



St Mary's School
Waverley
Founded 1888

Guideline booklet
for
application to tertiary institutions

Useful acronyms and terms you may come across

Term	Explanation
Bachelor Degree Pass	Four designated subjects have been passed with an achievement rating of 4 (adequate achievement 50-59%) or better, together with any institutional requirements (source: Department of Education).
APS	Admissions Points Score Individual institutions have their respective methods for scoring APS. The APS varies between faculties and courses. Students must examine the scoring method for each institution to which they wish to apply. The APS is a minimum score as a guideline for admission. Students should aim to achieve more than the minimum APS to improve chances of admission.
AQL	Academic and Quantitative Literacy Test, this being one of the National Benchmark Tests.
Cohort	The particular group of students who have applied for a particular faculty/course in a particular year.
Co-requisite	A compulsory course that must be completed together with another course.
Curriculum	A set of courses or subjects. Some programmes, such as the MBBCh and BSc Engineering, are based on a set or fixed curriculum where you are required to complete specific areas of study. In other faculties, such as the Humanities and Sciences, you have a wide range of courses to choose from, and you will need to decide on your major subjects.
Faculty	An organisational and discipline-based administrative division within a university, e.g. the Faculty of Humanities. Each faculty is in turn made up of a number of "schools", e.g. the School of Languages. The Dean is the head of the faculty.
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
Lecture	A teaching session conducted by a lecturer.
Majors	Subjects a student will take to her final year of study. These subjects become an area of specialisation.
Minors	Subjects which are secondary areas of study and are not usually taken to a student's final year.
Modules	Short courses offered during each semester which contributes to making up a major or minor subject.
NBT	National Bench mark tests, see page 8.
NSC	National Senior Certificate
Pool of applicants	A group of students who are applying for the same faculty or course of study.
Pre-requisite	Entry requirement for a course, e.g. a "Level 5" in Mathematics to study Mathematics I at university or a course that must be completed to allow entry into another course, e.g. Mathematics I to gain entry into Mathematics II.
Programme	The university qualification such as a degree or diploma that you enrol for, e.g. BSc in Biological Sciences. Undergraduate programmes usually extend over 3-4 years of full time study.
Tutorial	A tutorial is a more interactive, small group teaching session conducted by a teaching assistant.
Undergraduate student	A student who has yet to complete a first degree at university.

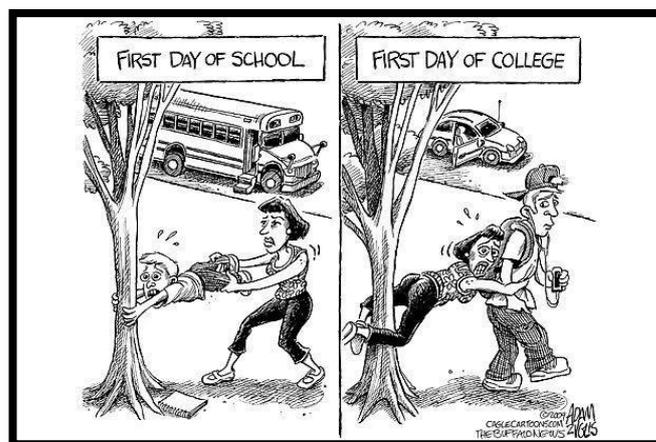
The thought of leaving school can be a daunting one! The pressures around making decisions about your future have become an immediate reality. You need to have faith and believe in your own ability in that you have built the skills and confidence here at St Mary's to carry you into your exciting future of tertiary study and work experience.

St Mary's adopts an holistic approach to career education and development which involves an integrated learning programme in Life Orientation from Form I through to Form V. A large support team, who are involved in the development of this learning programme, together with individualised support at the School's Counselling and Career Centre, is available at school. The Open Door team is headed by Heidi Burkhalter (educational psychologist), who works with Lara Rammutla (educational psychologist), and Lynn Moony (careers assistant). Our aim as a team is to contribute towards the development of each young woman at St Mary's so that she becomes in charge of her own future. Each girl should have the power to make informed choices and the confidence to navigate her way independently in the world of work which awaits her.

This booklet has been compiled based on the experiences of the St Mary's Career Counselling Centre and the numerous Form V girls our staff have successfully mentored though their decision-making and tertiary application processes over the years. It is intended to function as a *guide and support* to help you as you embark upon the process of deciding upon your path after school.

Important note for parents

Your role as parents is to guide your children when they are young, accompany them into adulthood towards the end of their teens and allow them the space to live their own adult lives. Your daughter is now embarking on the decision-making process with respect to her future plans. Most parents and their daughters experience a myriad emotions, from trepidation to excitement. As parents, it is important to be mindful that it is your daughter's journey and, while we need to accompany her in this process, providing encouragement, we need to give her the trust, space and support to discover her own destination. This booklet may provide a useful starting point to engage with your daughter around the big questions concerning her career and future work experiences.



Source: [State University of New York]

The big questions

As you start to consider your future, there are a few big questions which come to mind. Use these questions to think about the processes which lie ahead. These are questions you may like to discuss in conversation with your parents and /or a member of staff at the Career and Counselling Centre.

Thinking about myself

- What do I know/understand about the world of work?
- Which careers really interest me and why?
- Have I researched the careers which interest me?
- How do I rate my decision-making skills?
- Are my career expectations broad enough?
- Have I considered my personality, interests, abilities, values and influences?
- Does the course which appeals to me, build on my strengths?

What about my academic habits?

- Am I an independent learner who is able to motivate myself?
- Can I identify my key strengths and areas of difficulty?
- What is my learning style?

Once some of the big questions have been answered and you have given careful thought to areas of interest, you can think more seriously about the tertiary application process.

Application to-do list

Subjects, courses and faculties

1. Research the subjects which you think you will enjoy studying.
2. Think carefully as to why these particular subjects interest and motivate you.
3. If you are considering university, which particular faculty will suit you best and why?
4. Look carefully and find out about the courses within various faculties that interest you.
5. How flexible is/are the study programme/s?
6. Is it easy enough to change courses if you realise that it may not be the course for you?
7. Investigate the minimum requirements for each course and for each institution. However, bear in mind that achieving the minimum requirements will not necessarily guarantee you entry into the course. Figure 1 below attempts to illustrate visually the process involved in deciding upon a particular course option. Note the importance of starting with the bigger questions first, before navigating oneself towards the specific course requirements.

Figure 1: Career Pyramid



Image courtesy Crosley, C. (2011), Wits University.

8. To maximise your chances of being admitted into a programme of your choice; you should indicate a minimum of three choices - including one from a less restricted faculty.

Choice of tertiary institution

1. Keep your options open. Select at least three tertiary institutions (including a local option and an institution further afield).
2. Try to establish what sort of reputation an institution may have with employers.
3. Research the types of learning approaches which may be used. For example, what is the balance between lectures, seminars, theoretical, practical work, group, independent study - does the particular learning style/approach suit your way of learning?
4. What is the focus on developing employability skills as well as academic excellence?
5. How can the institution help me find quality work experience?
6. Does the institution meet my other preferences? For example, geographically, socially, economically and so forth.
7. What does your 'gut feel' indicate?

Useful links and contact details

A large number of girls matriculating from St Mary's have successfully gained access into the following universities. Please consult the university website as provided below for specific information about the application process and **specific** application requirements for the various faculties and courses. In addition, there are many other tertiary institutions which we encourage girls to research and investigate according to their areas of interest.

University of the Witwatersrand	www.wits.ac.za/
University of Johannesburg	www.uj.ac.za/
University of Pretoria	www.up.ac.za/
University of the Free State	www.ufs.ac.za/
Rhodes University	www.ru.ac.za/
University of Cape Town	www.uct.ac.za/
Stellenbosch University	www.sun.ac.za/english

Other useful information (local)

- WITS Career Counselling and Development Unit [CCDU]

Contact: 011 717 9140

<https://www.wits.ac.za/ccdu>

- WITS First Year Experience Information

<https://www.wits.ac.za/prospective/student-services/18747/first-year-experience.html>

- University of Johannesburg Institute for Child and Adult Guidance [ICAG]

Contact: 011 559 3106

Web links and career information

- www.careerplanet.co.za
- www.FirstStep.me

Useful sites providing information about various institutions, courses and financial assistance.

- www.careersunlimited.co.za

This site provides resources with comprehensive information about how to select a career path.

Financial assistance

Financing tertiary study is not always easy. You may like to start the bursary information search by consulting the websites listed below. It may also be helpful to talk to the financial aid office at the institutions to which you may be interested in applying. The staff members at these offices will provide you with the specific information concerning the financial assistance you may be looking for. It is important to note that many bursary offers work on a first-come, first-served basis, so do not leave this aspect of your tertiary application process till last!

- www.careerwise.co.za
- www.nsfas.org.za

Admission requirements

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) is the current South African school leavers' certificate. While your final matric results are used to determine your entry into a particular university, faculty and course, you may use your final Form IV examination results as a pre-entry from which you may gain provisional acceptance. Each university,

faculty and course has its own set of entry or admission requirements, which vary from year to year. It is very important that you carry out in-depth research and are aware of the exact requirements early on. Admission requirements play an important role in motivating you to work hard and keep focused on your academic studies.

It is important that you work hard and prepare thoroughly for your examinations in your Form IV year. You want to give yourself the best possible chance from the outset. Examination technique and the correct mindset are as important as knowing your work. Below are a few useful pointers to consider in your preparation for examinations.

Managing exam periods

- While writing exams is clearly an intellectual pursuit, there is also a significant physical aspect to writing examinations

Writing for 3 hours at a stretch is very tiring - your hands, arms and upper body ache

- Thinking and concentrating for 3 hours at a stretch is also exhausting

To prepare for this, you must try to work for 3 hours at a stretch

- Exams are written during daylight hours which require candidates to be fully awake at that time

Pupils who study through the night, stand the risk of upsetting their sleep patterns and create a pseudo jet-lag situation. Sleep at night and work by day!

- Do past papers in simulated exam conditions i.e.

without memos, without breaks, without music, without water etc.

The National Benchmark Test

The National Benchmark Tests (NBTs) are national tests written by pupils wishing to go to university. The aim of these tests is to assess the academic readiness of a first-year student. There are two NBTs which aim to assess aspects of prior learning in the areas of Academic Literacy and Mathematics.

1. The Academic and Qualitative Literacy Test (AQL)
2. Mathematics Aptitude Test (MAT)

It is only necessary to register to write the MAT if you wish to apply for a programme where Mathematics is a pre-requisite. NBTs are nationally administered tests, regardless of the university to which you may be applying. It is very important that you clarify the admissions requirements for the universities and courses. Not all universities or courses require the NBTs as a pre-requisite, however, in our experience we highly recommend that you write these tests to keep all your options open.

The NBTs are multiple-choice tests for which you have no real way of preparing. No past test papers are available nor do your teachers have access to past papers or test preparation resources. Your Mathematics teachers will help you in the preparation for multiple-choice style Mathematics questions in your Form V year as a build-up to these tests.

Each year around the beginning of April, the online test booking facilities become available. Tests can be booked online and are written at various test venue facilities in and around Johannesburg. Please visit the NBT website for further information concerning the tests, the booking procedure and access to results once tests have been written.

- www.nbt.ac.za/

Application deadlines

Please take careful note of all application deadlines as these vary from one institution to another and, in some cases, there may be different deadlines for faculties within an institution. In many cases, applications will require supporting documentation from the school. Please ask for this ahead of time, especially if the application deadline falls within St Mary's school holidays.

International tertiary study

Many St Mary's girls have been accepted into both undergraduate and post-graduate study at universities in other countries. The application process is, for the most part, completed online and a great deal of information is required. It is important to note that many universities have different application deadlines which need to be adhered to strictly.

In order to assist with international applications, St Mary's has devised a checklist to ensure that we have done all we can to ensure the best possible outcome for each girl. Any girl who aims to apply to a university in another country must collect a form from Ms Knowles well in advance of the submission date required by that institution; and consult with her on the process of international application.

Application support documentation

Institutions or faculties require different forms of supporting documentation in the application process. It is important that you start to find out well in advance what information is necessary, as collecting and compiling the various supporting documents can be time consuming. The following list is merely an outline of examples of information some institutions or faculties may look for from an individual. There may well be others, so be sure to read application and admissions criteria thoroughly.

- **Job shadowing experience**

Job shadowing provides an opportunity to gain insight into the type of work which you may consider as a future career option. It enables you to gain an understanding of the realities of a particular work situation and what that career may entail. This experience is an important step in the decision-making process of selecting a field of study at tertiary level.

- **Community service**

Community service forms an important aspect of an individual's personal development and meaningful contribution to society beyond school. Some tertiary education institutions do not require applicants to have completed community service hours. However, certain faculties at universities still require the applicant to complete a biographical questionnaire. This is where community service hours could make the difference. When applying for scholarships and bursaries, community service hours are beneficial as they indicate an interest beyond the self. All community service hours should be listed on the CV.

- **A personal essay**

In some instances you may have to write a personal essay often referred to as "statement of purpose," "personal statement," or "letter of intent". In our experience many of the international university applications require this element.

Some essays require rather specific information, for example, the applicant's intended areas of study while others are quite unstructured, leaving you to address a wide range of matters. Usually the purpose of the essay is a form of pre-admission screening, in that the admissions committee will be looking at the quality and style of your writing as a way of assessing your suitability for tertiary study. The admissions committee may also be looking to see whether you will be a "good fit" for a particular course, or residence as an example.

The following websites offer some useful information concerning the writing of a personal essay.

<https://career.berkeley.edu/grad/gradstatement.stm>

<http://www.essayedge.com/graduate/essayadvice/course/>

- **A Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

Although the term “curriculum vitae” literally means “course of life”, the CV is about much more. In addition to outlining your life and experiences to date, the CV is a marketing tool to demonstrate your suitability for the job or bursary in question. Prospective employers approach CVs from the perspective of:

- Does this CV demonstrate evidence of the skills and qualities for which I am looking?
- Does this individual stand out from other applicants?

- **Testimonials**

A testimonial is a document which provides a record of a girl’s school achievements. St Mary’s provides testimonials on request as the vast majority of tertiary education institutions do not require testimonials as part of the application process and, once girls have graduated, school testimonials are frequently considered to be outdated.

In rare cases, a particular faculty at a university may request a school testimonial or, if a girl decides to take a working gap year, her prospective employers may require one.

Please note that only **one** official school testimonial will be issued for each pupil who requests one. It is advised that the testimonial is requested as late as possible during the pupil’s final year at school to ensure all awards and accolades are recorded. Should a girl have a valid reason for requesting a testimonial, she must contact Ms Knowles and provide an honest summary of her school successes in the following categories:

- Academic - including academic badges, Olympiads, awards and honours blazer
- Leadership - including details of positions held, Form Captain or Deputy Form Captain and the year, sports captains etc.
- Cultural - including any examinations, trophies, awards, half- or full colours, honours blazer and which activities were undertaken
- Service - including all community service, House service, trophies, awards, half- or full colours, honours blazer
- Spiritual - including areas of involvement, positions held, initiatives
- Sport - including teams played for and the age group, awards, trophies, half- or full colours, provincial and/or national representation, honours blazer

The testimonial will be provided in hard copy.