

South African Institute of Professional Accountants
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Numbers in SAIPA's Accounting Olympiad are on the rise

There has been a marked increase in the number of schools and learners participating in this year's National Accounting Olympiad due to a growing interest in the Accountancy Profession as well as massive awareness drive initiated by the South African Institute of Professional Accountants (SAIPA), says Zobuzwe Ngobese, Marketing and Business Development Executive at SAIPA.

"The increase from 310 to 390 schools and 3510 to 7069 learners is quite encouraging and is also due to the fact that in 2017 we introduced the Olympiad to grade 11 for the first time. Next year we want to reach even more schools to make the subject of accounting popular again because our economy needs more accountants in order to grow," he says.

The top four Grade 12 learners nationally, in no specific order, are Adam Melnick from Yeshiva College in Gauteng, Juanè Cronjè from Die Hoërskool DF Malan in the Western Cape, Philip Visagè from Hugenote High School also in the Western Cape and Sara Saleh of Lenasia Muslim School in Gauteng.

Gauteng had the most schools participating in the Olympiad, accounting for 145 of the 390 schools that took part.

SAIPA has this year opened the competition to Grade 11 pupils for the first time since the inception of the competition in 2002, with the top five national candidates in this division, in no specific order, being Alet Muller from Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof in the Western Cape, Deandre De Meyer of Stellenberg High School located in the Western Cape, Felicia Makondo of EPP Mhinga Secondary School in Limpopo, Nabeel Fazluddin from King Edward VII School in Gauteng and Sean Scorer from Amanzimtoti High School in KwaZulu-Natal.

On October 10th, SAIPA will be announcing the Grade 11 and Grade 12 winners at a Gala Awards evening in Johannesburg.

Broadening the scope

In addition to including Grade 11 pupils in the competition, SAIPA has also partnered with Gauteng with Future Forward, which specialises in developing youth orientated intervention programs. The institute's regional administrators have this year purposefully targeted additional schools in their areas.

The aim with the Olympiad, which is open to pupils studying Accountancy or Mathematics in private and public schools, is to make Accounting a subject of choice for learners and to expose them as early as possible to the Accountancy profession, says Ngobese.

Performance indicators

The competition is divided into two rounds and Grade 11 pupils had to achieve a score of 60% or more to advance to the second round and Grade 12 pupils had to score 65% or more to qualify for writing the second paper.

Out of the 1 750 learners in Grade 11, 255 progressed to the second round and 1 095 out of 5 319 in Grade 12 went on to write the second paper. The overall result for the 5 319 learners in Grade 12 shows that the majority – 2 495 learners - scored 40% or more.

In the case of Grade 11 pupils, only 14.5% of the 1 750 pupils scored 60% or more in the final round. The majority – 955 pupils – scored 40% or more.

The top performers will receive a bursary, valued between R10 000 and R25 000, which is paid to the tertiary institution of their choice.

“This year the bursary is subject to the recipients pursuing studies in the Accountancy profession. The main aim with the competition is to grow the numbers in the profession,” remarks Ngobese.

Maintaining high standards

Ngobese says both papers in the competition have been moderated. “They are challenging, but doable,” he says, adding that the results of the Grade 11 pupils are a reflection of the fact that this is the first time they have been exposed to the competition.

“We are confident that the results will improve. The Grade 12 pupils have had access to a study guide, compiled by SAIPA, with past examination papers. The Grade 11 pupils will have access to that in the Olympiads going forward.”

Ngobese notes that part of SAIPA’s future strategy is to open the Olympiad to pupils from Grade 10 to Grade 12. He says in many instances pupils have already made their career decisions when they reach their final school year.

“If we can expose pupils as early as possible to Accountancy as a profession the more likely it is that they will choose it as their career path.”

Accounting is a critical skill and with the threat of Mathematics no longer being compulsory at high school, the numbers may start dwindling, says Ngobese.

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