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**Document Title:**

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1. Background


- 1.1.1. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) has developed rules and guidelines in order to mitigate the spread of the corona virus at examination centres during the administration of examinations. Examinations in themselves are sensitive, generate anxiety and stress especially during the time of a pandemic such as now. All those who handle examinations and are there to assist candidates should commit to facilitating access to examinations without compromising the health of others. It is against this background that all relevant stakeholders are implored to adhere to these guidelines.
- 1.1.2. The **BEC/HR/P03.v1 – Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness Policy** requires that all supervisors, employees and service providers (contractors) must protect their own and fellow employees' health and safety by working in compliance with safety, health and wellness rules and regulations established by BEC.
- 1.1.3. Based on the above, the BEC is committed to maintaining a safe examinations environment by adopting practices protecting the health of candidates, invigilators and others.

### 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of these rules and guidelines is to provide direction for Head of Centre and centre staff on how they should conduct the examinations during the COVID-19 pandemic phase and to enable adequate adherence to the COVID-19 Regulations during the administration of examinations or until further notice. The rules and regulations are intended to provide guidance on what steps to take during the conduct of examinations to minimise the spread of the virus while ensuring that candidates are given access to BEC examinations. The document covers the administration of examinations under the COVID-19 environment including cases of candidates in isolation, quarantine as well as those that are infected. The guidelines are applicable for the year 2020 and until further notice.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 These guidelines are intended for use by the Heads of Centre, Chief Invigilators, Invigilators as well as candidates. They should be used in conjunction with the BEC Guidelines on conduct of Examinations, Ministry of Basic Education Safety Guidelines on Re-opening of Schools after Lockdown and the COVID-19 Health Protocols.

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2.2 Any changes that will be effected at National level in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of writing the examinations will take precedence over the existing protocols and will be issued by BEC.

### 3 Responsibility and Authority

#### 3.1 Chief Executive Officer (COVID-19 Response Process Lead & Sponsor)

The Chief Executive Officer of the BEC is the overall accountable and responsible resource for ensuring that these rules and guidelines are established and adhered to during the period of the pandemic or until further notice in line with the COVID-19 Regulations.

#### 3.2 Director, Examinations Administration and Certification (EAC)

The Director, EAC is responsible for ensuring that these rules and guidelines are communicated and made available to all examinations centres to enable effective implementation thereof.


#### 3.3 Manager, Programmes

The Manager Programmes is responsible for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of these guidelines at centre level. He/she will be the first point of contact for centres in providing guidance regarding COVID-19 procedures and managing reports from centres.

### 4 Abbreviations, Terms and Definitions

#### 4.1 Abbreviations

<b>BEC</b>	Botswana Examinations Council
<b>DHMT</b>	District Health Management Team
<b>GoB</b>	Government of Botswana
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>NCITs</b>	Non-contact Infrared Thermometers
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>SHE</b>	Safety Health and Environment
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

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## 4.2 Terms and Definitions

### 4.2.1 COVID-19

The Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCov) which is an infectious disease caused by a virus, and declared a global pandemic by the WHO on 11 March, 2020.

### 4.2.2 COVID-19 Regulations

These are Emergency Powers (COVID-19) Regulations of 2020, as amended from time to time and Directions for Prevention of Spread of COVID-19.

### 4.2.3 Close Contact

A person who provided care for the patient, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had similar close physical contact OR who lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact with a probable or confirmed case while the case was ill.

### 4.2.4 Isolation

The separation of infected persons from others to prevent the spread of the virus.

### 4.2.5 Lockdown

A severe form of social distancing under conditions as set out in Part II of GoB (2020) as amended.

### 4.2.6 Self-isolation


When you do not leave your home because you might have coronavirus.

### 4.2.7 Social Distancing

Any public health measure taken to reduce interaction and contact between persons, to limit spread of diseases that are transmitted between persons including through contact and coughing.


### 4.2.8 Quarantine

Restricting activities or separating people who are not ill themselves but may have been exposed to COVID-19 to prevent the spread of the disease at the time when people just developed symptoms.

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## 5 Guidance to Centres During Examinations

- 5.1 Centres should regularly clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the examination environment such as door handles, desk surfaces, examination storages and cabinets on daily basis before and after each examination.
- 5.2 Centres shall ensure mandatory and proper wearing of face masks for all Invigilators and candidates and that there is no writing on the face masks. Candidates should be asked to show their full faces while maintaining social distance to verify their identity at the time of entry into the examination venue. Once in the examination room, candidates, invigilators and examiners shall have their masks on all time.
- 5.3 Candidates shall be provided with adequate facilities and time to wash hands or sanitise their hands before sitting for an examination. This should be at least 30 minutes before the start of an examination.
- 5.4 Centres shall ensure social distancing of 1.25 metres or more between candidates as per the examination regulations. Invigilators should minimise contact with candidates during the distribution of question papers, collection of scripts and marking of attendance registers.
- 5.5 Daily temperature screening for Invigilators and candidates shall be conducted upon entering school premises and this should be maintained throughout the day. Candidates and Invigilators with temperatures of above 37.4°C must be kept at the holding bay and allowed to wait for 5 minutes before screening again. In the case of a candidate, if the temperature is still high, he/she must be kept in a separate room and allowed to write the examination. The SHE Officer at the centre must be informed, who will then liaise with the local DHMT for further guidance and action.
- 5.6 Separate accommodation for writing the exam, in cases of candidates with suspected flu symptoms or those similar to the COVID-19 published symptoms shall be provided. Such candidates shall not be allowed to come into contact with the rest of the candidates and precautionary measures should be taken to ensure that the centre is not at risk.
- 5.7 On receipt of examination material from the courier company, all personnel involved must sanitise themselves including the consignment before checking and storing securely.
- 5.8 Ideally, candidates should not share examination stationery or equipment but if they are to share, all materials should be sanitised before and after each use and each candidate must sanitise before and after they handle the equipment. This also applies to shared utensils used during coursework and practical examinations.
- 5.9 Ensure all equipment for use by candidates with special needs including Perkins brailers for candidates with visual impairment, assistive technology devices and

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recorders for other disability types such as learning disabilities should also be sanitised before and after use.

- 5.10** Provide transparent masks and face shields to be worn by candidates with special needs where possible/appropriate for oral response and also by scribes, readers and sign language interpreters as the use of face masks for certain disabilities may render the examination inaccessible. Sign language interpreters for candidates with hearing impairment should use transparent face masks and ensure a safe distance of minimum 1 to 2 metres is maintained between the interpreter and the candidates.
- 5.11** Know that candidates' needs are different and therefore only when it's appropriate and when candidates are comfortable should special arrangements be made as a response to COVID-19. Some candidates with special needs may be averse or sensitive (sensory issues e.g. Autism) to having material on their skin such as face masks and face shields. In such cases alternative measures can be put in place to ensure that both the candidate and invigilator are protected e.g. transparent barrier.
- 5.12** Ensure safe exchange of question paper packets and scripts between Invigilators and candidates at all times before and after the examination by sanitising.
- 5.13** In all these undertakings and during the conduct of examination, the confidentiality of the examination shall not be compromised.

## **6 Approach to Administration of Examinations During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- 6.1** A candidate who is COVID-19 positive should be isolated according to the National COVID-19 health protocols and continue to take their examination if they are able to in accordance with applicable *Guidelines for the Conduct of Examinations*.
- 6.2** For the above candidate, designated invigilators should be provided with appropriate PPE (including a surgical mask) for the duration of the examination(s).
- 6.3** The centre should arrange with the local DHMT for such a candidate to be transported to and from their place of isolation to the identified examination venue(s).
- 6.4** In the case of candidates who are contacts to a COVID-19 case, who are in quarantine, the centre should arrange for candidates to be invigilated where they are quarantined with invigilators adequately protected. National COVID-19 protocols must be observed at all times.
- 6.5** In light of COVID-19 and associated risks, candidates and invigilators are advised to restrict movement to minimise the risk of contracting and/or spreading the virus during the exam period.



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## **7 Additional Measures for the Conduct of Examinations to be Taken Due to COVID-19**

- 7.1 Assume all candidates and invigilators are possibly COVID-19 positive.
- 7.2 Always apply the COVID-19 safety protocols to reduce the possibility of transmission.
- 7.3 Any examination room may seat up to a maximum of 50 candidates, but observing the 1.25 metres rule. Large rooms e.g. halls may be used provided there is partitioning such that each section can accommodate a maximum of 50 candidates.
- 7.4 Examination papers longer than 2 hours should be allowed to continue until the end without any breaks in between.
- 7.5 Ideally candidates should sit in the same rooms and at the same desks with the same invigilators for all papers. This is more desirable than moving to different rooms to write different papers and reduces the risks of infection. However, this is more applicable at PSLE where all candidates sit the same examinations.
- 7.6 Advise candidates to regularly clean and sanitise their hands.
- 7.7 All candidates should carry only the equipment to write the exam. A clear plastic is advised for ease of scrutiny without the invigilator having to come into contact with the bag upon entry into the examination room.
- 7.8 The invigilator may move between the candidates but must maintain social distancing.
- 7.9 Invigilators should sanitise their hands before and after distribution of the examination materials and collection of scripts.
- 7.10 All desks must be sanitised before and after each examination.

## **8 Procedure to Follow in the Event of a Suspected Case or Positive Case of COVID-19 is Identified in an Examination Centre During the Examinations Period**

### **8.1 General**

It is important that centres should have provision of PPEs during the examination period to cater for possible cases of COVID-19.

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## 8.2 Procedure

The following steps should be taken if a candidate records a temperature greater than 37.4°C during screening.

**Step 1.** Ask the candidate if they have been in contact with anybody who is COVID-19 positive.

**Step 2.** SHE Officer takes the candidate to the sick bay for observation.

**Step 3.** Re-check the temperature after 5 minutes. If the temperature continues to be high, then find out if the candidate is in a position to write the examination.

If the candidate is able to write the examination, the centre should follow the procedure for candidates sitting examinations under adverse or special conditions.

**Step 4.** Provide an invigilator in appropriate PPE to invigilate the candidate in a separate room. Where possible (only applies to gloves, the rest are a must), both the candidate and the invigilator should wear gloves, masks, face screen and observe greater social distancing while the candidate writes the exam.

**Step 5.** The SHE Officer informs the DHMT and supervising authority about the case.

**Step 6.** At the end of the examination, the script is collected and securely placed in a separate packet marked "COVID-19" and placed in a second packet.


**NOTE 1** The centre should write a report as per the "Guidelines for the Conduct of Examinations" for candidates sitting examinations under adverse conditions and submit it to BEC.

**Step 7.** DHMT takes the candidate away for further testing.

**Step 8.** Head of Centre informs the parent/guardian of the candidate.

**NOTE 2** Head of Centre should consult with DHMT to ensure that candidate's results are given top priority to allow them to go back to their examination environment with their colleagues as soon as possible.

**Step 9.** If the candidate tests negative for COVID-19, he/she should be freed to continue with their examinations.

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**Step 10.** If the candidate tests positive for COVID-19, DHMT places them in the identified COVID-19 holding facility.

**Step 11.** The candidate gets to write their examination in the facility being invigilated by invigilators who wear proper PPE. Both the candidate and the invigilator should wear protective wear during the entire examination session.

**NOTE 3** Where candidates are not able to write the examinations because they are sick from COVID-19, the same procedure as described in the *Guidelines for Conduct of Examinations* should be followed.

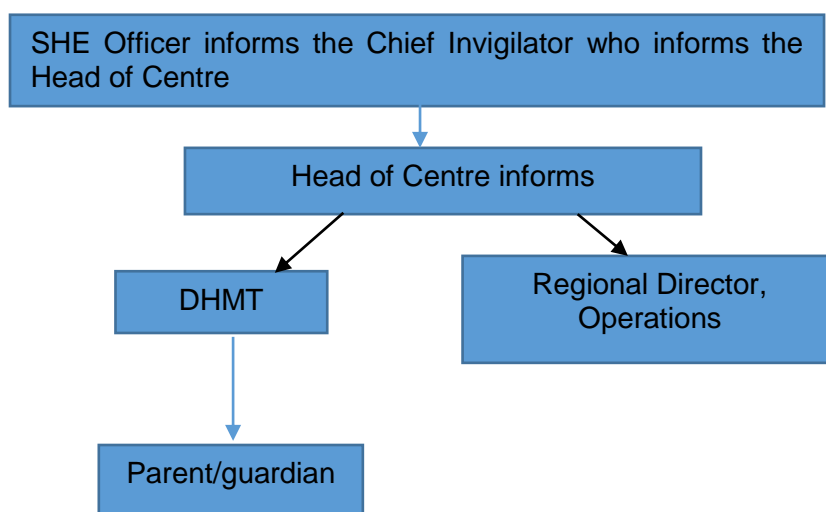
## 9 Communication Protocols


**9.1** Information about COVID-19 test result shall not be shared with unauthorised third parties in whatever format or platform.

**9.2** The communication channels regarding COVID-19 suspected case or positive case will be dependent on the origin of the case. The case might arise from home environment the school premises, or transport services that candidates use.

**9.3** The following communication channels should be followed to disseminate information during examinations period.

### Examination Centre Scenario



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## 10 Associated Documents

This document should be read and used in conjunction with:

- (i) BEC/EAC/PSLE.GO1.v4 - Guidelines for Conduct of Examinations – 2020 PSLE
- (ii) BEC/EAC/JCE.GO1.v3 - Guidelines for Conduct of Examinations – 2020 JCE
- (iii) BEC/EAC/BGCSE.GO1.v6 - Guidelines for Conduct of Examinations – 2020 BGCSE

## 11 References

- (i) BEC (2020), *BEC/CEO/G01 – COVID-19 Rules and Guidelines*, Gaborone.
- (ii) GoB (2020), *Emergency Powers (COVID-19) Regulations*. Government Printing and Publishing Services, Gaborone.