

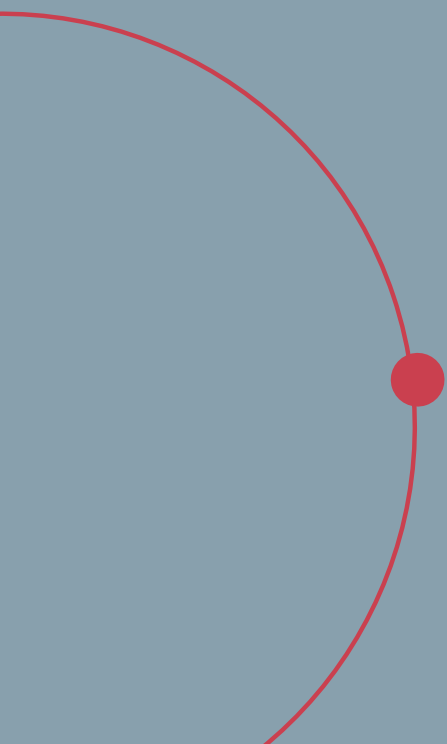
# SPECIAL REPORT 2022



NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND  
EXAMINATIONS CENTER IS 20 YEARS OLD!



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A circular portrait of Sophia Gorgodze, a woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored blazer and a patterned scarf. The portrait is set within a red circular frame that has a small red dot on its right side.

## SOPHIA GORGODZE

### DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS CENTER

This is a special year for the National Assessment and Examinations Center as the organization celebrates its 20th anniversary. For every employee of the Center, this date is memorable, important and meaningful...

Despite many obstacles, during its 20 years, the Center was able to initiate one of the most successful reforms in the field of education in Georgia – the Unified National Examinations. Throughout the years the NAEC has managed to further develop the testing and assessment system and retain the public trust that is really valuable for us.

In this Special Report, we will share what has been achieved during the twenty-year history of the Center, what the challenges associated with the introduction of the first centralized high-stakes examinations were and how the public responded to the reform. Apart from the introduction of centralized exams in 2005, the other biggest challenge has been holding examinations during the two years of the Coronavirus Pandemic. During the high peaks of Covid-19, our organization proved once again that with the tireless work of our professional team it is possible to achieve the goals even in such arduous circumstances. In this report, readers will also learn how the exam process is prepared every year and what changed from one year to another.

To mark this date, the National Assessment and Examinations Center hosted an anniversary conference, where current and former employees recalled interesting details from the Center's history. Also, based on the research data analyzed by our team, many important issues relating to education were discussed including the career choice of youth in Georgia and the differences between the achievements of students at the primary level. At the same conference, the NAEC presented the project "Assessment for Development" which is a very important initiative to support the improvement of teaching and learning in schools.

The National Assessment and Examinations Center certainly has the potential to further develop the educational testing and assessment system. We are continuously working to improve the quality of education by using valid and reliable assessments and we are fortunate to have such a hardworking and dedicated team to do so.

# NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS CENTER IS 20 YEARS OLD!



შეფასებისა და გამოცდების  
ეროვნული ცენტრი

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND  
EXAMINATIONS CENTER

The National Assessment and Examinations Center (NAEC) was established on January 10th, 2002. In 2005 the first Unified National Examinations were conducted.

The transformation from the outdated Soviet admissions system to a new exam model is considered to be one of the most successful reforms in Georgia. However, it should be noted that everything started much earlier.

In the fall of 1999, with the initiative of the Ministry of Education, a small group of experts was already working on the possibility of conducting exams centrally. They were financed by the World Bank and trained to familiarise themselves with the European and American experience.

Despite the public protest, in 2002, the state exams for the 9th grade students were held. In May 2005, a large-scale pilot of the centralised university entrance exam was conducted in Batumi. Representatives of the World Bank also observed the process.

In 2005, entrants only had an option to choose 5 desired faculties by taking 3 mandatory exams: Georgian language and literature, foreign languages, general abilities. Depending on the field of study, some applicants also had to take mathematics. State funding was awarded based on the results of 3 exams. For those who took the fourth exam, the highest score between in mathematics and foreign language exams were considered during the calculation.

From 2006 exams in natural sciences, literature, Georgian history and social sciences were added to the list of elective subject exams. Instead of three subjects, entrants were enrolled as a result of four subjects. The methods of educational grant distribution were also modified. The funding was given only as a result of high scores in general abilities exam and scores in other subject areas were not considered.

From 2008 “Georgian Language Preparatory Program” was launched for ethnic minorities. According to the program, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian entrants were offered general abilities exam in their native languages. After passing the mentioned exam they took a one-year government funded course in Georgian Language. After successful completion of the course the students continued studying at the degree programs without taking any other centralized exams.

It was also decided by the Ministry of Education and Science that universities should allocate 5-5% of places for Azerbaijani and Armenian-speaking students, and 1-1% - for Abkhazian and Ossetian-speaking students<sup>\*</sup>. This reform has served to increase access to higher education for ethnic minorities.

<sup>\*</sup> “New Education”, September 2001, N25, K. Jamburia.

<sup>\*</sup> <http://sainteresoadamianebi.1tv.ge/?id=104>.



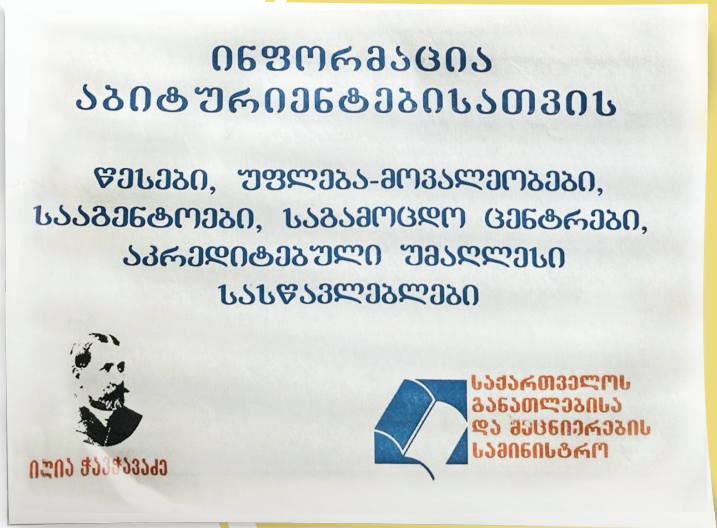
In 2008-2009, the National Assessment and Examinations Center modified the grant distribution regulations, thus applicants received state funding based on the results of four subjects (Georgian language and literature, foreign language, general abilities and one optional subject). From 2019 the general abilities exam was included in the list of optional subjects.

Currently, the state grant distribution is based on the results of three subjects (two compulsory and one optional). Entrants have the opportunity to get 100, 70 and 50 percent grants.

30% grant funding was removed in 2013. Every year, according to the statistics of the last 10 years, an average of between 27,000 and 29,000 entrants become students, of which more than 6,500 entrants receive grants, including 100% funding for more than 1,000 entrants, 50% funding for up to 1,500 entrants and 50% funding for more than 4000 applicants.

Since 2013, entrants have the opportunity to enrol in certain educational programs that are fully funded by the state. These programs are re-approved by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia every year and more than 5,000 applicants have the opportunity to receive a higher education without any costs.

**AT THE BEGINNING OF 2005, GUIDELINES IN THE FORM OF AN INFORMATION BROCHURE TITLED "UNIFIED NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS 2005 - INFORMATION FOR ENTRANTS (RULES, RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS, AGENCIES, EXAMINATION CENTERS, ACCREDITED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS)" WERE RELEASED.**



## EXAMINATIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

Unlike the first Unified National Examinations, since 2006 every examinee is able to see a copy of the paper (answer sheet). Graded copies of the entrants' papers are published online which makes the system more transparent.

Since 2007, online registration has been available. From the same year, entrants had the opportunity to choose seven educational programs instead of five. A year later this was increased to 20 programs. It should be noted that already in 2013 entrants had an opportunity to indicate unlimited number of educational programs in their application. This change prevented the need for secondary enrolments and therefore secondary enrolments have not been conducted since 2013.

\* Journal "NAEC.GE" N1 p.4, M. Akhsishvili.





In 2008 the computerised marking system (eMarker) was successfully introduced. The program is still unique today because it allows the markers to review the papers without leaving home and without being able to identify the examinee. The marker does not see the whole test, but only individual tasks or items. Each task is marked by two people independently. If their evaluations do not match, the paper is sent to a third specialist. This system of marking the papers completely eliminates any possibility that the examinee might receive a biased assessment.

“Davit Chankotadze, the head of the information technology group of the National Assessment and Examinations Center notes: ...the exam model that Georgia chose was original. It was the creation of a unique system for our country based on the analysis of existing models. Foreign consultants also took part in this process. Subsequent years have further refined this model. The development process was

especially interesting for foreign experts who collaborated with National Assessment and Examinations Center in 2005. According to their assessment, we introduced completely new approaches in this field. Many developed countries had either implemented these methods on a small scale, or years later they were planning to introduce a similar innovation — I mean publishing papers after the exams, providing detailed information to the entrants continuously on the Internet. Also, eMarker, the electronic marking system, developed at the center, provides complete anonymity and maximum transparency. In 2011, graduation exams were added to this — a system that even well-computerised countries could not manage to implement.”\*



\* "Research on the effectiveness and results of preferential policy in the higher education system of Georgia", Sh. Tabatadze, N. Gorgadze, K. Gabunia



Until 2019, school leaving exams were held simultaneously in 1,600 schools throughout Georgia for students of 11th and 12th grades. The purpose was to determine the minimum competence of the student in the subjects that were taught in the final school years. The CAT (Computer Adaptive Testing) exam model was conducted entirely electronically. The CAT system meant an adaptive testing, focused on the student's ability.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science started to work on a new model of the exam system, which was called "8+1". According to the model, on the basis of 8 graduation exams and one admission exam, an applicant would be enrolled in a higher educational institution.

In November of the same year, the relevance of this model was questioned: "The unified National Examinations system is an important aspect of the Georgian education policy. In addition, the reform of the Unified National Examinations is one of the most successful reforms, on the effectiveness of which everyone agrees, because the goal



\* Magazine "NAEC.GE" N1,  
p. 45.



set at that time was fully achieved as a result of the said reform. It should be noted that the work on reforming the Unified National Examinations was ongoing.

In 2011, certificate exams (school leaving exams) were held for the first time, and in 2012, it was announced that by 2013, instead of Unified National Examinations, reform of certificate exams and skills tests would be introduced to enrol students in Universities (the so-called 8+1 model). The Ministry of Education and Science made a decision to leave both the certificate and entrance exams in force, however, they divided the certificate exams into two stages - 11th and 12th grades.”\*

As of 2019, graduation exams have been cancelled and certificates are currently issued in schools again based on academic performance.

**CURRENTLY,  
THE CENTRE CONDUCTS:**

SINCE 2005

Unified National Examinations;

SINCE 2006

The Student Grant Competition;

Educational Research;

SINCE 2009

The Unified Master's Exam;

The National School Olympiad;

SINCE 2010

The Teacher's Exams;

SINCE 2013

International Exams;

Vocational Testing;

SINCE 2019

Exams for those wishing to continue their studies in Georgia.

\* Magazine "Liberal" 2.11.2012, "Certificate and entrance exams in Georgia", Sh. Tabatadze

STATISTICS -  
FROM  
2005  
TO THE  
PRESENT DAY:

More than 447,800 entrants became students

State grants were given to a total of 125,200 students

The centre created accommodations (special educational conditions) for more than 3,000 people with special educational needs

For the last few years, the centre has been conducting exams for entrants in 17 subjects, **these are:**

- Georgian language and literature;
- Ossetian language;
- Abkhazian language;
- Mathematics;
- History;
- English;
- German;
- Russian;
- French;
- Biology;
- Chemistry;
- Physics;
- Civil Education;
- Fine and Applied Arts;
- General abilities;
- Geography;
- Literature.

UNIFIED NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

Year	Registered	Was Present in the exam	Became a student
2005	31171	30227	16507
2006	32789	31991	19479
2007	39249	38618	15444
2008	24049	23342	15559
2009	28942	28451	21182
2010	36657	35217	22877
2011	34032	33267	23639
2012	35361	34436	26050
2013	41936	40670	28861
2014	36223	33998	26456
2015	40076	37437	28061
2016	41702	37338	27785
2017	41242	36875	28176
2018	40405	36498	27907
2019	40460	38763	28740
2020	39381	37195	29614
2021	38415	35985	29362
2022	41264	39060	32111

2005-2022





## HOW THE EXAMS ARE PLANNED - LOGISTICS AND THE EXAM PROCESS

Pre-examination preparations are multi-stage and ongoing throughout the year. As a rule, each year starts with a summary of the process already completed. The special division at NAEC discusses the logistical challenges and future plans as even the smallest and most insignificant details can be important and must be considered.

Every year, in order to create the most comfortable conditions for the exams, the exam centers are specially selected and the relevant service prepares tender proposals for the purchase of all the necessary items and inventory.

In parallel with solving logistical issues, active work begins on the creation of exam programs and also exam tests - all this is taken care of by various subject groups consisting of qualified subject specialists.

Working on test tasks is quite time-consuming - each task goes through a long path and a number of procedures before it reaches the exam.

Initially trends are outlined based on the study of the previous year's examinees papers, as well as listening to, and considering, the opinions of a large team of markers by subject groups. After that, item development begins. It is followed by constant refinement, creation of evaluation schemes and, if necessary, the involvement of a group of experts in this process. When the group brings something new to the test, the tasks are always pre-tested.

Although specific people work on specific items, all items are read and completed by all group members to avoid any potential hazards that may be associated with an inconsistent understanding of the item instruction or its contents.

Finally, several main and spare versions of the test are created. Options are compared to each other to minimise differences in subject matter and complexity.



The NAEC employees are also starting to work on the guide for master's students and the entrants' directory. In addition to these two documents, 'open door days' with the participation of subject groups are also a source of additional and permanent information for the exams. These types of meetings are held both face-to-face and electronically throughout the year.

Due to the high national importance of the Unified National Exams, every year, the Ministry of Education and Science sets up a consultancy group to support the process. This group includes representatives of various ministries of Georgia, Tbilisi City Hall and several internet providers.

The first meeting of the organising group is traditionally held in May. The center provides them with detailed information about news and needs. The meeting with the organising group is held twice a year and issues such as: the uninterrupted power supply of the examination centers, provision of emergency and fire assistance, road maintenance, transportation (in the direction of the centers, additional transport). The consolidated information is then sent to all institutions in the form of a thick document in June. It contains the addresses of all of the centers and the contact information of the representatives, as well as the duties that must be performed by the agencies involved in the logistical part of the exams.

One of the most important pre-examination activities is the distribution of the exam schedule - it should be planned in such a way that applicants are distributed to the centers equally, and it is also important not to have "Overlapping exams" - for example, if a person is taking (takes) the Unified Master's Examination and the teacher's exams together, then they should be able to do both exams on different days. The examinee allocation document is sent to the Information Technology Department, based on which it prepares an electronic database - after that, the random distribution of persons begins with the indication of sectors and table numbers.





Before that, considering the number of registered people, the employees of the National Assessment and Examinations Center prepare answer sheets, as well as supporting materials, such as maps and the periodic table of chemical elements. Along with these materials they provide supply of all stationery, medical items, etc.

Every year, the Ministry of Education and Science gives 10,000 to 20,000 computers to the National Assessment and Examinations Center for temporary use. The employees of the NAEC equip the computers with a special program in advance, check each and every one of them, and prepare exam servers.

Equipping the centers starts about 10 days before the exams, which means that the preparation proceeds to the next stage and it is already moving to the exam centers. Administrator-coordinators, IT managers, assistants and other technical personnel selected according to the examination center's needs will now lead the process on site along with employees of the center.

Between 1,500 and 2,000 administrators-coordinators and supervisors-curators work in examination centers every year. There are about three thousand people in the database. Before the exams, they go through special training and pass the appropriate tests. The HR database is constantly updated.

One day before the exam process a rehearsal (mock exam) is held during which all the details are carefully reviewed so that all the centers are perfectly ready for the exams the next morning.







Although the first exam day is often accompanied by a special anxiety, procedurally it is similar and standard to all the other exam days - the administrator of a particular exam center, together with the coordinator, goes to work first and checks all the rooms. At 07:00 AM administrators and coordinators are joined by supervisors-curators who are responsible for registering the examinees. After that, the sectors are brought to full readiness. The rooms are ventilated, the answer sheets and pens are distributed accordingly and the janitor and the gardener continue with their additional sanitation work. Patrol, fire and ambulance vehicles enter the perimeter. At 08:00 AM, the center is ready to receive examinees.

To complete the registration, the examinee needs an identity card and an exam card, the exam card contains the person's personal information, the address of the exam center, the sector and table number, as well as the registration start time. When there are a few minutes left before the end of registration, the employees of the center go to the gate and take a good look at the perimeter - if they see an applicant somewhere, they try to hurry them up so that the examination process is not interrupted due to a late entrant.

On average, the centers opened throughout Georgia can accommodate more than 7,000 examinees every day. Before the start of the test, the supervisor reads the rules of conduct for the exam in the sector. A laptop, an answer sheet and a pen are placed on each table. All examinees can request new pen and paper and also a replacement of an answer sheet in case of damage. The replacement of the answer sheet is done by a special protocol. Rough papers are not marked, however, their distribution is considered information dissemination and is prohibited. The answer sheets are sealed and sent to the National Assessment and Examinations Center. Examinees who require special conditions often have extended exam times. The administration of the center contacts such persons in advance and specifies the details.

As you can see, the examination process is multi-stage, time-consuming and detail-oriented.

# OTHER EXAMS

In 2005, in addition to the Unified National Examinations, the center conducted the selection tests for public school principals and externship exams. For many years the NAEC has received requests for information and training related to the selection of civil servants and the conduct of school exams.

Every year the organisation administers other equally important exams which we will discuss in more detail below.

## THE STUDENT GRANT COMPETITION

The Student Grant Competition provides an opportunity for undergraduate students in order to obtain or improve funding. All students of accredited higher education institutions who didn't receive or only partially received funding have the right to participate in it.

If a student fails to improve their results, they retain the previously obtained grant and have the right to re-register for the Student Grant Competition every subsequent year (additional semesters are not funded). The money allocated for this competition from the state allocations are distributed to the students with the best results according to the ranking indicator. The National Assessment and Examinations Center has developed a test format specifically for this exam, and every year test items are prepared specifically for students to assess their general academic skills.

In 2022 more than 2,500 examinees participated in the Student Grant Competition and an additional 250 students were awarded a grant increase.



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## THE UNIFIED MASTER'S EXAMINATION

Passing both the Unified Master's Exam and the exam/s appointed by the higher educational institution is a necessary condition for continuing studies in any master's program at all higher educational institutions in Georgia (except for theological, performing arts and sports educational specialties).

### THE PURPOSE OF THE UNIFIED MASTER'S EXAMINATION IS:

To help higher education institutions in the selection of graduate students;

To exclude the admission of such students who cannot meet the necessary requirements for this level of education;

To ensure greater objectivity and transparency of the enrolment process in the master's program.



Along with the Unified Master's Exam, a new master's degree funding system was introduced in Georgia, which focused on the financing of priority directions for the state.

Passing the threshold in three of the four parts of the Unified Master's Examination is sufficient to pass the exam. Applicants for master's degrees can find detailed information in the guide, which is published on the center's website every year after the start of registration.



Year	Enrolled in the Masters Program	Obtained funding (grant)
2009	2964	920
2010	3766	923
2011	4434	889
2012	4029	901
2013	4696	895
2014	5997	895
2015	6505	896
2016	6498	895
2017	7488	895
2018	6084	893
2019	6101	892
2020	7711	891
2021	7074	890
2022	5296	891

## EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHER'S SUBJECT AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS



The National Assessment and Examinations Center started conducting teachers' qualification exams in 2010.





## **SUBJECT COMPETENCE EXAMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR TEACHERS IN THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:**

- ▶ Georgian Language and Literature (primary level);
- ▶ Mathematics (primary level);
- ▶ Natural Science (primary level);
- ▶ Georgian Language and Literature, Mathematics and Natural Science (grades I-IV); Georgian Language And Literature (basic and/or secondary level);
- ▶ Georgian as a Second Language (primary, basic and/or secondary level); Mathematics (basic and/or secondary level);
- ▶ Social Sciences (basic and/or secondary level): History, Geography, Civic Education;
- ▶ Natural Sciences (basic and/or secondary level): Physics, Chemistry, Biology;
- ▶ Foreign Languages (primary, basic and/or secondary level): English, German, French, Russian;
- ▶ Subjects of Aesthetic Education: Fine and Applied Arts, Music, Sports;
- ▶ Information and Communication Technologies.

Teachers of non-Georgian-speaking schools can work on the subject test that has been translated into their native (Azerbaijani, Russian or Armenian) language. Proof-readers trained by the NAEC mark these tests with the help of translators.

In 2021, the National Assessment and Examinations Center conducted the Senior Special Teacher Examination in Professional Skills for the first time. The test included issues related to creating a positive, student-centred safe environment, planning the learning process, using different teaching strategies and learning resources, assessment, and the teacher's professional responsibility.

In 2022, the center organised, and for the first time conducted, an exam in professional skills for those who want to become a leader and mentor teacher. An examination program based on the teacher's professional standard was developed in advance - it defined additional requirements and competencies for leader and mentor teachers.

Also, this year, two new exams were held for the first time for native language and literature teachers of non-Georgian schools, namely, for Azerbaijani and Armenian teachers, organised by the National Assessment and Examinations Center.



## VOCATIONAL TESTING

Vocational testing provides an assessment of important, minimal (basic) knowledge and specific skills for mastering a specific profession. The purpose of vocational testing is to reveal the skills and abilities of those wishing to continue their studies in a professional educational program.

For this exam, the center has specially developed different types of tests including: Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Literacy, Quantitative Literacy and General Abilities.

This year, the National Assessment and Examinations Center gave applicants the opportunity to take a mock test online and familiarise themselves with the features of the program and sample test items without leaving home.

In 2022, admission was announced for more than 600 professional educational programs. About 24,500 applicants expressed their desire to participate in the professional test. Of these, more than 9,300 applicants for admission to higher and secondary professional educational programs passed the test organised by the National Assessment and Examinations Center, and more than 2,900 applicants passed the general abilities test to continue their studies at the basic professional level. Applicants for a number of professional programs were selected by the professional educational institutions themselves.

## THE EXAM FOR THOSE WISHING TO CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES IN GEORGIA

The National Assessment and Examinations Center supports Georgian citizens' endeavours to continue studying in Georgia. Therefore, each year the Center opens call for applicants who are willing to transfer from foreign universities to Georgian higher educational institutions.

Eligible candidates should be citizens of Georgia who have studied / are studying and have received credits / qualifications at a higher education institution recognized by law in a foreign country (they have been abroad for a period of study, not less than 75 days per semester).

Those who wish to continue their studies in Georgia take a test specially prepared for them, which consists of 3 parts: reading comprehension, logical reasoning and quantitative reasoning. The exam is held twice a year





- in February and September. In 2022, the exam was held for the third time, and those who received education in the form of distance learning during the pandemic were also allowed to participate in it.



## THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OLYMPIAD

Since 2009, the National Assessment and Examinations Center has been centrally conducting the National School Olympiad for students of the secondary and basic levels. With the tests prepared by the center, the first round is held at the school, and the second and third rounds are conducted centrally by the National Assessment and Examinations Center. The goal of the National School Olympiad is to stimulate the learning process and increase the motivation of students. Also, the winners are considered as potential candidates for the national teams that will participate in the International Olympiad on behalf of Georgia. The Olympiad is held in the Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian languages. 130,000 teenagers expressed their desire to participate in the first National School Olympiad.

More than 31,900 students expressed their desire to participate in the first round in 2022, and considering the pandemic, it was held in a different format. Students could participate remotely from any computer connected to the Internet.

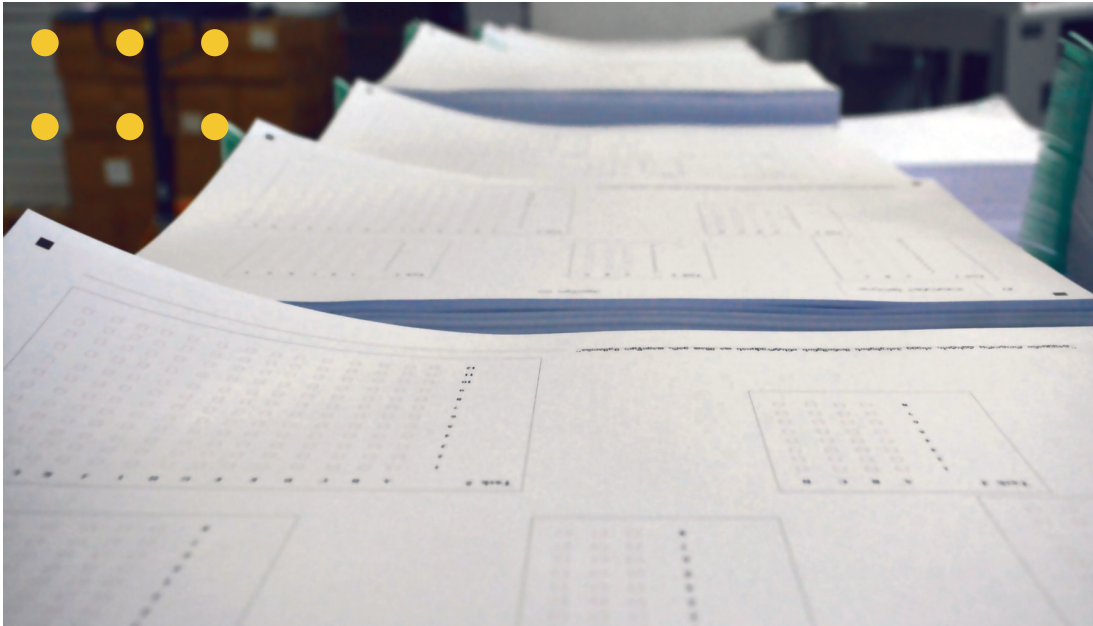
Participants who scored 60% or more of the maximum test score and were among the first 1,000 students on the subject's ranking list qualified for the second round. In the third round, those students who scored at least 50% of the maximum score in the respective subject and were among the first fifty participants in the ranking list of the respective class and subject moved on. More than 6,000 students participated in the second round, and more than 600 in the third round.

The winners of the Olympiad are the students who score more than 60% of the maximum score in the test of the relevant subject and are among the first ten participants in the ranking list of the relevant class and subject. The winners are awarded with diplomas and gift vouchers.

The National School Olympiad is based on the National Curriculum and is conducted annually by the National Assessment and Examinations Center.







## TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES

In the examination guide published in 2005, a sample registration application was given. It included detailed information on how an applicant was supposed to apply to participate in the Unified National Examinations. The applicant provided personal information and a list of faculties at which he wanted to continue his studies. The applications were collected by the local educational resource centers and then sent to the National Assessment and Examinations Center.

Today, this procedure is greatly simplified. For one month, the entrant can make changes to the online application several times using any available computer or mobile phone. Since 2016, registration has become a three-stage process. Within this one month period entrants can enter personal data, choose the exam city and the subjects to be taken in the first, main stage. After the expiration of this period, the applicant cannot change the exam city, but they can add or change the exam details, and they have the opportunity to make changes to the list of educational programs up to the day after the publication of the appeal results - a few days before the publication of the final results.

Electronic registration was introduced in 2011 for applicants who were taking the entrance exams that year.

Since 2012 registration has been fully electronic for all applicants, from any computer connected to the Internet, which has made the registration process significantly easier and more convenient.

Since 2014 the procedure of getting the exam card has also been simplified. Previously it was only possible to get it at the educational resource centers, now all examinees can see it on their registration page and, in case of loss, they can reprint it from any computer connected to the internet. The exam card, together with the identity card, is the “pass” of every applicant for the entire exam period; it contains the person's personal information, as well as the address of the exam center, the time and date of the start of registration. From 2020, the exam sector and table numbers are also indicated on the card which makes the registration process easier.

Since 2014, the method of equating has been introduced in order to compensate for the differences between various test versions.

In 2016, the exams were held for the first time in a partially electronic format. The change in format provided only for the electronic delivery of the test (and not the answer sheet). As a result of the introduction of the new format, the participant sees the test on the computer screen and marks or writes the answers on the answer sheet. By switching to a partially electronic format of the exam the center saved approximately 600,000 GEL which was previously allocated annually for printing the tests. To protect confidentiality, all exam papers were sent to the Stephen Austin printing house in England for printing. At that time the authoritative company “Steven Austin”, recognized in the printing of confidential documents, was serving 20 countries’ examination centers and their Ministry of Education on 4 continents of the world. All safety measures were followed during the packaging and transportation of the tests - the tests were placed in special polyethylene bags, which couldn’t be opened without damage, then these packages were arranged in boxes and sealed, and the sealed and palletized boxes were then placed in containers with three different types of seals. The material was sent to Georgia by ship and was kept under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. On the day of the exam, the tests were sent to the exam centers by special escort. It was only possible to open it immediately before the exam.





# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND GEORGIA

Since 2006, Georgia has joined the list of countries that actively participate in international educational research. Administration is traditionally provided by the National Assessment and Examinations Center in Georgia.

## RESEARCH AIMS TO:

- ▶ evaluate the achievements of students and their changes over time;
- ▶ discover systemic, methodological and contextual reasons for differences and similarities between student achievements;
- ▶ offer recommendations to improve results.



## SINCE 2006, GEORGIA HAS PARTICIPATED IN THE FOLLOWING STUDIES:

**PIRLS** - International Literacy Survey, assesses the reading skills of 4th grade students. Georgia has been involved in PIRLS since 2006 and has since participated in the 2011, 2016 and 2021 surveys.

**TIMSS** - Survey of Learning and Teaching in Mathematics and Science, assesses the achievements of students in grades 4 and 8. Georgia was first involved in the assessment in 2007 and since then it has participated in studies conducted in 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. Major fieldwork for the 2023 survey is currently underway.

**PISA** - the Program for International Assessment of Student Achievement among 15-year-olds, assesses reading, maths and science skills. Georgia has been involved in PISA as a partner country since 2009, since then it has participated in the 2015, 2018 and 2022 cycles.

**TEDS-M** - International Study on the Training of Future Mathematics Teachers. The purpose of the research is to improve teacher education programs and thus promote learning and teaching. Georgia participated in it in 2008.

**TALIS** - The purpose of TALIS research is, on the one hand, to examine the main aspects of policy and practice related to teachers' activities and, on the other hand, to inform all interested parties about the results of this activity. Georgia joined the study in 2013 and took part in it for the second time in 2018.

International and state research reports are prepared every year and published on the website of the National Assessment and Examinations Center ([www.naec.ge](http://www.naec.ge)).



**ACCORDING TO THE MENTIONED STUDIES, ON NOVEMBER 22, 2022, AT THE CONFERENCE DEDICATED TO THE 20 YEARS ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTER, THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WERE DISCUSSED:**



- ▶ "Scientific (STEM) career challenges and professional choice of 15-year-old students" - moderator Giorgi Chumburidze;

During the presentation the key issues were discussed: 1) influence of existing gender stereotypes on career choice in the scientific direction; 2) Achievements of Georgian elementary level students in reading, mathematics and science subjects; 3) future professional choice of 15-year-old students; 4) career choice of entrants on unified national exams.

- ▶ "Analysis of student responses to TIMSS 2019 assessment tasks according to content and cognitive areas" - Moderator Zakaria Gyunashvili, Lika Zaalishvili;

The material was presented, in which the analysis of students' answers according to the various characteristics of the tasks used in the assessment was discussed, namely: in which content and cognitive field do Georgian students have better and worse results in the TIMSS 2019 international assessment; What are the students' achievements according to the types and content of the tasks; What is the relationship between the national curriculum, its implementation and student achievements; What is the relationship between teacher practice and student achievement in different areas? • According to the published tasks of TIMSS 2019, the analysis of the mistakes made by the students was presented. A discussion was also held.

- ▶ "Differences between the achievements of students at the primary level in Georgia" - moderator Giorgi Ratiani, Nutsa Mchedlishvili.

The conversation touched on what factors can lead to differences at the school, class and individual level of the student (school culture, school practices and climate, educational and infrastructural resources, school location, type, etc.).







# EXAMS FOR ALL

(APPLICANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND CONVICTED/ACCUSED APPLICANTS)

In the first year of conducting the Unified National Examinations, one of the main priorities was to create equal conditions for all examinees. The center still fulfils the promise of “exams for all” and every year hundreds of examinees with special needs pass various exams under the administration of the center. Among them are people with a wide range of conditions including blindness, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy and conditions causing limited motor functions. We ensure that the necessary special conditions are created in the examination centers. In special cases, the applicants are offered scribe/amanuensis and pass the exam in this format. Since 2006, the National Assessment and Examinations Center has been creating special Braille exam tests for blind examinees, as well as providing test items with a special voice program, arranging a space adapted to the needs of the examinee, extending the exam time, and many other solutions. The center is constantly working on further refinement and improvement of the system.

Later it became possible for accused or convicted persons to take the exams. With this initiative, in 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science applied to the Ministry of Penitentiary, Probation and Legal Assistance. In the same year, the question arose as to how convicts could be better prepared for the Unified National Examinations. It was decided that upon arrest, the minor would be enrolled in Public School 123, whose teachers would have the right to conduct lessons for them daily, in the regular school mode. In the first academic year, seven convicts successfully passed the national exams. Three of them were pardoned by the president. Three of the remaining four were released at different times and continued their studies (“Naec.ge” N2 p. 17-19.).

“Participating in the exams will increase the motivation of the accused/convicts and will set them towards positive changes.”

In many cases, they become students and continue their education in various higher educational institutions, as well as acquiring a profession. Involvement in the process of higher education during the period of stay in a penitentiary institution helps the accused/convicts adapt and communicate with the outside world, and also promotes their resocialization.





# THE NAEC'S PROJECTS

With the initiative of the center, from 2006 to 2016, the Black Sea International Conferences were held and experts in the field of education from many countries took part.

Since 2013, the National Assessment and Examinations Center has been administering various types of international exams. Any interested person can use this opportunity, including pupils, students and graduate students. The center has obtained the licence to conduct Cambridge, TOEFL, and ACCA computer-based qualification exams in Georgia.

## FROM 2013 TO DATE:

Approximately 900 examinees took the **TOEFL** exam.

Approximately 650 examinees took the **ACCA** exam.

Approximately 2,500 examinees took the **Cambridge exams**.

In 2014-2017, the center administered the projects: "Civic Education Olympiad" and "Students for Self-Government". The aim of the projects was to support the establishment of civic values in the young generation and their formation as full-fledged members of the democratic society.



სტუდენტები თვითმმართველობისათვის

In 2017-2018, the center conducted a test to determine the level of English language proficiency within the framework of the CERTUS project. Holders of a foreign language certificate issued within the framework of CERTUS no longer had the obligation to pass a foreign language exam in some of the institutions. Later, the project was temporarily suspended. Currently, the center is actively working on the restoration of the project and, in the near future, those who wish to, will have the opportunity to take the test again.

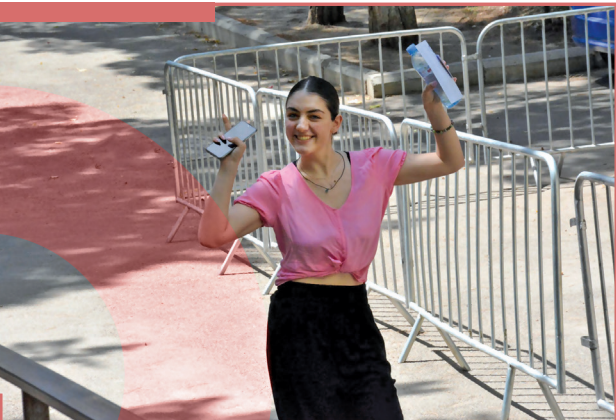
In 2019, the center started working on a new project called "Assessment for Development".

Its purpose is to evaluate the achievements of the fourth and sixth graders at the end of the school year in Georgian language and literature (literacy) and also in mathematics (quantitative literacy) with the help of an electronic platform. The results will help students and parents monitor the progress achieved during the educational process and gain information about the strengths and weaknesses of the students.

In order to further improve the electronic platform meetings with the principals and teachers in schools throughout Georgia are ongoing. The purpose of these meetings is to familiarise the people involved in the project with the electronic platform of the report and its specifics.



# 2020-2021 YEARS: EXAMS UNDER PANDEMIC CONDITIONS



*“Although the introduction of the Unified National Examinations (UNE) is most often associated with the elimination of corruption, based on policy documents, interviews with politicians and education experts at the time, we can single out three main goals of the introduction of the UNE: 1. Fight against corruption; 2. Giving equal opportunities to all; 3. Ensuring meritocratic selection”.\**

*Lela Chakhaia in her research “School Graduation and Unified National Examinations in Georgia” (2019) writes:*

*“The Unified National Examinations confronted corruption through the following means:*

- *Depriving universities of the right to admit students*
- *Standardisation of exams*
- *Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of exams*

The success of national exams in the fight against corruption has been repeatedly recognized by various local and international organisations (Transparency International, 2006; World Bank, 2009). The introduction of the UNE by the population was perceived as a great success from the beginning. A 2005 survey found that 80% of applicants and their parents and 80 to 90% of university administrators expressed confidence in the new examination system (Transparency International, 2006). 78.2% of the respondents named the UNE as the most fair and transparent evaluation system (ibid.). As a result of the qualitative research the high level of trust in society towards the UNE was confirmed. As the focus groups and interviews revealed, the standardised format and complete anonymity of the exams leave no reason to doubt its objectivity. The corrupt practices in the system of entrance exams before 2005 are still well remembered by teachers, parents and representatives of universities. Many believe that the only way to prevent this practice from returning is to maintain the UNE system. Even the most vocal critics of standardised tests admit to the need for the introduction of tests at that stage and the undoubted success of the UNE system in the fight against corruption, but add that the circumstances that led to the introduction of the UNE at that time have changed, the tests have become outdated and, therefore, the system needs to be changed. \*

In 2019, considering the aforementioned research, the center started working on a new model of entrance exams. Relevant subjects were defined according to technical and humanitarian directions.



\* "National Assessment and Examinations Center", 2018; World Bank, 2012; A. Lomaia, 2006).

\* Lela Chakhaia, "School graduation and the Unified National Examinations in Georgia", 2019.



In 2020, as part of the complex reform of education, the model of the Unified National Examinations was changed. The new model meant, on the one hand, reducing the number of exams from 4 mandatory exams to 3 exams, and on the other hand, better assessing the readiness of applicants for a specific program. It was decided that knowledge of factual material would be minimally tested in the subject exam and more emphasis would be on important skills such as critical thinking, the ability to adequately process information, evaluation, and logical reasoning, etc.

With the new model of the Unified National Examinations, the applicant could take three mandatory exams in the following subjects:

1. Georgian language and literature;
2. a foreign language;
3. The third exam depended on the programs. Entrants in technical and natural science courses took mathematics, entrants in humanities took history, and depending on the specifics of the social or public sciences program they took history or mathematics.

Higher education institutions, if they wished, could set a fourth exam from the list of the following subjects: biology, chemistry, physics, general skills, geography, literature, fine and applied arts, or civic education. However, this desire was expressed in the case of only a few educational programs.

Considering the initiative of medical educational institutions, four examinations were mandatory for health education programs:

1. Georgian language and literature;
2. a foreign language;
3. Biology;
4. Mathematics/Chemistry/Physics (applicant chooses at least one). Quota places were allocated for the fourth subject, not less than 30% for each subject.

Until 2019, entrants to creative educational programs took three mandatory exams and a creative tour. From 2020, to enrol in artistic, creative or sports educational programs, along with the creative tour, the applicant was obliged to enrol only in Georgian language and literature, as well as a foreign language.





Due to the pandemic, conducting exams safely and sufficiently in recent years has become a real challenge for the National Assessment and Examinations Center. In addition to the center having to assess the knowledge and skills of approximately 70,000 examinees, another top priority in 2020 was to take care of the health of each of them. For this purpose, the schemes of organising and conducting exams have been completely modified. In close cooperation with the relevant organisations, the center handled this task in such a way that the largest gathering of the summer did not become a source of infection.

**Regulations:** In order to reduce the number of examinees in the sectors for the safety of examinees the number of examination sessions was increased and, instead of 24 days, the examination process lasted 30 days. No more than 10 examinees were allowed in each sector. Each desk was equipped with a transparent protective shield/barrier on the front. The distance between the tables was 2 metres in width and the distance between the tables arranged one after the other was 1 metre. The National Assessment and Examinations Center provided a face mask to each examinee (if desired, the examinee could bring their own mask). The center also took care of arranging quarantine spaces where the work desks of the quarantined entrants were equipped with a transparent protective shield/barrier on three sides and the desks were separated from each other by at least two





metres. Unlike other entrants, it was necessary for COVID–19 contacts to wear a mask during work and also to conduct a PCR-test before the exam, which was free for them. Before entering the center the examinees would pass through the barrier, thermal screening and sanitise their hands. Exam participants left extra things in a specially designated place and all these things were packed and stored in a special place. Entrants were divided into sectors according to the sector and place indicated on the exam card. The examination process started after the invigilator announced the code and participants entered it into the computers.

The first COVID-infected entrant: an entrant assigned to one of the exam centers was tested for the illness of a family member on the second day after taking the exam and was diagnosed with COVID. All nine entrants in his room were quarantined and tested. None of them were excluded from the examination process, and the infected applicant had to take the remaining exams in a medical institution. The centers equipped the ward of the COVID-infected applicant with three laptops: one of them recorded the exam test itself, the second was intended for listening tasks, and the third laptop was used to videotape the entire exam process. The exam was attended by two invigilators, specially trained by the center, with specialist equipment. The sealed laptops were opened in front of the entrant before the start of the exam. The invigilators ensured that both the techni-







cal preparation and the equipping of the sector, as well as conducting the examination process, were done in the usual manner - familiarising the examinee with the examination rules and conducting all other necessary procedures. A few days later, the center conducted an exam at the medical institution for the second COVID-identified applicant.

In 2021, NAEC together with the Ministry of Education and Science made an important decision - for those persons who could not appear at the examination centers due to a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, an additional examination was held. The National Assessment and Examinations Center was able to plan and successfully conduct the examination process twice in a short period of time. Additional sessions were scheduled after the main sessions for more than 600 participants. Among them were more than 170 teachers and aspiring teachers, more than 200 entrants, about 190 participants of Unified Master's Examination and about 60 people registered for the Student Grant Competition. The center allowed examinees to attend an additional session after at least 14 days of infection. Due to this, the examination process turned out to be the longest in the history of the center.

The participants of a particular exam session were identified based on the information provided by the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health. Subject groups created different versions of tests specifically for the additional sessions. The procedures were as follows: disinfection works started from 05:30 in the morning and disinfection was carried out both for the entire examination center and for each sector and workplace. At 6:30 in the morning, the administrator, coordinator and Information Technology specialist appeared in the examination center and printed the forms which contained information about the examinations registered on a particular day. A little later, the registrars and supervisors joined the team. Registration of entrants started exactly at 8:00. From that time the employees of the center, together with the security police, began to distribute the tests on the outer perimeter, keeping the appropriate distance, according to the previously made marks. The ambulances, rescue service and patrol police were mobilised in the vicinity of the examination centers. In the future, the National Assessment and Examinations Center plans to switch from a semi-electronic system to a fully electronic system, and is actively working towards the introduction of school diagnostic testing.





# EXAMS 2022

From 2022, the list of third mandatory optional subjects has been increased, in addition to mathematics and history, the following subjects have been added: literature, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, fine and applied arts, civil education. The change did not affect any of the health care programs and the rules of grant distribution.

In 2022, the center had a record number of examinees (up to 90,000). Of these, more than 34,500 took part in the teacher's exam, more than 41,000 were university entrants, more than 9,500 were applicants for a master's degree, and more than 2,500 participated in the Student Grant Competition. As a result of the Unified National Examinations, more than 32,100 examinees (over 77% of the registered entrants) became students, which is also unprecedented in the history of the NAEC.

In 2025, according to the education strategy, a new examination system should be introduced, which will be more transparent, effective and more adapted to the examinee. Work is currently underway on this issue.

Over the years an organisation has been formed whose mission is to promote the improvement of the quality of education through reliable, objective assessment methods and research-based recommendations.

It is worth mentioning that in 2005 Maya Miminoshvili, Soso Gogilidze, Merab Topuria, Kakha Jamburia, Sofo Dolidze, Iva Mindadze, Davit Chankotadze, Ia Kutaladze were awarded the Order of Merit for administering the Unified National Exams successfully. Another member of the NAEC's devoted team - Maya Gabunia was awarded the Order of Honor in 2011. In 2013, Gia Khatisashvili, the head of the Center's chemistry group, was awarded the Order of Honor and received the Georgian National Award in 2020. Sibila Geladze (2013) and Zaza Toria (2021) received the award of the French government "Order of the Academic Palm". Sibila Geladze was also awarded with the national award for the best translations (in 2009 and 2011). For the contribution to the development of intercultural relations (Cultural relations Award) the award of the British Council was given to Rusudan Tkemaladze (2004). In 2022, the current director of the center, Dr. Sophia Gorgodze, was elected as a member of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Standing Committee.





**On November 22, National Assessment and Examinations Center held a conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of its establishment.**

The conference was opened by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, Mikheil Chkhenkeli. Long time partners, the representatives of various state agencies, local and international organizations and individuals working in the field of education got together to recall NAEC's history and hear about the future plans.

The organization, which made a significant contribution to the creation of a fair, transparent assessment system based on meritocratic principles, was founded in Georgia in 2002.

Initially the Center conducted examinations only for university entrants. However, due to hard work and devotion of the team the area of activity expanded soon afterwards.

Currently, NAEC conducts various types of exams, administers international educational research and consults local and foreign partner organizations on assessment and large scale, high stakes examinations.

The Center's employees, most of whom have been working in the organization since its establishment, recalled the path taken by National Assessment and Examinations Center, the first exam process and the difficulties that accompanied the introduction of the new exam model.

At the conference, the Center also presented a project "Assessment for Development". The goal of the project is to measure students' achievements towards the national curriculum and track their progress.

It is worth mentioning that the item development, as well as registration, test delivery and marking is fully electronic. The results are aimed to help students and parents track the progress made during the learning process and get information about the weaknesses and strengths.

The second part of the conference was dedicated to themed discussions and presentations on the following topics:

- ▶ "Assessment for Development": implementation challenges and results;
- ▶ Challenges related to scientific (STEM) careers and professional choices of 15-year-old students;
- ▶ TIMSS 2019 – analysis of student responses according to content and cognitive areas;
- ▶ Differences and achievement gaps between the students at the primary level in Georgia.

The event concluded with a summary of the discussions.

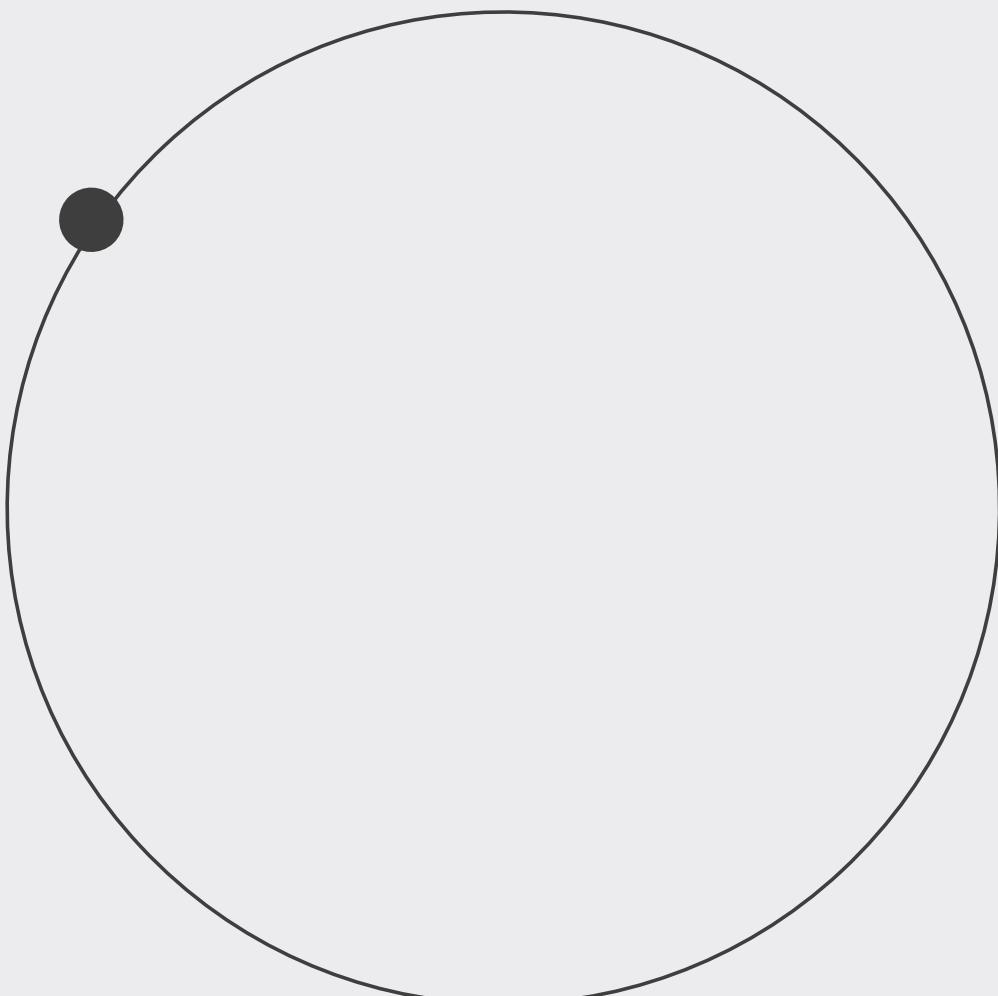


# ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE – NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS CENTER IS 20 YEARS OLD!













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