



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY**

PRESS STATEMENT

**PHASING OUT OF JUNIOR CERTIFICATE OF
EDUCATION EXAMINATION**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology wishes to inform the general public that as part of the ongoing Public Service Reforms, Malawi Government will, from 2016/2017 academic year phase out the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examination. The last JCE examination to be administered will, therefore, be in 2016 for the current Form 2 students. The arguments behind this decision and the way the secondary school education shall be managed are given below:

1. The Ministry would like all secondary school students to remain in school until they complete Form 4 when they will sit for the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations. Successful

candidates shall be awarded an MSCE Certificate as is the case now while the unsuccessful candidates shall be awarded a Certificate of Completion which will recognize the fact that the owner of the certificate went through and completed secondary education. The emphasis here is on knowledge, skills and values acquired by secondary school students and not the number of public examinations passed.

2. It should be understood that the only reason we send children to school is for them to learn and acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as set out in the curriculum. Examinations are part of the learning process but are not the main objective of education.

3. The Ministry would like to promote the practice of continuous assessment from Form 1 through to Form 4 in order for schools to thoroughly cover the Curriculum as opposed to the current practice which is, to a greater extent, examination oriented as both students and teachers focus much on JCE examination results rather than acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes. In fact, most of Term 3 of Form 2 is spent on preparing

for JCE examinations and not learning for understanding.

4. In order to promote continuous assessment, the Ministry plans to strengthen the cluster examination system which will be used as part of secondary school teacher development activity and students learning hubs in line with the plans of the Ministry which intends to resource these cluster centres better than is the case currently. Cluster management teams shall be responsible for setting and marking cluster based examinations within each cluster. Therefore, instead of having Junior Certificate Examinations, students will sit for Cluster Based Examinations.

5. Since the Ministry wishes to promote acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes by students as opposed to simply pass examinations, secondary schools shall have the responsibility to encourage students that are struggling with their studies in Forms 1, 2 and 3 to benefit from remedial classes or to repeat the year before proceeding to the next class (Forms 2, 3, 4).

6. To ensure that the plans outlined above are achieved fully, the Ministry is implementing the National Education Standards for Primary and Secondary Education from September 2015. The Standards specify expected outcomes for students which should be delivered by all education providers in public and private institutions.

7. The old secondary school curriculum is being phased out, and a new one has just been rolled out. The current Form two students will be the last group of the old curriculum to sit for J.C.E. The phasing out of J.C.E. therefore, is in line with the phasing out of the old curriculum being replaced with the new curriculum where there is emphasis on acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes.

The policy change has the following benefits:

- a) Students will have the opportunity to remain in school from Form one to Form four without hindrance within which period it is expected that they will have acquired useful knowledge and skills of up to the level of senior secondary education. This will give equal opportunities

to both girls and boys to reach Form four as the JCE examination negatively affected girls' education more than boys.

- b) National examinations are used for certification, selection and placement. Previously, due to insufficient places in Form three, the JCE examination was being used for selection of high performing students (from district schools) in the examination to take up Form three places of students who had failed the examination in National Secondary Schools. The examination is no longer being used for selection. Further, employers, including Government (Civil Service) have set the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) as a minimum entry qualification for employment. As a result, JCE no longer serves its certification purpose.
- c) Government spends a lot of money to administer the examination. Since it is clear that the examination has lost all the three purposes for which examinations are administered, government shall redirect the financial resources to other productive areas.

The Ministry appreciates the concern by the public that removal of the JCE examination might negatively affect learning in schools because students will relax before they

are required to sit for the MSCE examination. The Ministry would like to inform and assure the public that in line with its mandate to improve standards of education in the country, the Ministry has developed and launched National Education Standards which focus on continuous assessment. Through continuous assessment, students will be evaluated in various learning areas to determine knowledge and skills acquired at any particular time. The standards are aligned to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II and National Education Sector Plan 2008-2017 which emphasise on quality education for all.

The Ministry already has structures and assessment tools in place to monitor students' progress and give appropriate advice to teachers in areas of improvement through its Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS).

With this information, the Ministry is convinced that the general public will understand and support the reform because the long term benefits far outweigh any perceived shortfalls emanating from the reform.

