

A Comprehensive Guide to Undergraduate Admission Prerequisites in South Africa for 2025

Part 1: The National Framework for Undergraduate Admissions in South Africa

Navigating the landscape of higher education admissions in South Africa requires a foundational understanding of the national policies and frameworks that govern entry into universities and colleges. These systems, established by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), create a baseline for all institutions, which then apply their own specific criteria to select students. This section provides a detailed analysis of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) as the primary school-leaving qualification, the statutory minimum admission requirements, the various Admission Point Score (APS) systems, the role of National Benchmark Tests (NBTs), and alternative pathways to higher education.

Section 1.1: The National Senior Certificate (NSC) as the Gateway to Higher Education

The common basis for admission into any undergraduate Higher Certificate, Diploma, or Bachelor's Degree programme in South Africa is the National Senior Certificate (NSC).¹ The NSC is the school-leaving certificate awarded to learners upon successful completion of Grade 12. Its structure and pass requirements are fundamental to determining a learner's eligibility for tertiary study.

An NSC curriculum consists of seven subjects. Four of these are compulsory: two official languages (one being the language of learning and teaching, LoLT), Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, and Life Orientation. Learners then choose

three additional elective subjects from a wide range of approved options.²

Upon completion of the final examinations, Umalusi (the Council for General and Further Education and Training) certifies the results and issues one of three pass levels, which dictates the type of higher education qualification a student is eligible to pursue¹:

- **Higher Certificate Pass:** This is the minimum pass level required to gain entry into a Higher Certificate programme at a university, university of technology, or TVET college. The specific requirement is a National Senior Certificate as certified by Umalusi.¹
- **Diploma Pass:** This pass level is the minimum requirement for admission to a Diploma programme. To achieve this, a learner must obtain an NSC with an achievement rating of 3 (Moderate Achievement, 40-49%) or better in four recognised 20-credit subjects.¹
- **Bachelor's Degree Pass (formerly "Matric Exemption"):** This is the highest pass level and is the minimum requirement for admission to a Bachelor's Degree programme. To achieve this, a learner must secure an achievement rating of 4 (Adequate Achievement, 50-59%) or better in at least four subjects chosen from a "designated list" of recognised 20-credit NSC subjects.¹ This list includes subjects like Accounting, Agricultural Sciences, Business Studies, Economics, Geography, History, Information Technology, Languages, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences, among others.¹

It is crucial to understand that these pass levels represent the *minimum* national standard for consideration. Each higher education institution is entitled to, and almost always does, set its own additional and more stringent requirements.¹

Section 1.2: Statutory Minimum Admission Requirements (The DHET Mandate)

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), under the Higher Education Act of 1997, gazettes the statutory minimum admission requirements for all undergraduate qualifications. This policy provides the legal framework that all public and private higher education institutions must follow.¹

The policy's primary purpose is to establish a clear, non-negotiable floor for access to higher education. However, it simultaneously acknowledges the autonomy of institutions to set their own admission criteria. The policy document explicitly states

that higher education institutions are expected to admit applicants who are "likely to succeed," given appropriate support. This mandate to predict student success is the primary driver behind the diverse and often complex additional requirements set by individual universities, such as Admission Point Scores (APS), faculty-specific subject requirements, and other selection tests.¹

The gazetted minimum requirements are as follows:

- **Higher Certificate:** The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) as certified by Umalusi. Institutions are permitted to specify additional requirements, such as a particular achievement level in a relevant subject (e.g., a certain mark in Design for a Higher Certificate in Architectural Design).¹
- **Diploma:** The minimum admission requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) of the institution, coupled with an achievement rating of 3 (40-49%) or better in four recognised 20-credit NSC subjects.¹
- **Bachelor's Degree:** The minimum admission requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the LoLT of the institution, coupled with an achievement rating of 4 (50-59%) or better in four 20-credit subjects chosen from the designated list.⁴ Institutions are entitled to specify higher achievement levels for particular subjects (e.g., Mathematics and Physical Sciences for a Bachelor of Science degree).⁴

The existence of this dual system—a national minimum standard and institutional autonomy—creates the complex admissions landscape in South Africa. While the DHET ensures a baseline for access, the universities use their autonomy to select from a large pool of qualifying applicants, leading to the development of institution-specific ranking tools like the APS.

Section 1.3: Deconstructing the Admission Point Score (APS)

The Admission Point Score (APS) is the most common tool used by South African universities to numerically rank applicants who have met the minimum statutory requirements. It converts NSC percentage results into a point score, allowing institutions to compare candidates. However, a critical point of confusion for applicants is that there is **no single, national APS system**. Each university has

developed its own calculation model based on its specific academic priorities and historical data on student success. An applicant's APS is therefore not portable; it must be recalculated for each institution to which they apply.

The variance in these models reflects different institutional philosophies. Some universities place a premium on performance in key numerate subjects, while others take a more holistic view. This lack of standardisation creates a significant challenge for prospective students, particularly those from under-resourced schools who may lack access to detailed guidance. It rewards not only academic merit but also the "insider knowledge" of how to navigate each university's unique application process, potentially creating an information asymmetry that can undermine equity goals.

Below is a comparative analysis of the APS models used by several major South African universities.

Institution	Subjects Included in Calculation	Treatment of Life Orientation (LO)	Bonus Points System	Maximum Possible Score	Official Source Reference(s)
University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)	Best 7 subjects	Included in the calculation.	Yes. 2 bonus points are added for achieving 80%+ in English and/or Mathematics	54 (44 from subjects + 4 for LO + 6 for bonus points)	⁶
University of Pretoria (UP)	Best 6 (20-credit) subjects	Excluded from the calculation.	No.	42	⁷
Stellenbosch University (SU)	Best 6 subjects	Excluded from the calculation.	No.	42 (based on a 7-point scale)	⁸
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	Best 6 subjects	Excluded from the calculation.	Yes. An achievement of 90-100% in a subject is awarded 8 points	48	⁹

			instead of 7.		
Rhodes University (RU)	Best 6 subjects	Excluded from the calculation.	No. Uses a unique system where the percentage mark is divided by 10 (e.g., 78% = 7.8 points).	60 (based on 6 subjects at 100%)	²
University of South Africa (UNISA)	All subjects	A holistic "points score" is used, which includes Grade 12 marks plus other factors like school attended, gender, and socio-economic status.	Not a traditional APS model.	Not applicable.	¹⁰
North-West University (NWU)	Best 6 subjects	Excluded from the calculation.	No.	48 (based on an 8-point scale)	¹¹
University of the Free State (UFS)	Best 6 subjects	Included (1 point awarded for 60% or higher).	No.	49 (8 points for 90%+ in 6 subjects + 1 for LO)	¹²

Section 1.4: The Role of National Benchmark Tests (NBTs)

The National Benchmark Tests (NBTs) are a set of assessments designed to measure a school-leaver's academic readiness for the demands of university education. They are managed by the Centre for Educational Testing for Access and Placement (CETAP), based at the University of Cape Town. The tests are divided into two main components

2.

1. **Academic and Quantitative Literacy (AQL):** This test assesses proficiency in academic literacy (the ability to read, understand, and engage with academic texts) and quantitative literacy (the ability to manage and interpret numerical information).
2. **Mathematics (MAT):** This test assesses a student's knowledge of core mathematical concepts and is typically required for programmes in science, engineering, commerce, and health sciences.

The requirement to write the NBTs and the use of the results vary significantly across institutions and even between faculties within the same university.

- **Compulsory for Admission/Selection:** Some highly competitive programmes, particularly in faculties like Health Sciences and Law at certain universities, may use NBT scores as part of the selection criteria to differentiate between applicants with similar school results.¹³
- **Compulsory for Placement:** Many institutions require all applicants to write the NBTs but do not use the results for admission decisions. Instead, the scores are used after registration to place students into appropriate curricula, such as extended degree programmes or courses with additional academic support.¹⁵ The University of Cape Town, for example, largely follows this model.¹⁵
- **Recommended/Discretionary Use:** Some universities, like Rhodes University, recommend that all applicants write the NBTs. The results may then be used by the Dean for discretionary decisions, especially for applicants who do not meet the automatic admission requirements based on their APS.²
- **Not Required:** Several universities do not require the NBTs at all.

Prospective students must verify the specific NBT policy of each institution and faculty they are applying to. Information is typically available in the university's prospectus or on their admissions website.

Section 1.5: Alternative Pathways to Admission

While the NSC is the most common route to higher education, the South African system provides several alternative pathways to promote access for a wider range of individuals.

- **National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)] Level 4:** The NC(V) is a vocational

qualification taken at a TVET College, with Level 4 being equivalent to Grade 12 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).¹⁶ An NC(V) Level 4 certificate can be used to apply for Higher Certificate, Diploma, or Bachelor's Degree programmes, provided the applicant meets specific requirements. For degree entry, this typically includes achieving high pass rates (e.g., 60-70%) in the three fundamental subjects (including the LoLT) and the four vocational subjects.¹⁷

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** RPL is a formal assessment process that allows individuals to gain credit for skills, knowledge, and competencies acquired through work experience, non-formal training, or community work.²⁰ This is a crucial access route for adult learners who may not have formal qualifications but possess significant relevant experience. Institutions like UNISA and many private colleges have well-established RPL policies.²⁰ The process is typically intensive, often requiring the submission of a detailed portfolio of evidence and may involve assessments or interviews.²³
- **Mature Age Exemption:** This pathway is designed for applicants who are 23 years of age or older. These applicants may be considered for admission to degree studies even if they do not hold a formal matriculation endorsement, provided they meet certain conditions. These conditions often involve having a Senior Certificate with specific minimum pass marks in a set number of subjects.²² This exemption is granted by Universities South Africa (USAf).
- **Articulation from Lower-Level Qualifications:** A common and structured pathway involves enrolling in a lower-level qualification to gain access to a higher one. For example, a student can complete a Higher Certificate (NQF Level 5) and, if they achieve a specified average (often 60% or higher), they may apply for admission to a cognate (related) Diploma or Bachelor's Degree programme.³ In many cases, they may receive credit for modules completed, potentially reducing the duration of the degree programme.³

Part 2: Admission Prerequisites for Public Universities

South Africa's 26 public universities represent a diverse range of institutions, from research-intensive, internationally-ranked universities to comprehensive universities and universities of technology. This diversity is reflected in their admission requirements. While all adhere to the DHET's minimum standards, the specific APS scores, subject requirements, and selection procedures vary significantly. This section provides a detailed, institution-by-institution breakdown of undergraduate admission

prerequisites for 2025.

Note: Admission is competitive, and meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee a place. Information is based on the latest available prospectuses and official websites for the 2025 academic year; where 2025 information is not yet available, the most recent data (typically for 2026 applications) is provided as a guideline.

Section 2.1: University of Cape Town (UCT)

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is consistently ranked as one of the top universities in Africa and employs a competitive, multi-faceted admissions process. Admission is not based on a single score but on a holistic assessment of an applicant's academic record and, in some cases, other factors.²⁷

- **General Admission Framework:**

- **National Senior Certificate (NSC):** Applicants must have an NSC with a Bachelor's degree endorsement.
- **National Benchmark Tests (NBTs):** All undergraduate applicants are required to write the NBTs (AQL and MAT, where applicable). While the results are not typically used for admission decisions in most faculties, they are essential for placement into appropriate academic support or extended degree programmes after registration.¹⁵ For the Faculty of Health Sciences, NBTs must be written by a specific date to be considered for a conditional offer.¹⁴
- **Faculty Points Score (FPS):** UCT calculates an FPS to rank applicants. The specific calculation varies by faculty. For the Faculty of Science, for instance, the FPS is the sum of the percentages of the best six NSC subjects (including English but excluding Life Orientation), with the percentages for Mathematics and Physical Science being doubled.¹⁵
- **Weighted Points Score (WPS):** For some applicants, particularly those considered under redress policies, a WPS may be calculated. This involves adjusting the FPS by a weighting factor to account for educational or socio-economic disadvantage.¹⁵
- **Application:** Applications are made directly to UCT, typically closing on 31 July of the year preceding study. Applicants may apply for up to two programmes.¹⁴

- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:**
 - **Faculty of Commerce:** Mathematics is a compulsory subject for all programmes. Admission is highly competitive, based on the FPS and NBT results for placement.¹⁴
 - **Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment (EBE):** Requires high marks in Mathematics and Physical Sciences. The Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS) requires the submission of a portfolio by a specified deadline.¹⁴
 - **Faculty of Health Sciences:** Requires strong performance in Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Life Sciences. The NBTs must be written by 31 July for an applicant to be considered for a conditional offer.¹⁴
 - **Faculty of Humanities:** Requirements vary by programme. The Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (BA(FA)) requires the submission of a portfolio.¹⁴
 - **Faculty of Law:** Admission to the LLB programme is highly competitive and based on academic merit.
 - **Faculty of Science:** Admission requires a minimum FPS of 550. Specific subject requirements are a minimum of 70% in Mathematics and 60% in Physical Science. The NBTs are compulsory.¹⁵
- **Official Source References:** UCT 2025 Undergraduate Prospectus²⁷, UCT 2025 Applicant Directions²⁹, UCT Science Faculty Admissions Criteria.¹⁵

Section 2.2: University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)

The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) is a leading research university with a highly competitive admission process. Admission is based on a unique Wits APS calculation and faculty-specific requirements.⁶

- **General Admission Framework:**
 - **Wits Admission Point Score (APS):** Wits calculates its APS based on an applicant's seven best subjects, **including** Life Orientation. A unique feature of the Wits APS is the awarding of bonus points for high achievement in English and Mathematics. An achievement of 80-89% earns 7 base points plus 2 bonus points (total 9), while 90-100% earns 8 base points plus 2 bonus points (total 10).⁶
 - **Subject Requirements:** Mathematics (not Mathematical Literacy) is compulsory for all programmes in Commerce, Law and Management (except LLB), Engineering and the Built Environment, Science, and most programmes in Health Sciences. Mathematical Literacy is considered for LLB, Education,

and most Humanities programmes.⁶

- **Application:** Applications are made directly to Wits. Meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee a place due to the limited number of places available.³⁰ Wait-listing is common for applicants who are close to the direct entry requirements.³⁰
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements (for 2025):**
 - **Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management:**
 - **Bachelor of Accounting Science (BAccSci):** APS 44; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6.³²
 - **Bachelor of Economic Science (BEconSci):** APS 42; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 7.³²
 - **Bachelor of Commerce (BCom):** APS 38; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 5.³²
 - **Bachelor of Laws (LLB - 4 year):** APS 46; English Level 6, Mathematics Level 4 OR Mathematical Literacy Level 6.³²
 - **Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment:**
 - **BSc in Engineering (all disciplines):** APS 42; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 5, Physical Science Level 5. Applicants with Level 6 in these subjects have a greater chance of acceptance.³⁰
 - **Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS):** APS 34; English Level 4, Mathematics Level 4. Requires a written and graphic exercise and may require an interview.³⁰
 - **Faculty of Health Sciences:** These are highly competitive programmes. For example, the MBBCh (Medicine) has a composite index score based on academic results and NBTs. Specific APS and subject requirements are detailed in the faculty's admission guidelines.
 - **Faculty of Humanities:** Programmes like the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Education (BEd) have varying APS requirements, typically in the range of 36-40, with specific language requirements.³³
 - **Faculty of Science:** A Bachelor of Science (BSc) generally requires an APS in the range of 40-42 with strong passes (Level 5 or higher) in Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and/or Life Sciences, depending on the chosen major stream.
- **Official Source References:** Wits Entry Requirements Page ⁶, Wits Prospectus Documents.⁶

Section 2.3: University of Pretoria (UP)

The University of Pretoria (UP) uses a straightforward APS calculation and has clearly defined faculty-specific requirements. Admission is number-limited, and selection is based on academic merit.⁷

- **General Admission Framework:**

- **Admission Point Score (APS):** UP calculates the APS based on a candidate's achievement in six recognised 20-credit subjects. Life Orientation is explicitly **excluded** from the calculation. The maximum possible APS is 42.⁷
- **Application:** Applications open on 1 April and close on 30 June for most faculties (31 May for Veterinary Science). Conditional admission is granted based on final Grade 11 results, with final admission contingent on the final NSC results.⁷
- **Language of Tuition:** English is the official language of tuition for all programmes, unless a module specifically requires another language.⁷

- **Faculty-Specific Requirements (for 2025):**

- **Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences:**
 - **BCom Accounting Sciences:** APS 34; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6.⁷
 - **BCom Investment Management:** APS 34; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6.⁷
 - **Other BCom programmes:** Range from APS 30-32 with Mathematics at Level 4, 5, or 6 depending on the specialization.⁷
- **Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT):**
 - **BEng (all disciplines):** APS 35; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6, Physical Sciences Level 6.⁷
 - **BSc Architecture:** APS 27; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 4, Physical Sciences Level 4. A selection interview is required.⁷
 - **BSc Computer Science:** APS 30; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6.⁷
- **Faculty of Health Sciences:**
 - **MBChB (Medicine):** APS 35; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6, Physical Sciences Level 5.⁷
 - **BChD (Dentistry):** APS 35; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 6, Physical Sciences Level 5.⁷
 - Other programmes like Nursing, Physiotherapy, and Radiography have APS requirements ranging from 25 to 30.⁷
- **Faculty of Law:**
 - **LLB (4-year):** APS 35; English Level 6.⁷

- **BA (Law):** APS 34; English Level 5.⁷
- **BCom (Law):** APS 32; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 5.⁷
- **Faculty of Veterinary Science:**
 - **BVSc (Veterinary Science):** APS 35; English Level 5, Mathematics Level 5, Physical Sciences Level 5.⁷
 - **BVetNurs (Veterinary Nursing):** APS 28; English Level 4, Mathematics Level 4, and either Physical Sciences or Life Sciences at Level 4.⁷
- **Official Source References:** UP 2025 Undergraduate Prospectus.⁷

Section 2.4: Stellenbosch University (SU)

Stellenbosch University (SU) uses a selection model based on a combination of an NSC aggregate percentage and specific subject results. The university places a strong emphasis on academic merit and has rigorous selection criteria.⁸

- **General Admission Framework:**
 - **Selection Criteria:** Admission is primarily based on an applicant's NSC aggregate (average percentage of the best six subjects, excluding Life Orientation) and performance in required subjects. A specific APS system is not the primary metric advertised, with the focus being on percentage marks.⁸
 - **National Benchmark Tests (NBTs):** For 2025 admissions, NBTs are generally not required, with the notable exception of all programmes in the Faculty of Law, for which applicants must write the NBTs (AQL and/or MAT) before 31 July.⁸
 - **Language Requirements:** A minimum pass in either English or Afrikaans (Home Language or First Additional Language) is required for all programmes.⁸
 - **Application:** Applications close on 31 July for all undergraduate programmes and residences.³⁷
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements (for 2025):**
 - **Faculty of AgriSciences:** Programmes generally require an NSC aggregate of 60% (excluding LO), Mathematics at 60%, and Physical Sciences at 50%.⁸
 - **Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences:** Programmes typically require an NSC aggregate of 63%. Specific programmes have additional requirements: Music and Drama require auditions, and Visual Arts requires a portfolio submission.⁸
 - **Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences:**
 - **BCom programmes:** Require an NSC aggregate of 65% and Mathematics

- at 60%.⁸
- **BAcc:** Requires an aggregate of 70% and Mathematics at 70% (or 60% if Accounting is 70%).⁸
- **BCom (Actuarial Science) & BDatSci:** Require an aggregate of 80% and Mathematics at 80%.⁸
- **Faculty of Engineering:** Requires an NSC aggregate of 70%, Mathematics at 70%, and Physical Sciences at 60%. A specific selection mark formula is used: (Mathematics % + Physical Sciences % + (6 x Matric average)).⁸
- **Faculty of Law:** All programmes require NBTs. The four-year LLB and BA (Law) require a 70% aggregate, while the BAccLLB requires an 80% aggregate.⁸
- **Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences:**
 - **MBChB:** Requires an aggregate of 75%, Mathematics 60%, Physical Sciences 50%, and Life Sciences 50%.⁸
 - Other programmes like Physiotherapy and Dietetics require a 60% aggregate with varying science subject requirements.⁸
- **Faculty of Science:** Programmes require a 65% aggregate, Physical Sciences at 50%, and Mathematics at either 60% or 70% depending on the chosen first-year modules.⁸
- **Official Source References:** SU 2025 Admission Booklet⁸, SU Faculty Brochures and Selection Documents³⁸, SU International Prospectus.³⁷

Section 2.5: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) uses an APS system for selection and has specific quotas to promote access for students from Quintile 1 and 2 schools.⁹

- **General Admission Framework:**
 - **Admission Point Score (APS):** UKZN calculates the APS by adding the performance levels (1-7) for six subjects. Life Orientation is **excluded** from this calculation. A unique feature is the awarding of 8 points for a subject mark of 90-100%.⁹
 - **Application:** First-time South African undergraduate applicants must apply via the Central Applications Office (CAO).⁴¹
 - **Language Requirement:** A pass in English (Home Language or First Additional Language) at Level 4 (50% or above) is required for most programmes. The College of Law requires a higher Level 5 or 6.⁴³

- **Selection Quotas:** A minimum of 15% of new entrants to each programme are selected from students who attended Quintile 1 or 2 schools and meet the minimum entry requirements. Within quotas, selection is based on academic merit (APS).⁹
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements (for 2025):**
 - **College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science:**
 - **BSc in Engineering:** Requires Mathematics and Physical Science at Level 5 (65% or above).⁴⁴
 - **BSc in Agriculture:** Requires an APS of at least 28, with Level 4 in English, Mathematics, and one of Agricultural Science, Life Science, or Physical Science.⁴⁴
 - **College of Health Sciences:**
 - **MBChB (Medicine):** Has a highly competitive selection process based on a composite score. The application closing date is 30 June.⁴²
 - **Other Health Sciences (e.g., Pharmacy, Nursing, Optometry):** Have specific APS and subject requirements, typically requiring Mathematics, Life Sciences, and/or Physical Sciences.⁴⁴
 - **College of Humanities:**
 - **General BA/BSocSci:** Requires an APS of at least 28 and a Level 5 in one designated language or social science subject.⁴⁴
 - **Bachelor of Architectural Studies:** Requires an APS of 30, Mathematics at Level 5, and the submission of a portfolio.⁴⁴
 - **Bachelor of Social Work:** Requires an APS of at least 28.⁴⁴
 - **College of Law and Management Studies:**
 - **Bachelor of Laws (LLB):** Requires an APS of 32, English HL at Level 5 or FAL at Level 6, and Maths Level 3 or Maths Lit Level 5.⁴⁴
 - **BCom (General):** Requires an APS of 30 and Mathematics at Level 4.⁴⁴
 - **BCom (Accounting):** Requires an APS of 32 and Mathematics at Level 5.⁴⁴
- **Official Source References:** UKZN 2025 Undergraduate Prospectus ⁴¹, UKZN Handbooks ⁴⁶, UKZN Selection Procedure documents.⁹

Section 2.6: University of South Africa (UNISA)

As the largest open distance e-learning (ODEL) institution in Africa, the University of South Africa (UNISA) has a unique admission process designed to accommodate a vast and diverse student body. Selection is not based on a simple APS but a more

holistic points score system.¹⁰

- **General Admission Framework:**

- **Selection Process:** UNISA uses a points score system that considers an applicant's final Grade 12 marks along with other factors such as the school attended, gender, and socio-economic background to ensure fair and equitable access.¹⁰
- **Limited Space:** Admission is not automatic upon meeting minimum requirements. The number of available spaces for each qualification determines how many students can be accepted.¹⁰
- **Application:** Applicants can apply for a maximum of two qualifications. Successful applicants must accept their offer and register for the relevant semester, or they will have to re-apply.¹⁰ All new students must complete the First-Year Experience MOOC before registration.¹⁰
- **Alternative Pathways:** UNISA strongly supports alternative pathways, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and articulation from its own Higher Certificate and Diploma programmes into degree studies.²⁰

- **Qualification-Specific Requirements (for 2025):**

- **Higher Certificate:** The minimum requirement is an NSC with at least 30% in the language of teaching and learning (English) and 40% in Mathematics for qualifications in the College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET).²⁰
- **Diploma:** Requires an NSC with a diploma endorsement and specific subject requirements depending on the field (e.g., engineering diplomas require strong passes in Mathematics and Physical Sciences).²⁰
- **Bachelor's Degree:** Requires an NSC with a degree endorsement.
 - **BSc Programmes (CSET):** These programmes have multiple streams (e.g., Mathematics and Computer Science, Chemistry and Physics) and require strong passes in the relevant science subjects.²⁰
 - **BCom Programmes (College of Economic and Management Sciences):** These have specific mathematics and language requirements.²⁵
 - **Other Degrees (Human Sciences, Law, Education, etc.):** Each has specific admission requirements detailed on the UNISA qualifications website.²⁵

- **Official Source References:** UNISA Qualifications Website ²⁵, UNISA 2025 Application Information ¹⁰, CSET Prospectus ²⁰, UNISA Student Rules.⁴⁸

(Note: The following sections for the remaining public universities will be similarly

detailed, based on available prospectus information.)

Section 2.7: North-West University (NWU)

- **General Admission Framework:** NWU uses an APS calculated from six subjects, excluding Life Orientation. A minimum APS of 34 is required for most engineering programmes.¹¹
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Engineering requires a minimum of 70% in Mathematics and Physical Science. Other faculties have varying APS and subject requirements.¹¹
- **Official Source References:** NWU Admissions Policy ⁵⁰, NWU Prospectus Information.¹¹

Section 2.8: University of the Free State (UFS)

- **General Admission Framework:** UFS uses an Admission Point (AP) score calculated from six academic subjects, with one additional point awarded for Life Orientation if passed at 60% or higher.¹²
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Specific AP scores and subject levels are required for each faculty, such as an AP of 34 and Maths Level 5 for BAcc, and an AP of 36 with Level 5 in four key science subjects for MBChB.¹²
- **Official Source References:** UFS 2026 Prospectus ¹², Faculty-specific documents.¹²

Section 2.9: Rhodes University (RU)

- **General Admission Framework:** Rhodes uses a unique points system where the percentage mark for each of the six best subjects (excluding LO) is divided by 10. An APS of 45 is typically required for automatic acceptance.² NBTs are recommended for all applicants.²
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Commerce requires Maths Level 4, Pharmacy requires Maths and Sciences at Level 6, and Law has specific language and

Maths/Maths Lit requirements.²

- **Official Source References:** RU Entry Requirements Page ², Faculty Booklets.⁶¹

Section 2.10: Nelson Mandela University (NMU)

- **General Admission Framework:** NMU uses an APS system for admissions. Applications for certain programmes like MBChB and Pharmacy have early closing dates (e.g., 30 June and 2 August).⁶⁶
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Detailed requirements are available in faculty-specific prospectuses, such as the one for the Faculty of Education.⁶⁷
- **Official Source References:** NMU Prospectus Documents.⁶⁶

Section 2.11: University of Fort Hare (UFH)

- **General Admission Framework:** The minimum requirement for a Bachelor's degree is an APS of 26, with Level 4 in English and four other subjects.⁶⁸
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Faculties may prescribe higher minimum requirements.⁶⁸
- **Official Source References:** UFH Study/Admissions Page.⁶⁸

Section 2.12: University of Limpopo (UL)

- **General Admission Framework:** UL uses an APS calculated from six subjects, excluding Life Orientation. A minimum level of 3 in English and Life Orientation is required.¹⁷
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Specific APS scores are required for each programme (e.g., BCom Accountancy ECP requires an APS of 26).¹⁸ Selection tests are required for programmes like Social Work and Education.¹⁷
- **Official Source References:** UL 2025/2026 Prospectus.¹⁷

Section 2.13: University of Venda (UNIVEN)

- **General Admission Framework:** The minimum point score for a degree is 26. Life Orientation is not included in the APS calculation.⁷⁴
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Programmes in Humanities typically require an APS of 30. Education requires an APS of 36 with specific subject passes.⁷⁴
- **Official Source References:** UNIVEN 2025/2026 Prospectus.⁷⁴

Section 2.14: University of the Western Cape (UWC)

- **General Admission Framework:** UWC provides programme-specific information, including module details and costs. Admission requirements are detailed in faculty-specific publications.⁷⁸
- **Official Source References:** UWC Website and Faculty Calendars.⁷⁸

Section 2.15: Sol Plaatje University (SPU)

- **General Admission Framework:** SPU uses its own APS calculation which includes points for Life Orientation and bonus points for Mathematics and Home Language.⁸⁰
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** The 2026 prospectus details APS requirements (typically 25-30) and specific subject levels for programmes in Education, Economic & Management Sciences, Humanities, and Natural & Applied Sciences.⁸⁰
- **Official Source References:** SPU 2026 Undergraduate Prospectus.⁸⁰

Section 2.16: University of Mpumalanga (UMP)

- **General Admission Framework:** Applications require certified copies of ID and academic results, and an application fee.⁸³
- **Official Source References:** UMP Application Page⁸³, UMP Prospectus.⁸⁴

Section 2.17: Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** CPUT has specific application closing dates for different qualification types, with some programmes in Health Sciences and Education closing earlier (e.g., June/July).⁸⁶
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Engineering courses require Mathematics and Physical Sciences, while some design courses require portfolio submissions.⁸⁷
- **Official Source References:** CPUT Application Page ⁸⁶, CPUT Prospectus.⁸⁷

Section 2.18: Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** TUT adheres to national legislation: Bachelor's degrees require at least four subjects at Level 4, and Diplomas require at least four subjects at Level 3. Life Orientation is not included in the APS calculation.¹⁹
- **Official Source References:** TUT Prospectus.¹⁹

Section 2.19: Durban University of Technology (DUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** All undergraduate applications are processed through the Central Applications Office (CAO).⁹⁴
- **Official Source References:** DUT Course Information.⁹⁴

Section 2.20: Vaal University of Technology (VUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** VUT uses an APS system and has specific subject requirements for its programmes. A maximum of 6 subjects are used, excluding Life Orientation.⁹⁹
- **Faculty-Specific Requirements:** Detailed requirements for Diplomas and Degrees in all four faculties are available in the 2026 prospectus flyer.¹⁰⁰

- **Official Source References:** VUT Prospectus and Admissions Policy.⁹⁹

Section 2.21: Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** Applications are made via the CAO. Minimum requirements include an NSC with a diploma pass or N3 with 50% in Maths and English. A point system is used, with requirements listed in the CAO handbook.¹⁰²
- **Official Source References:** MUT Undergraduate Prospectus.¹⁰²

Section 2.22: Central University of Technology (CUT)

- **General Admission Framework:** CUT uses an APS system. The minimum APS to study at CUT is 27, though some programmes require more. Applicants with an APS between 24 and 26 may be considered for a selection test if space is available.¹⁰⁷ Life Orientation is given a score of 1 point.¹⁰⁷
- **Official Source References:** CUT Programmes Offered Page¹⁰⁷, CUT Prospectus.¹⁰⁸

Section 2.23: Walter Sisulu University (WSU)

- **General Admission Framework:** WSU uses an APS calculated from the best six subjects (seven for Education, which includes Life Orientation). The system converts percentage marks to a WSU-specific point score.⁵
- **Official Source References:** WSU Prospectus Documents⁵, WSU Admission Requirements.⁵

Section 2.24: University of Zululand (UNIZULU)

- **General Admission Framework:** Applications are made via the CAO. A minimum APS of 22-24 is required for Certificates and Diplomas, and 26-32 for Degrees,

with specific subject requirements.¹¹²

- **Official Source References:** UNIZULU Prospectus.¹¹²

(Sections for other public universities would be included here if specific data were available.)

Part 3: Admission Prerequisites for Private Higher Education Institutions

The private higher education sector in South Africa is diverse, encompassing large multi-brand institutions, specialized colleges, and business schools. While all are accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and registered with the DHET, their admission requirements can vary.

Section 3.1: The Independent Institute of Education (IIE) Institutions

The IIE is the largest registered private higher education provider in South Africa and is the academic body for well-known brands including **Varsity College**, **Vega School**, and **Rosebank College**.¹¹⁵ These brands share a common IIE admissions framework.

- **Degree Admission:**
 - A National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a Bachelor's Degree pass.
 - A Senior Certificate (SC) with matriculation endorsement.
 - A National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) Level 4 with a Bachelor's Degree pass.
 - Alternatively, a cognate (related) Higher Certificate, 240-credit Diploma, Advanced Certificate, or 360-credit Diploma may satisfy the minimum requirements.²²
- **Diploma Admission:** An NSC with a Diploma pass, or an equivalent qualification.
- **Higher Certificate Admission:** An NSC with a Higher Certificate pass.
- **Language Requirements:** Specific programmes, such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd), require a minimum of 50% in English (as either Home Language or First Additional Language). Applicants who do not meet this may be required to pass a language proficiency test.²²

- **Alternative Admission:** The IIE provides for Senate Discretionary Admissions, including Mature Age Exemption for candidates 23 years and older who meet specific criteria.²²
- **Official Source References:** IIE Admission Requirements Policy ²², IIE Brand Websites and Factsheets.¹¹⁶

Section 3.2: Leading Private Business Schools

- **Milpark Business School:**
 - **BCom Admission:** Requires an NSC with a minimum of 50% in four 20-credit subjects, including English. A minimum of 50% for Mathematics or 70% for Mathematical Literacy is also required. A bridging programme is available for candidates who do not meet the Mathematics requirement but have strong passes in subjects like Economics or Accounting.¹²⁶
 - **Articulation:** Admission to the BCom degree is also possible for candidates who have completed a relevant Higher Certificate (NQF 5) or Diploma (NQF 6).²⁶
 - **Official Source References:** Milpark Undergraduate Prospectus ²⁶, BCom Programme Page.¹²⁶
- **MANCOSA:**
 - **General Admission:** The minimum requirement is an NSC with the appropriate endorsement for the level of study (Higher Certificate, Diploma, or Degree).²¹
 - **Alternative Admission:** MANCOSA considers applicants via Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Mature Age Exemption (for applicants over 23).²¹
 - **Language:** Proven proficiency in English is required. Some programmes, like the Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism and Hospitality Management, require a minimum of 55% in English in the prior qualification.²¹
 - **Official Source References:** MANCOSA Undergraduate Prospectus.²¹
- **Regenesys Business School:**
 - **Admission Process:** Admission is both merit- and entrance-based. The process includes performance in an entrance test such as the Regenesys Management Admission Test (RMAT), GMAT, or CAT, as well as a personal interview and academic record review.¹³⁰
 - **Undergraduate Entry:** Requires a relevant school-leaving certificate (e.g., Maharashtra HSC, CBSE 12th for Indian applicants) and may involve an entrance exam.¹³⁰

- **Official Source References:** Regenesys Admission Information.¹³⁰
- **Regent Business School:**
 - **General Admission:** Requires a secondary school record and proof of English proficiency (TOEFL). SAT/ACT scores may also be considered. The institution also offers credit for life experiences.¹³⁴
 - **Note:** The available information pertains to Regent University in the US, which may have different requirements from Regent Business School in South Africa. Prospective students should consult the local institution directly.
 - **Official Source References:** Regent Business School Prospectus.¹³⁵

Section 3.3: Specialist and Other Private Colleges

- **AFDA (The School for the Creative Economy):**
 - **Degree Admission:** Requires an NSC with a Bachelor's degree endorsement. Specifically, a minimum of 30% in English and an achievement rating of 4 (50-59%) or better in four recognised 20-credit NSC subjects.¹³⁸
 - **Higher Certificate Admission:** Requires an NSC.
 - **Additional Criteria:** The application process is online and requires applicants to select their preferred campus, programme, and discipline specializations. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used for admission into the second year of a degree or for postgraduate studies.¹³⁹
 - **Official Source References:** AFDA Website and Application Portal.¹³⁸
- **Damelin:**
 - **Degree Admission:** Requires an NSC with degree endorsement, an NCV Level 4 with degree endorsement, or an equivalent qualification.
 - **Alternative Admission:** A completed Higher Certificate with a minimum average of 65% may grant access to a cognate degree. Mature Age (45+) and RPL pathways are also available.²⁴
 - **Subject Requirements:** Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy and English at NQF Level 4 are required for programmes like the Bachelor of Public Management.²⁴
 - **Official Source References:** Damelin Programme Pages²⁴, Damelin Website.¹⁴⁶
- **Boston City Campus:**
 - **Admission Philosophy:** Boston does not use a point system for entry. Admission is based directly on the endorsement obtained on the NSC or equivalent qualification (i.e., Higher Certificate, Diploma, or Bachelor's Degree

pass).¹⁵⁰

- **Application:** Applicants must submit certified copies of their ID and matric certificate or equivalent.¹⁵¹
- **Official Source References:** Boston City Campus Website and Prospectus.¹⁵⁰

Part 4: Admission Prerequisites for TVET Colleges

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are a cornerstone of South Africa's post-school education system, providing critical vocational and skills-based training. They offer two primary types of qualifications—the National Certificate (Vocational) and the NATED (Report 191) programmes—each with distinct entry points and progression pathways.¹⁵⁸

Section 4.1: Understanding TVET College Qualifications

A frequent point of confusion for prospective students is the difference between the NC(V) and NATED programmes. Understanding this distinction is vital for choosing the correct educational path based on one's prior schooling and career goals. The TVET sector's structure provides a crucial alternative to the traditional university route, offering an accessible entry point for learners who may not wish to, or are unable to, complete an academic matric. This makes TVET colleges central to the national strategy for addressing skills shortages and youth unemployment.

- **National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)]:**

- **Entry Point:** The minimum entry requirement is a Grade 9 pass.¹⁵⁸ This is the most significant feature of the NC(V), as it provides a vocational alternative to the academic Grades 10, 11, and 12.
- **Structure:** The NC(V) is a three-year qualification, progressing from NQF Level 2 to NQF Level 4. Each level takes one year to complete.¹⁵⁹
- **Curriculum:** The curriculum consists of seven subjects: three compulsory fundamental subjects (English, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, and Life Orientation) and four vocational subjects specific to the chosen field (e.g., Engineering, Business Studies, Hospitality).¹⁶
- **Equivalency:** An NC(V) Level 4 is equivalent to a National Senior Certificate

(Grade 12) on the NQF. With the correct subject combination and achievement levels, it can be used to apply for admission to Higher Certificate, Diploma, and even some Bachelor's Degree programmes at universities and universities of technology.¹⁶

- **NATED / Report 191 Programmes:**

- **Entry Point:** These are post-school qualifications. Entry into the first level (N1) can be from Grade 9, 10, or 11, particularly for engineering studies.¹⁶⁰ However, entry into N4 programmes typically requires a Grade 12 (NSC) or an N3 certificate/NC(V) Level 4.¹⁶¹
- **Structure:** The theoretical component is divided into six levels, N1 to N6. Each level is a certificate in its own right and typically takes one trimester (for engineering) or one semester (for business studies) to complete.¹⁶⁴
- **National N-Diploma:** This is the ultimate qualification in the NATED stream. To achieve a National N-Diploma, a student must complete the N6 certificate and provide proof of 18 to 24 months of relevant, practical work experience (in-service training).¹⁵⁹ This integration of theory and practice is the hallmark of the NATED system.

The table below provides a clear comparison of these two fundamental TVET pathways.

Feature	National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)]	NATED / Report 191 Programmes
Minimum Entry Level	Grade 9 Pass	Grade 9-11 (for N1-N3 Engineering); Grade 12/NSC or N3/NCV L4 (for N4-N6)
Target Audience	Learners seeking a vocational alternative to Grades 10-12.	School-leavers and workers seeking technical qualifications.
NQF Levels Covered	NQF Levels 2, 3, and 4.	NQF Levels 1-6.
Qualification Structure	Three-year programme, one year per NQF level.	Six theoretical levels (N1-N6), each a separate certificate.
Pathway to National Diploma	An NC(V) Level 4 can provide access to university diploma programmes.	Completion of N6 Certificate + 18-24 months of relevant in-service training leads to a National N-Diploma.
Official Source Reference(s)	¹⁶	¹⁵⁹

Section 4.2: Provincial TVET College Requirements - A Practical Guide

While a comprehensive list for all 50 public TVET colleges is extensive, the requirements for popular programmes are broadly similar. The following provides a practical guide based on the examples provided in the user query.

- **General Application Process:** Nearly all TVET colleges now use an online application system. Applicants must typically complete a career interest questionnaire or placement test, register a profile, and upload certified copies of their ID, latest academic results, and proof of residence.¹⁶⁶
- **Western Cape (e.g., False Bay TVET College, Boland TVET College):**
 - **NC(V) Programmes:** Require a Grade 9 pass.¹⁷⁰
 - **NATED Business Studies (N4-N6):** Require a Grade 12 (NSC) pass. Financial Management may require Accounting as a subject.¹⁷¹
 - **NATED Engineering Studies (N4-N6):** Require an N3 certificate, a Technical Matric, an NSC with passes in Mathematics and Physical Science (often at 40%), or an NC(V) Level 4 in a relevant field.¹⁷³
- **Gauteng (e.g., Ekurhuleni West TVET College, West Rand TVET College - Westcol):**
 - **NC(V) Programmes:** Require a Grade 9 certificate or equivalent.¹⁶⁰
 - **NATED Engineering (N1-N3):** Entry can be from Grade 9-11.¹⁶⁰
 - **NATED Engineering (N4-N6):** Westcol requires a Grade 12 pass with an APS of 22 and passes in Mathematics and Physical Science.¹⁷⁴
 - **NATED Business Studies (N4-N6):** Require a Grade 12 pass with relevant subjects.¹⁶⁰
- **KwaZulu-Natal (e.g., Thekwini TVET College, Umgungundlovu TVET College):**
 - **NC(V) Programmes:** Require a Grade 9 pass or higher.¹⁶¹
 - **NATED Programmes (N4-N6):** Require a Grade 12 (NSC), N3, or NC(V) Level 4 certificate.¹⁶¹ Umgungundlovu specifies Grade 12 with 40% in Maths and Physical Science for N4 Engineering.¹⁷⁵
- **Limpopo & Mpumalanga (e.g., Capricorn TVET College, Ehlanzeni TVET College):**
 - **NC(V) Programmes:** Ehlanzeni requires a Grade 9 year-end report with a pass in Mathematics.¹⁶²
 - **NATED Programmes (N4-N6):** Capricorn requires an NSC/Grade 12, N4

Introductory Certificate, or N3/NC(V) L4.¹⁷⁶

- **North West & Northern Cape (e.g., Orbit TVET College, Northern Cape Urban TVET College):**
 - **NC(V) Programmes:** Northern Cape Urban requires a Grade 9 pass. For Finance, Economics, and Accounting, a pass in Accounting is required.¹⁷⁷
 - **NATED Programmes (N4-N6):** Orbit requires a Grade 12/NSC for N4 entry.¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

The South African higher education admissions landscape for 2025 is characterized by a multi-layered framework that balances national access policies with institutional autonomy. At its foundation, the National Senior Certificate (NSC) serves as the universal gateway, with its pass levels (Higher Certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor's Degree) dictating the baseline eligibility for different types of undergraduate qualifications. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) formalizes these minimums, ensuring a standardized entry point across the system.

However, the autonomy granted to institutions to select students "likely to succeed" has led to a complex and varied set of specific prerequisites. The most significant variation lies in the calculation of the Admission Point Score (APS), which is not standardized nationally. Prospective students must be aware that their APS will differ from one university to another, necessitating careful, institution-specific research and calculation. This complexity, while designed to serve institutional goals, can present a considerable hurdle for applicants without access to detailed guidance.

Furthermore, the use of National Benchmark Tests (NBTs), portfolio submissions, interviews, and other selection criteria adds another layer of complexity that is highly faculty- and programme-specific. Alternative pathways such as the National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Mature Age Exemption provide crucial access points for non-traditional students, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity.

The TVET college sector operates on a distinct but parallel system, with the NC(V) programmes offering a vital vocational alternative to academic schooling from as early as Grade 9, and the NATED (Report 191) programmes providing a clear pathway to a technical National N-Diploma through integrated theoretical and workplace learning.

For any prospective undergraduate student, the key to a successful application in 2025 is meticulous research. It is imperative to move beyond generic requirements and consult the official 2025 prospectus and admissions pages for each specific institution and faculty of interest. Understanding the nuances of each institution's APS calculation, language policies, and supplementary requirements is not merely advantageous—it is essential for navigating the application process effectively and maximizing the chances of admission.

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