

# National Benchmark Tests

Even though learners only apply to universities and write the National Benchmark Tests (NBT's) in Grade 12, it's important to introduce them to the terminology earlier on in their school careers. As early as Grade 9, learners should be made familiar with these terms and have a basic understanding of what they mean.

Many South African universities require learners to write the NBT's as part of their admission criteria. Even though not every single university requires them, we suggest that they are still written to keep options open. The tests are used by universities to assess people applying for their first year of study at university and they are in multiple-choice format.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I study for the NBT's?

The NBT's can be likened to the USA SAT's, in that they assess aptitude rather than parrot-style learning. For this reason, they can't really be studied for. Rather, learners should view them as an assessment of how they can apply what they have learnt throughout their schooling.

### What tests are there and do I need to write the Mathematics test?

A learner is required to write both the Academic Literacy (language skills) and the Quantitative Literacy (numeracy skills) tests and together, these are known as the AQL. Depending on what degree or course of study a learner is applying for, the Mathematics test (MAT) may be required. This is typically the case for any qualifications that involves Mathematics, such as degrees or diplomas within the faculties of commerce, health sciences, engineering and the built environment and science. Not all qualifications within these fields require the MAT, but it's worth ascertaining this on the university website first. If the learner has taken Maths Literacy as a subject, they may not write the MAT test.

### How long are the tests?

The AQL is approximately three hours, as is the MAT. Learners can arrive at 07:30 for check in and the

venue's doors close at 08:30. It can be tricky to find the room in which the learner is meant to write, so they should make sure that they arrive early.

### Can I re-write the NBT's?

Learners are allowed to re-write the tests, but most universities only accept their first results for the year.

### Do I need to send my results to the university?

No, these get sent directly to the university. Learners can receive their results by clicking on 'Request Scores' on the NBT website.

### How do I book?

Learners can book via the NBT website: [nbt.ac.za](http://nbt.ac.za), by clicking on 'Register to Write'. To confirm a booking, payment needs to be made. It's well worth booking early as some venues have been known to get booked up.

### When should I write the NBT's?

Universities such as UCT encourage the NBT's to be written early in the Grade 12 year to increase chances of obtaining a scholarship and possibly receiving early acceptance. However, writing the tests early does mean that the learner will have covered less of the syllabus. The NBT website recommends that the tests are written when the learner is confident to do so, but they must bear in mind their application closing date. ■

## TIPS FOR LO EDUCATORS

- Introduce learners to the idea of the NBT's as early as Grade 9. While it's not important to go into too much detail at this stage, it makes it less daunting if writing the NBT's in Grade 12 does not come as a surprise.
- Encourage learners to go on to the NBT website ([www.nbt.ac.za](http://www.nbt.ac.za)) and to book and pay for their session early on in the year. If you conduct a Grade 9 subject selection information session with parents,

bring this up then.

- Make learners aware that they cannot use a calculator, ruler, dictionary or any other learning aid.
- Read through the NBT booklet compiled by the University of Stellenbosch. It's available online and contains useful information (<http://www.myvirtualpaper.com/doc/stellenbosch-University/national-benchmark-test/2012022901/>).

Follow Joanne on @Achieve\_Careers on Twitter or Achieve Careers on Facebook



Joanne Wood is the founder of Achieve Careers, an organisation which specialises in providing the necessary support and resources required to ensure that educators are able to provide their learners with practical, up-to-date career development information.

# Activity page

## How to prepare for the National Benchmark Tests (NBT)

No special preparation is required for these tests. You'll need to do the following:

- **Mathematics test** - based on the Curriculum Statement and National Senior Certificate (NSC)
- **Academic literacy** - assesses the ability to successfully engage with the demands of the academic study in the medium of instruction
- **Quantitative literacy** - assesses your ability to manage situations and solve problems of a quantitative nature

## Activity Page

### Assessment

Answer the following questions.

1. What do the following abbreviations stand for?
  - a) AQL (1)
  - b) NBT (1)
  - c) NSC (1)
2. Where is the closest place that you can go and do this test? (2)
3. Name 5 things the Academic Literacy test aims to assess. (5)
4. Name 5 things the Quantitative Literacy test aims to assess. (5)
5. What is the other name for the NB Mathematics test? (2)
6. Name the two main problem-solving and modelling categories. (2)
7. What are the three benchmarks you can achieve? (3)
8. What common sense advice is given to students who are writing these tests? (3)

Total:

25

### Resource for the Educator:

<http://nbttests.uct.ac.za/site/faq/view/how-do-i-prepare>

Download full lesson plans from [www.sacareerfocus.co.za](http://www.sacareerfocus.co.za)

Umfundi Educational Books produce Learner and Educator Guides that are fully compliant with CAPS and RNC.

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