



# Addendum: University Entry Pathways for International Qualifications

## Shortened Version

American Advanced High School Diploma (AHSD) and British BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma

### Purpose of this addendum

This addendum serves to **clarify the process of entry into South African and international universities** for learners completing the **American Advanced High School Diploma (AHSD)** or the **British BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma** at Baken Akademie.

Both qualifications are **internationally benchmarked** and subject to formal verification and admission processes, as is the case with **all foreign qualifications** used for university entry in South Africa (including Cambridge, IB, and other international systems).

The purpose of this document is to explain:

- How these qualifications are structured
- What universities and institutions require for admission
- Why additional verification steps exist
- How and when applications should be made

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### An international academic pathway

Both the AHSD and the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma are **international qualifications** designed to prepare learners for **rigorous tertiary study**, not only in South Africa, but also at **international universities worldwide**.

As such:

- The academic expectations are **high**
- The assessment and verification process is **detailed**
- The pathway requires **long-term planning**, consistency, and maturity

This is intentional. The aim is to ensure that learners are **properly prepared for the rigour of international higher education and professional environments**, rather than merely meeting minimum local thresholds.

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# American Advanced High School Diploma (AHSD)

## Structure and academic rigour

- The AHSD is a **four-year high school qualification**, starting in **Grade 9** and concluding at the end of **Grade 12**
- Academic performance is measured through a **Grade Point Average (GPA)**
- **The GPA is calculated cumulatively from Grade 9 onwards, not only from Grade 12 marks**

This means:

- Consistent performance over all four years is essential
- Early academic discipline has a direct impact on final university eligibility
- The programme is academically demanding by design

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## University admission requirements (South Africa)

For admission to **South African public universities**, learners completing the **Advanced AHSD** must meet **two parallel requirements**:

1. **University-specific admission requirements**, and
2. **Matriculation Exemption (Use of Exemption)** through **Universities South Africa (USAf)**

Typical minimum requirements include:

- **Overall GPA of 3.5 or higher** (approximately 87%)
- Completion of **either**:
  - **SAT** (minimum  $\pm 610$  English and  $\pm 530$  Mathematics), **or**
  - **National Benchmark Tests (NBTs)** at the required proficiency level

Without a USAf exemption, a learner **cannot register for a degree** at a South African public university.

Universities may, at their discretion, allow **conditional or provisional admission** while exemption documentation is still being processed, provided that:

- Academic criteria are met, and
- The exemption process is formally underway

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# British BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma

## Academic structure and vocational focus

- The BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma is an **international vocational qualification**
- It is assessed through **continuous coursework and moderated assignments**
- There are **no final examinations**, but the academic and practical demands are sustained and rigorous

In addition to university progression, the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma is **specifically designed to prepare learners for the world of work**.

On completion of the qualification:

- Learners are **work-ready** within their chosen field
- The qualification enables **direct entry into employment**, both locally and internationally
- Skills are developed through **applied, real-world tasks aligned to industry expectations**

This makes the BTEC pathway particularly suitable for learners who wish to:

- Enter employment immediately after school, **or**
  - Combine work with further studies at a later stage
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## South African recognition (SAQA)

For South African institutions:

- The BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma must be **verified by SAQA**
- SAQA evaluates the qualification and confirms its **comparability to NQF Level 4**

This process:

- Applies to **all foreign qualifications**, not only BTEC
- Is the same process followed by Cambridge, IB, and other international qualifications

The **SAQA verification fee** is payable directly to SAQA and is **not charged by the school**. Fees are determined by SAQA and typically fall in the region of **±R2,000–R3,000**, subject to change.

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## Application timelines (important clarification)

University application timelines **vary by institution and faculty**.

As a general guideline:

- Applications are submitted **during the preceding year**
- Most applications fall **between June and September**
- Many institutions expect applications to be completed **by the end of June**

Parents and learners must **always confirm application deadlines directly with the specific university and faculty**, as requirements and closing dates differ across institutions.

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## Early certification and processing time

Final school certification is issued **towards the end of November** to ensure:

- Adequate time for **SAQA and/or USAf applications**

- Early submission of documentation to universities
- Smoother registration processes at tertiary institutions

In many cases:

- Learners may **commence studies provisionally**
  - Outstanding verification documents can be submitted once finalised
  - The key requirement is that **the academic criteria are met and the process is active**
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## Costs and transparency

Baken Akademie:

- **Does not charge any additional fees** for final certification
- **Does not charge for SAT or NBT examinations**

Any external costs are payable **directly** to:

- SAT or NBT testing bodies
- SAQA (for BTEC verification)
- USAf (where applicable)

These are standard national and international fees and apply equally to all learners using international qualifications.

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## Final clarification

All foreign qualifications used for university entry in South Africa must undergo formal verification or exemption processes.

This is **standard, regulated practice**, not an exception.

An additional advantage of this pathway is that:

- SAT results and international certification allow **direct access to overseas universities**
- Online and international study options remain open
- Learners are prepared for **both local and global academic and professional environments**

# Addendum for Parents: University Admission Requirements for the American Advanced High School Diploma and British BTEC Extended Diploma (2025-2026)

## Purpose of this addendum

How our **American Advanced High School Diploma (AHSD)** and **British BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma** programmes meet the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4 standards required for university admission in South Africa. This addendum clarifies the minimum academic standards, application processes and related fees so that families can make informed decisions. It draws on official circulars from Universities South Africa (USAf), National Benchmark Test (NBT) updates, SAQA guidelines and external research on BTEC equivalence. A list of key websites is provided at the end.

## American Advanced High School Diploma

### Four-year programme and GPA calculation

- **Duration:** The advanced diploma is a rigorous **four-year programme** that starts in Grade 9 and concludes at the end of Grade 12. Your child's **Grade Point Average (GPA) is calculated from Grade 9 onward**, not only final marks of Grade 12. Admission decisions therefore consider performance across all four years. Maintaining a high GPA throughout is essential.
- **Academic rigour:** The AHSD aligns with the U.S. college-preparatory curriculum. Students take advanced courses and must consistently meet high standards in English, mathematics and science. Baken Akademie monitors progress from Grade 9 to ensure students are on track for university admission.

### Recognition by South African universities and USAf

USAf's **Circular 8-24** (May 2025) confirms that holders of the AHSD may qualify for a **condoned conditional exemption** provided they meet specific criteria. South African public universities can also admit learners via their **senate discretionary route**; this allows universities to use their own academic judgement if the minimum USAf requirements are not fully met. Admission policies vary slightly across institutions; therefore parents should consult the university of interest early.

### Minimum academic requirements (condoned conditional exemption)

To qualify for the USAf exemption, the following **minimum requirements** must be achieved:

1. **GPA:** An overall GPA of **at least 3.5** on a 4-point scale (equivalent to an average of 85 per cent or higher).
2. **English and Mathematics:** Students must complete college-preparatory courses in these subjects throughout Grades 9–12.
3. **Standardised tests:** Applicants must provide either **SAT scores** or **National Benchmark Test (NBT) results**:
  - **SAT (USAf requirement):** Minimum **610 for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (English)** and **530 for Mathematics**. These scores may be higher for specific programmes (e.g., engineering). Students who write the **National Benchmark Test** instead of SAT must achieve **Proficiency** level (see below). Universities like University of Johannesburg (UJ) may waive the SAT if the applicant holds a letter of admission from a recognised U.S. university 【USAf Requirements 2025\_6†L13-L23】 .
  - **NBT:** The NBT comprises Academic Literacy (AL), Quantitative Literacy (QL) and Mathematics (MAT) tests. USAf's 2025 NBT update states that for degree programmes, students must achieve **AL ≥ 69 %**, **QL ≥ 70 %** and **MAT ≥ 69 %**; for diploma or higher-certificate programmes the cut-off is **AL ≥ 61 %**, **QL ≥ 63 %** and **MAT ≥ 63 %**. The NBT tests moved online in 2025 and can be written at home or school.

## University-specific requirements and application dates

The table below summarises the requirements for several South African universities based on the **Baken Akademie University Admission Pathways (2025–2026)** document 【Baken\_Akademie\_University\_Admission\_Pathways\_2025\_2026†L9-L23】 and USAf circulars. Note that admission is competitive; meeting the minimum does **not guarantee** acceptance. Parents should verify the most up-to-date information with each institution.

University (Province)	Minimum academic requirements for AHSD holders	Application closing date*
University of Johannesburg (UJ)	AHSD with GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT scores of 610 English & 530 Maths or NBT proficiency 【Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 . UJ may accept applicants without SAT if they present an admission letter from a U.S. university 【USAf Requirements 2025_6†L13-L23】 .	<b>15 July</b> for most programmes 【Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
University of Pretoria (UP)	AHSD with GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT 610 English & 530 Maths or NBT proficiency 【Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 . Some faculties may require higher scores (e.g., Engineering).	<b>30 June</b> (economic sciences) and <b>31 July</b> (other faculties) 【Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
University of the Witwatersrand	AHSD with GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT or NBT proficiency; certain faculties require specific subjects (e.g., Physical Sciences	<b>30 June</b> for Architecture & Health Sciences; <b>30 September</b> for other faculties 【

University (Province)	Minimum academic requirements for AHSD holders	Application closing date*
Grand West (Wits)	for Engineering) 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .	Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
University of Cape Town (UCT)	AHSD with GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT 610/530 or NBT proficiency; competitive programmes require higher marks 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .	<b>31 July</b> (all programmes) 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
North-West University (NWU)	GPA ≥ 3.5 and SAT or NBT results; some faculties require additional assessments 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .	<b>27 September</b> 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
University of the Free State (UFS)	GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT or NBT proficiency; ensures subject-choice alignment with intended programme 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .	<b>30 September</b> 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .
Stellenbosch University (SU)	GPA ≥ 3.5; SAT or NBT; strong emphasis on subject performance, especially for science degrees 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .	<b>31 July</b> for most programmes 【 Baken_Akademie_University_Admission_Pathways_2025_2026†L9-L23】 .

\*Dates refer to applications for admission in 2026. Check each university's admissions page for programme-specific closing dates.

## SAT and NBT preparation tips

- **Prepare early:** USAf recommends that students begin SAT/NBT preparation in Grade 11. Universities may use the highest scores achieved before the application deadline.
- **Multiple sittings:** The SAT is offered multiple times per year. Baken Academy helps students register for a March or May sitting to ensure results are available before the July–September university deadlines.
- **Online NBT tests:** The NBT moved online in 2025. Students must register via the **NBT official website** and ensure they have a stable internet connection.
- **Match tests to programmes:** Some universities (e.g., UJ and UP) may accept either SAT or NBT results; however, competitive faculties may favour SAT mathematics scores for engineering or science. Consult faculty requirements.

## Application process and SAQA/USAf evaluation

- **USAf (matric exemption) application:** After receiving final AHSD results (typically early November), learners must apply to **USAf** for a *condoned conditional exemption certificate*. Universities require this certificate for registration. Application is completed online at the USAf Matriculation Board website. There is a processing fee (approximately R650 in 2025). Submission of final transcripts, SAT/NBT scores and proof of payment is necessary.
- **SAQA verification for foreign institutions:** While USAf handles exemption for South African universities, some private universities or professional bodies may ask for **South**

**African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)** verification of the AHSD. SAQA's step-by-step manual states that applicants must create an online profile, upload certified documents, pay the evaluation fee and courier original documents [acsi.co.za](https://www.acsi.co.za). A verification fee of about **R105** applies [acsi.co.za](https://www.acsi.co.za). External immigration advisors report that SAQA charges about **R2,145** for the first qualification and **R900** for each additional qualification [ibn.co.za](https://www.ibn.co.za). These costs are outside the tuition fees charged by Baken Academy.

- **Our policy on fees:** Baken Academy does **not charge additional fees** for final examinations or certificates for either the AHSD or BTEC programmes. However, families are responsible for paying the USAf exemption fee and any SAQA evaluation costs. We issue final certificates by the end of **November** to allow sufficient time for these applications.

## Provisional registration at universities

USAf emphasises that universities may provisionally register students while their USAf exemption or SAQA evaluation is being processed. Students must ensure the application process has begun by submitting proof of payment and a copy of the submission receipt. Final admission is contingent on meeting the minimum GPA and test requirements.

## British BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma

### Overview and academic rigour

- **Structure:** The BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma is a two-year vocational qualification offered by Pearson. It focuses on practical skills and is assessed mainly through **continuous coursework** rather than exams. Each module includes assignments, projects and a small number of externally set tasks; there are **no final written examinations** [whatuni.com](https://www.whatuni.com).
- **Equivalence:** UK Level 3 qualifications are benchmarked to the National Framework for Qualifications (QCF). Independent education guides note that the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma carries the same standard as three A-levels; the national diploma (sometimes called the BTEC National) counts as two A-levels and the extended certificate counts as one A-level [whatuni.com](https://www.whatuni.com). Universities and employers recognise the extended diploma for entry into many degree programmes, although some courses (e.g., medicine) require supplementary A-level subjects [whatuni.com](https://www.whatuni.com).
- **NQF Level 4 equivalence:** Comparative studies show that UK Level 3 qualifications, including the BTEC Extended Diploma, align with **South African NQF Level 4** (equivalent to the National Senior Certificate) [skylinecollege.co.za](https://www.skylinecollege.co.za). An international credentials evaluation document notes that the BTEC National Diploma/Extended Diploma is considered NQF Level 4 in South Africa [taicep.org](https://www.taicep.org).

### University recognition and application requirements

- **Universities accepting BTEC:** Most UK and international universities—including many South African institutions—accept the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma. Entry requirements vary; some programmes require specific module grades or additional A-level subjects. Parents should consult the admissions offices of their chosen universities early.
- **SAQA verification:** As with all foreign qualifications, students who hold a BTEC must apply for **SAQA** verification to confirm NQF Level 4 equivalence. The application process is the same as described above for AHSD. Once SAQA issues a Certificate of Evaluation, students can register at South African universities.
- **No examinations:** Because BTEC assessment is coursework-based, there is **no additional exam fee** or final test to write. Baken Academy ensures that assignments are submitted on time and meet Pearson's standards.



- It is recommended that parents ensure their children complete the IGCSE English for University Studies. This is for the learners own cost.

## Fees and important timelines

Item	Who pays?	Approximate cost (2025)
<b>USAf condoned conditional exemption certificate</b>	Paid by family to USAf Matriculation Board	± R650 (subject to annual adjustment)
<b>SAT registration</b>	Paid by family to the College Board	~US\$60–80 per sitting (plus international test centre fee)
<b>National Benchmark Test (NBT)</b>	Paid by family to the NBT body	R180 for AQL and R200 for MAT per sitting (online)
<b>SAQA evaluation</b>	Paid by family	R2 145 for first qualification; R900 for each additional qualification (approximate) <a href="http://ibn.co.za">ibn.co.za</a> , plus R105 verification fee <a href="http://acsi.co.za">acsi.co.za</a>
<b>Courier costs for original documents</b>	Paid by family	R300–500 (approximate)

## Key websites and resources

To support your child's admission, consult these official resources:

Purpose	Website
<b>USAf Matriculation Board (condoned conditional exemption)</b>	<a href="https://mb.usaf.ac.za">https://mb.usaf.ac.za</a>
<b>National Benchmark Test (registration, dates)</b>	<a href="https://www.nbt.ac.za">https://www.nbt.ac.za</a>
<b>South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) – Certificate of Evaluation application</b>	<a href="https://www.saqa.co.za">https://www.saqa.co.za</a>
<b>SAT registration and test dates (College Board)</b>	<a href="https://satsuite.collegeboard.org">https://satsuite.collegeboard.org</a>
<b>Pearson – BTEC qualifications</b>	<a href="https://qualifications.pearson.com">https://qualifications.pearson.com</a>

## Closing remarks

Baken Akademie strives to provide clear guidance on university admission pathways. The **American Advanced High School Diploma** is a four-year programme with high academic expectations; students must maintain a **GPA of 3.5 or higher** and achieve the **required SAT or NBT scores** to qualify for the USAf exemption. The **BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma** is a vocational qualification equivalent to **three A-levels (NQF 4)**. Both qualifications are widely recognised when accompanied by SAQA verification.

We issue final certificates in **November** to allow families ample time to apply for SAQA evaluation and USAf exemption. There are **no additional examination or certification fees** from the academy, but families must budget for USAf, SAQA, SAT/NBT and courier fees. Universities may provisionally register students while the evaluation process is ongoing. Please contact the academy if you require assistance with the application process.