National Benchmark Test
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General Information

What are the NBTs?

The NBTs were implemented in 2008 and are a set of tests that assess students’ academic literacy, general knowledge, and mathematical skill in an effort to measure academic readiness for university.

They are managed by the Alternative Admissions Research Project at the University of Cape Town. NBT results are used by many universities as an extra admission criterion for applicants to their institutions. They serve to complement and support, rather than replace or duplicate NSC results.

Dr Abbey Mathekga, the head of the higher education enrolment programme, said: “They [the NBTs] are intended to identify learners who might have problems in certain subjects. They are also aimed at determining the level of competency of learners in certain learning areas.”

The NBT consists of two tests: the MAT and the AQL. The AQL combines Academic Literacy and Quantitative Literacy in one multiple-choice test requiring three hours writing time. The MAT (Mathematics) is also a multiple-choice test with three hours allowed.

What does the NBT assess?

The NBT assesses readiness for tertiary study.

The AQL aims to test proficiency in language comprehension as well as logic based numerical skills. It assesses knowledge learned in the senior high school phase. It aims to assess whether students will be able to apply knowledge learnt in high school to the tertiary context. The AQL section comprises approximately 75 multiple-choice questions.

The Academic Literacy (AL) sections will require reading of various texts with multiple choice questions referring to the text. Some questions are general knowledge based. Questions on grammar, punctuation, vocabulary are included. It predominantly assesses the ability to understand the meaning and application of various texts as well as understanding and applying the argument or main point of the author.

The Quantitative Literacy (QL) sections assess a student’s capacity to: understand basic numerical concepts, read and interpret graphs, reason logically and identify patterns and trends. It is largely based on the Grade 11 Maths Literacy syllabus.

The MAT paper (a separate three hour paper, only written by students applying for certain degree programmes and who have done Core Maths at school) assesses mostly Grade 11 Core Maths syllabus content although some Grade 12 work is included. It also takes a multiple choice format. It tests proficiency in such areas as problem solving and modelling, functions, trigonometry, spatial perception, and probability.

Both the AQL and MAT are differentiated into cognitive levels, meaning there is a range in difficulty in each section - with the easier applications generally coming first.

Click on this link to view in detail what is covered in the NBT: www.nbt.ac.za/node/89
Do I need to write the NBT? And if so, when do I need to write it?

Many South African universities require applicants to write the NBTs. There is an intake cycle for each tertiary year, generally starting in June the year before. The NBT dates reflect this cycle and start testing towards the end of May for the upcoming year to ensure all university application dates can utilise the NBT. All students wishing to apply to university should write at their earliest opportunity, although it is your choice on which date you want to write.

As tertiary institutions cannot complete your application until they have your NBT scores, students need to write at their earliest possible date in accordance with their chosen university and degree programme requirements. Available data by the NBT suggests that learners who write the tests later in the year have no advantage over those writing in earlier sessions.

Having said that, you should write the NBTs when you feel ready. If you feel that you may benefit from further revision, and you do not have an early university application date (it can be as early as June for medical students), you may choose to write your test later in the cycle.

The NBTs are available from the end of May until the first Saturday in January of the following year. This means that you could wait to write your NBT until you finish your syllabus. You must decide for yourself when you want to write – before or after your exams.

Keep in mind that different institutional and faculty requirements determine the deadlines for learners to submit NBT results, which may be as early as June or July. You must meet the closing dates and deadlines for the institutions where you are applying. You should also allow time for your NBTs to be processed and the results sent to institutions (approx 6 weeks after writing). Some universities/departments accept applications with proof that you have written the NBT without having received the actual results.

We have summarised some helpful tips for you below according to our recommendation. Advantage Learn cannot speak on behalf of the NBT nor the institutions themselves.

Table 1: Universities and Departments NBT Requirements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Required or Recommended</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stellenbosch</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes</td>
<td>Yes (recommended)</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Health Science &amp; Veterinary Science compulsory, other-recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMMU</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKZN</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medicine (sometimes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We have summarised some helpful tips for you below according to our recommendation. Advantage Learn cannot speak on behalf of the NBT nor the institutions themselves.
Table 2: Recommended writing dates and results to aim for by department*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Recommended Test Date</th>
<th>MAT + AQL or AQL only</th>
<th>Minimum NBT result to aim for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>On or before 1st week July</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Built Environment</td>
<td>On or before 1st week July</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Science</td>
<td>On or before last week July</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCom</td>
<td>On or before last week July</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Science</td>
<td>On or before 1st week July</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Before Trial exams</td>
<td>MAT + AQL</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Law</td>
<td>Before Trial exams</td>
<td>AQL only</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Each institution determines which tests are required i.e the university and faculty where you apply will determine which tests you must write (AQL or MAT, or both). Please check with each institution/faculty where you intend to apply, before you register for the NBTs with regards to their application requirements including closing dates and deadlines for receiving NBT results. Please note that each university has different requirements and each faculty may require different tests or have different deadlines.

What if I am applying to two institutions with different application deadlines?

If you are applying to more than one institution or faculty then you need to register and write the NBTs to meet the earliest deadline. You are only required to write the test once, even when applying to more than one institution. All institutions to which you apply will be able to access your NBT results.

Check the following before you book!

You need to check the following before you select the date and test site:

- Your school’s calendar for sporting and social events, holidays and exams
- Closing dates and application deadlines at all institutions where you intend to apply
- The language of instruction where you are applying

All this needs to be taken into consideration when you are deciding when the best time is to write your NBTs.

What are the tests like?

The NBTs are multiple choice tests. Both the AQL and MAT test are 3 hours long. Answers are recorded on what is called a “bubble sheet”. The answer sheets are scanned and then transferred into scores using sophisticated computer software. The AQL is made up of 25 minute sections. You may not refer back or go forward but can only work in the specified 25 minute section. The MAT is not made up of sections in this way.

How do I book an NBT?

Registration for the NBTs is done online and takes about 5 minutes. NBT registration for the 2017 intake opens on 1st April 2016.

Follow this link: [http://nbt.ac.za/content/test-dates-and-venues](http://nbt.ac.za/content/test-dates-and-venues) to book your test.

Note: you will need your official South African ID or foreign passport in order to complete the registration process.
Your registration is only valid for the specific date and location you select and must be done at least three weeks before you wish to write. It is your responsibility to register early enough to ensure a place on one of the national test days at your chosen venue. There is a full list of available test days and venues on the NBT website.

If you do not have access to the internet, or encounter problems during the registration process, you may either call 021-650-3523 or send an e-mail to nbt@uct.ac.za for assistance.

Why do I have to register?

The NBT project and the local venues guarantee space and materials ONLY for students who have registered to write at a specific venue on a specific day.

What are the available dates to write my NBT?

NBT registration for the 2017 intake opens on 1st April 2016. All test dates for the 2017 intake cycle (21 May - 9 January) will be available to book from 1st April. The tests will run on the weekend, every week or every second week from the 21st May 2016 - 5 January 2017.

Follow this link for all the NBT dates for 2016 http://nbt.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/2016NBTTestDates.pdf

Where can I write my NBT?

There are various centres across South Africa where you can write your NBT. Click on the following link for a list of all the venue sites across the country. Choose a venue that is convenient for you to get to: http://www.nbt.ac.za/content/nbt-test-sites

What time are the tests?

The AQL is written in the morning (3 hours writing time), and writers must be at the test venue by 07:30. The MAT is written in the afternoon on the same day, with a short lunch break between the two tests. The MAT also has 3 hours writing time.

No learner is allowed to arrive at mid-day to write just the MAT test. If you are writing the MAT test, you must write it on the same day as you write the AQL test.

How much does it cost to write my NBT?

Test fees are non-refundable and can be paid at any EasyPay point.

Fees for the 2016 Admission cycle are: AQL only R80 AQL and MAT R160.

Should you miss the test for which you were registered, you will need to reregister and pay again.
What must I take to my NBT?

- Your ID Book, passport, or a certified receipt of application for South African ID
- Your registration letter and EasyPay proof of payment (without this you will not be allowed to write the NBTs - the venue administrator will stamp the receipt and return it to you)
- Two HB pencils, an eraser, and a pencil sharpener
- Lunch and water, if you are writing both tests
- DO NOT bring calculators, rulers, dictionaries, scrap paper, notebooks or ipads, tablets or phones

NOTE that learners without an official ID will be turned away and not allowed to write (except where the following documentation is provided - a birth certificate with an affidavit from the police including a recent photograph and a letter of application for ID from Home Affairs).

What can I expect on test day?

YOU MUST CHECK IN AT 7:30AM. The test venue door closes at 8:30 after which no one is allowed inside the test room.

- At check-in, you will be given an answer sheet with your name and ID number printed on the back
- Once you are seated inside the test room, carefully check the printed name
- You will be given instructions by the Chief Invigilator how to make corrections
- You must show your official ID to an invigilator before the test begins
- Place your ID beside the answer sheet, along with your pencils and eraser. Everything else must be placed on the floor
- Note that bathroom breaks are not allowed. Plan ahead, and remember that the writing session is 3 hours long

In what languages can I write the NBTs?

The NBTs are available in English and Afrikaans. When you register you will be asked to indicate the language in which you wish to write.

Note that you can only use one language i.e there is no option to write one test in English and the other in Afrikaans.

How do I get my NBT results?

You can access your results by logging onto the NBT website with your ID or by sending a request to nbt@uct.ac.za approximately 5/6 weeks after you have written your test. If you are having difficulty accessing your results, you should send an e-mail to request them. NBT Project staff are not allowed to release your results over the phone.

To request your NBT results you need:

- Your ID number
- Your full names (as provided on the NBT answer sheet)
- Your surname (as provided on the NBT answer sheet)

For your NBT results, please click http://nbt.uct.ac.za/node/119
Which institutions will use my NBT results and how do they get them?

All the universities to which you apply can receive your NBT results. Many South African universities use the NBTs in conjunction with the National Senior Certificate (NSC) for access to their programmes. The NBTs help to interpret your NSC results and can be used by universities in different ways.

- Some use them to help make decisions about your access/application to university. This means that your NBT results, in combination with your matric results, are used to determine whether you are ready for academic study.
- Some universities use the results for placement within the institution. This means that your NBT results are used to decide whether you will need extra academic support after you have been accepted to university.
- Some institutions use them to develop curricula within their university.

When you apply to an institution, they will place your name on their applicant list. As applications are processed, they send the NBT Project a request for scores that match the applicants on the list. Universities will only get your results when they request them.

Before you submit your registration to write the NBT, you are asked to check a box giving permission for your results to be sent to the requesting institutions and for your results to be used in research projects. Be sure to read this and check this box before hitting “submit”. Remember, it is your responsibility to check whether your NBT results have been loaded with your tertiary institution.

Can I write the NBTs more than once?

Some universities do allow their applicants to write the NBT more than once in an attempt to achieve a better result the second time around. However you need to check with the specific faculty and tertiary institution that you are applying to, to make sure that this is the case as not every university will accept the second result.

Note If you do choose to write a second time, you should give yourself at least 6 weeks between writing sessions. If you write the MAT test a second time, you must also write the AQL test a second time on the same morning.

Are past tests available?

No. The tests are confidential and not available to anyone. The test assesses your prior knowledge - what you know and are able to do.

Other useful information

The NBTs are available in both Afrikaans and English. When you register, you will have the opportunity to indicate which of these two languages you prefer to write in.

NBT results are valid for three intake years. This means that it is worthwhile writing your NBT in your Matric year even if you are having a gap year. Your syllabus will never be more fresh in your mind as it is now.

If you cannot write the NBTs in the year before your studies (if, for example, you are overseas), you are allowed to write them in January before the start of the academic year. Bear in mind, however, that you do expose yourself to specific risks and practical implications in terms of placement and selection if you write the tests at such a late stage. It is therefore strongly recommended that you write the NBTs in your matric year.

Enquiries

For all and any other enquiries about the writing of your NBTs and release of NBT results contact: NBT Client Services Centre (University of Cape Town). Telephone: 021 650 3523. Website: www.nbt.ac.za.
Part Two: How Can I Prepare?

How Can I Prepare?

Our course includes the following: training of essential sections known to be tested regularly in the NBTs, test day best practices, how to go about answering multiple choice questions, extensive practice examples and a full mock exam.

When should I do my course?

We find that it is best to do the course relatively close to when you write your test. Depending on how much time you have available to study, you should do the course two–three weeks prior to your test. You should book your test date before booking your course.

NBT Prep course in-person:

The in–person course is an 8-hour course where the teacher covers predominantly material tested in the MAT. Our students will be referred to the AL and QL components in our online course for study.

The NBT preparation courses are run on the weekend (and some public holidays). Some courses are full day courses (8 hours) and others are split over Saturday and Sunday mornings (4 hours each). This was carefully thought out in an effort to accommodate sporting commitments as well as those students who battle to concentrate for long stretches at a time.

Included:

- A printed workbook
- Access to online course training MAT, AL & QL from prior to the course day until the end of 2016.
- A mock NBT

NBT Prep online course:

Made up of just over 9 hours of tutorial videos led by our Maths and English experts, the course focuses on covering key concepts tested in the NBT as well as test day best practices. Students have full access to the material from the purchase date until the end of 2016. Students are able work at their own pace, at any time of the day, in accordance with their NBT date.

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How do I prepare for the NBTs?

Advantage Learn offers NBT Prep courses, both blended and online via our website: www.advantagelearn.com

This course is recommended for all students wanting to prepare and do well in their NBT. With many years experience in preparing students for the NBT coupled with a world class online learning environment and exceptional educators, we are well placed to give you peace of mind with this challenging test.

Since formally commencing NBT training in 2013, Advantage Learn has helped over 2000 students across South Africa to prepare for this test. We are adding more cities and towns to our list in 2016 as well as expanding the course to be offered in Afrikaans as well as English.

Our carefully designed courses prepare students for both papers of the National Benchmark Test (NBT) – the MAT and AQL. It is important that you do this course at the appropriate time for your NBT.
Part Two: How Can I Prepare?

There are teaching videos, practice questions, quizzes, downloadable notes, a mock NBT for the MAT & QL and a forum for asking questions directly to the teacher and other students.

The more you engage with the material you are watching the better you will do. Press pause, watch again, try the examples on your own and learn at your own pace. You can access the online courses at any time of the day/night – that is the beauty of online learning!

Course Dates and Venues

These dates are provisional – please refer to https://advantagelearn.com/course/nbt-preparation-blended-courses/ for the most up-to-date view of course dates and cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>14-15 May</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>21 May</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>18-19 June</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>27-28 June</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>2-3 July</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durban</td>
<td>17 July</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pietermaritzburg</td>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Shepstone</td>
<td>4-5 June</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joburg</td>
<td>7-8 May</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joburg</td>
<td>25-26 June</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Course Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Course Blended (Eng)</td>
<td>R1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Course Blended (Afrik)</td>
<td>R1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Course Online (Eng)</td>
<td>R975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Course Online (Afrik)</td>
<td>R975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAT (online) only (Eng)</td>
<td>R650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAT (online) only (Afrik)</td>
<td>R650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQL (online) only (AL-Eng, QL-Eng)</td>
<td>R550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQL (online) only (AL-Eng, QL-Afrik)</td>
<td>R550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We offer NBT Training to Schools too!

We also offer our NBT preparation course solution to schools. Please see our website for further information on how we can help your school.

Testimonial from one of our 2015 students

“...The National Benchmark Test really is a result that can either open a large number of doors and opportunities for you or shut them immediately. Furthermore, good NBT results allow you to receive your conditional acceptances from the universities - Matric is an extremely stressful year and having your conditional acceptance is a calming factor that allows you to focus and take a breath amidst the chaos and pressure the year brings. I went on Advantage Learn’s in-person NBT training and completed the online component for all three tests - the AL, QL and MAT and I am able to confidently say that the course prepared me proficiently in every aspect to excel in these tests. I was able to achieve results that allowed me to achieve my dream of being accepted for Medicine at UCT. Trish Pike is extremely talented and is able to teach the complicated mathematical concepts to you in a way that you can understand it and remember it. I can still remember hearing Mrs Pike’s voice in my head during the challenging NBT telling me “Just substitute numbers” and her simple methods really do work!”

-Amy van der Merwe
Resources

Quiz

Click on this link to try a free practice quiz for the NBT

Book Now!

Click on this link to book your NBT Preparation Course

Other helpful links

NBT: http://www.nbt.ac.za/content/test-dates-and-venues

UCT: http://stoogle.co.za/institutions/universities/university-of-cape-town/

WITS: https://www.wits.ac.za/study-at-wits/schools-liaison/clarity-on-national-benchmark-tests-nbt-and-nati/


RHODES: https://www.ru.ac.za/admissiongateway/application/entryrequirements/

UKZN: http://stoogle.co.za/institutions/universities/university-of-kwa-zulu-natal/


UFS: http://kovsielife.ufs.ac.za/content.aspx?uid=80