrogant. NAPTOSA, the other recognized education trade unions, and the broader education fraternity, were "consulted", but their inputs were royally ignored. There was general consensus among the stakeholders that the calendar should not be amended. The DBE, however, appears to regard consultation as a process whereby they share information (in this case how the calendar is to be amended), allow stakeholders to give inputs and then proceed to implement what they have already decided prior the consultation process. This approach is souring the relationship between the Department and stakeholders and is bound to lead to an adversarial liaison in future.

Equally frustrating is the manner in which the Department chose to announce the amended calendar. There was no official announcement. We only became aware of the Department's decision in this regard through social media.

The new announced school terms are as follows:

- **Term 1:** 15 February - 23 April
- **Term 2:** 3 May - -9 July

- **Term 3:** 26 July – 1 October
- **Term 4:** 11 October – 15 December

Members can access the DBE's announced, amended, 2021 school calendar on the following link (the official publication will only be effected in the next couple of days):

<https://citizen.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-school-calendar.pdf?x43633>

COVID-19 has played havoc with attempts by NAPTOSA to produce a 2021 calendar for the union. After having finalized the calendar for 2021 in July 2020, based on the DBE's published official calendar for 2021, we were informed that the Department would be issuing an amended calendar for 2021, which was only published on 2 October 2020. Now sadly, circumstances have led to a further amended school calendar for 2021, rendering the union's calendar obsolete.

In National News Flash 3 of 2021 we *inter alia* called on the DBE to treat the School Governing Body (SGB) elections with circumspection and not to force the matter within the prescribed time frame. We are pleased to report that the Department, for once, heeded our call, having announced that the period for the 2021 SGB elections have been extended from 1 March to 30 April 2021 and that newly elected SGBs will assume their responsibilities once declared that they have been to be freely and fairly elected.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR