



# 2024 NBT Survival Guide

Everything you need to  
know about the NBTs in  
one place!

## 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 Mathematics (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:*

*<https://nbt.uct.ac.za/content/what-nbts>*



## 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 institutions & faculties' 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 to which 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.



## Latest University Intake Requirements

Note, this table is a very summarised version of our full NBT requirements document. [Please ensure that you read the full document here.](#)

University	NBT Required for some or all faculties/programmes?
University of Cape Town	Yes
University of the Witwatersrand	Yes
Stellenbosch University	Yes
University of the Free State	Yes
Rhodes University	Yes
University of the Western Cape	No, however, some applicants may be asked to.
University of KwaZulu-Natal	No
North-West University	No
University of Johannesburg	No, however, some applicants may be asked to.
University of Pretoria	No

## What if I'm applying to two different institutions with different intake requirements?

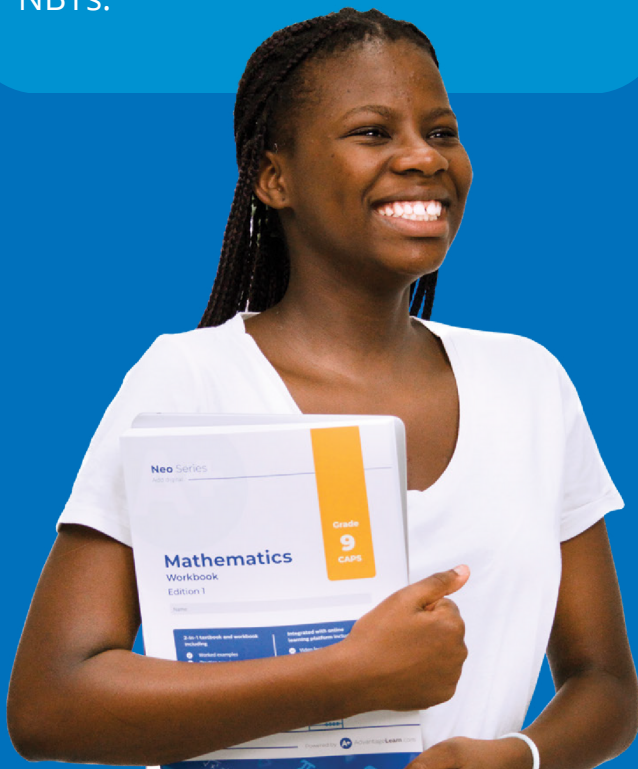
If you are applying to more than one institution or faculty then you need to register and write the NBTs to meet the earliest deadline. You are only required to write the test once, even when applying to more than one institution. All institutions to which you apply will be able to access your NBT results.

## 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 2025 intake opens on 3rd April 2024.

Follow this link:

<https://nbttests.uct.ac.za/tests/register> to book your test.

Note: you will need your official South African ID or foreign passport in order to complete the registration process.

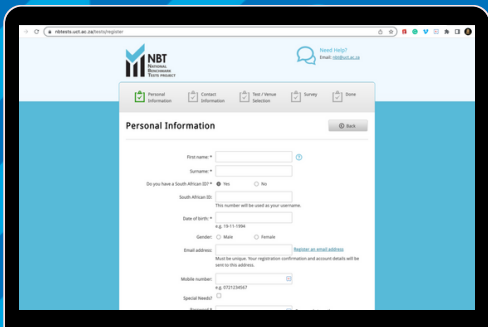


## How do I book an NBT? (continued)

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 point. Fees for the 2024 intake cycle are:

AQL only **R145** | AQL & MAT **R290**.

Should you miss the test for which you were registered, you will need to re-register and pay again. Space and materials are **ONLY** for students who have registered to write at a specific venue on a specific day.



## Why do I have to book?

The NBT project and the local venues guarantee space and materials only for those who register to write at that venue on that day.

## What are the available dates to write my NBT?

NBT registration for the 2025 intake opens on 3rd April 2024. All test dates for the 2024 intake cycle will be available to book from 3rd April 2024.

The tests will run on the weekend, every week or every second week between May 2024 and January 2025.

The NBT test dates will be released on 1st April 2024. Follow this link for all the NBT dates

<https://nbt.uct.ac.za/content/calendar-test-0>

## Where can I write my NBT?

There are various centres across South Africa where you can write your NBT but the NBTs can also be written online.

You can view the test locations via the link above once they are released.

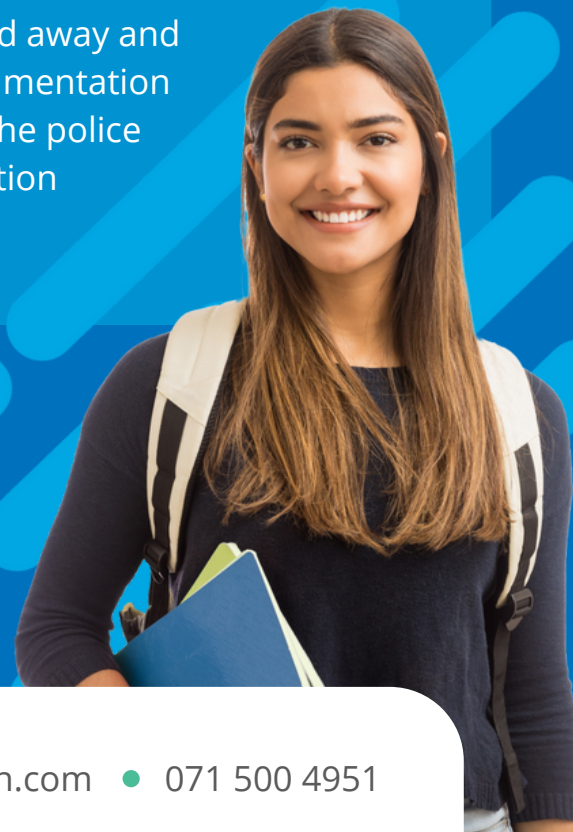
## What times are the tests?

The AQL is written in the morning (3 hours of writing time), and learners 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 of 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.

## What must I take to my in person 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 on 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](mailto: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)

## 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 two 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 fresher in your mind than 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.

*For enquiries about the writing of your NBTs contact:  
[nbt@uct.ac.za](mailto:nbt@uct.ac.za) | 021 650 3523 | [www.nbt.ac.za](http://www.nbt.ac.za).*

## How do I prepare for the NBTs?

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

This course is recommended for all students wanting to prepare and do well in their NBT. With many years of 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 23'000 students across South Africa to prepare for this test. We have live online, in-person and online course options available for NBT Preparation which are conducted in English as well as Afrikaans.

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.

Our courses and workshos 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 prepare?

There are so many factors to consider when determining when to start preparing. However, to keep it simple there are 3 things you should be thinking about when planning your preparation:

### **(1) When does your university require your test to be written?**

There will be testing opportunities between May 2024 and January 2025 and although this is a long runway, you should lean on your university requirements to determine your ideal writing date. For learners applying to medicine, typically the requirement is that you have written your test before the first week in July.



## When should I prepare?

(continued)

### (2) When are you writing your test?

The test dates for the 2025 intake will be released on the 1st of April, however, to give you a good indicator, last year's first testing opportunity was in mid-May. What we have found historically is that writing in the months of May, June and July are typically ideal months to write but be sure to check your university requirements before booking your test.

### (3) What type of preparation are you choosing?

It is always helpful to start preparing early so that you have time to work on skills you feel you may be lacking. Our online courses enable you to prepare, starting from right now up until your test date this year! However, our workshops give you the classroom feel you may need to get your knowledge up to par and these workshops include access to our digital or physical workbooks. We recommend preparing from around a month before your test date to ensure that you have enough time to solidify your knowledge.

## NBT Workshops

NBT workshops are in-person or live online classroom-style lessons.

Taught by only the best educators, these workshops have been helping learners to succeed in the NBTs since 2013. Our workshops are available in-person across all major metros in South Africa, as well as via a live-stream, giving you face-time with an educator.

- AQL & MAT workshops
- NBT Workbook
- Access to Advantage Learn mock NBT exams
- Available in English
- Q&A during the lesson
- Learn at a set date and time





## Online Courses

Our online courses consist of recorded **video lessons**, practice quizzes and downloadable worksheets.

These video lessons enable you to learn at any time via a video lesson path. Our coaches and online support teachers are ready to help you with your NBT preparations through our live chat platform.

- AQL & MAT courses
- 12 Months access
- Access to Advantage Learn mock NBT exams
- Available in English or Afrikaans
- Online Teacher support
- Learn in your own time



De La Salle Holy Cross College



Wynberg Boys high



CBC Boksburg



King David Victory Park



Kharwastan Secondary



Glenwood House School



Westville Girls' High School



CBC Boksburg

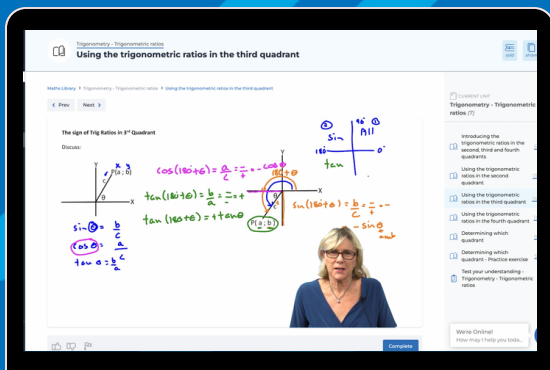


St Cyprian's School

## For Schools

Advantage Learn offers schools and organisations NBT workshops and course packages for their learners. If you would like more information about these packages, contact our team via live chat or email [info@advantagelearn.com](mailto:info@advantagelearn.com).

- Workshop at your school
- Special school discounts
- Workshop and course packages available



## 2024 NBT Preparation

### NBT In-Person Workshops

*Our coveted in-person workshops.*

Book Now

### NBT Live Online Workshops

*Our workshop experience from the comfort of home*

Book Now

### NBT Online Courses

*Learn on demand from anywhere*

Book Now

## What our learners have to say...



*"This course is exactly what I was looking for. I had done a previous course which did not prepare me for the NBTs at all, but after only 14% into this course, I already feel much more confident."*

- Yolandie Kotze -



*Absolutely Fanatastic! On completion of the AQL and MAT course, I felt well prepared for what I could expect to receive in the NBT. Our teacher (Cris) was outstanding and really brought the challenging concepts down to the student level, which definitely made it easy and relatable to understand. Over a 10/10 course and would highly recommend it to others that aim to tackle the NBTs and do more than succeed!!*

- Erin Rose Ungerer -





## Other Useful Links

- [Click here for our NBT booking page.](#)
- [Click here for more FAQ's related to the NBTs.](#)
- [Click here for our 2025 intake NBT requirements guide.](#)
- [Click here to book your NBT test.](#)