

You have to ask yourself a lot of questions as you travel through this book. And there are more questions on the horizon! Why? Because only when you question yourself, can you discover exactly what you're after. So here are a few more questions for you...

- Once school's behind you, are you going to study for a tertiary (post-Matric) qualification like a degree or diploma, or are you going to look for a job?

**Remember that a qualification means you'll enter the working world with a good idea of what the job actually entails. You'll have theoretical and practical knowledge of your field – which will make you more employable. Your prospective employer won't have to spend a lot of time and money training you. And you'll have a sense of responsibility and the ability to work independently – characteristics in great demand in the workplace. Convinced?**

- If you're going to study further, are your marks adequate for admission to a tertiary institution and a particular field of study?
- Do you need to educate yourself a little more before you can enter the career of your choice, through short courses perhaps?
- Can you afford to study further and if so, what are your financial resources and limitations (see Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education)? If you decide to become a student and you have the right marks, you'll need to choose between a university, a university of technology (technikon), a further education and training college (technical college) or a private college. You'll need to decide whether to study full-time or complete your course part-time over a longer period.

**Low Matric marks or leaving school before completing Grade 12 needn't stop you from studying further. You can complete Matric by correspondence or study at an institution that doesn't require a Matric certificate for admission.**

You'll also need to determine whether distance learning might work better for you than daily or weekly lectures, tutorials or workshops on campus.

### Diploma vs Degree

At present, university degrees deal with the theoretical aspects of subjects, rather than the practical. They're therefore more suited to the abstract thinker who is looking for a broad foundation upon which to build specific knowledge. Three-, four- or five-year degrees are also required for "direct entry" occupations like medicine, engineering, law and agriculture. But in today's world, it's common knowledge that people learn in different ways and that there are many paths to acquiring necessary and appropriate skills,

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including some less traditional approaches. The more practical tertiary education centres like universities of technology, FET colleges and private colleges therefore offer courses suited to the more hands-on student, with an emphasis on applied knowledge.

## Before You Make Any Decisions

Most students who drop out or fail do so in their first year, for a variety of reasons: they've chosen the wrong course; they face family or financial burdens; it's difficult to attend class; the college approach is too different from what they were used to at school; the work is too difficult; or – and this is the worst one! – they're lazy. So instead of finding out the hard way that studying isn't for you, complete the Student-Worthiness Self-Checklist on the next page and uncover potential problems from the start.

### HE vs FET

**Getting a university degree is referred to as Higher Education (HE), while direct skills training options are categorised as Further Education and Training (FET). Although degrees have typically been regarded as the ultimate after-school achievement, other qualifications can provide you with great career prospects – depending on your goals, abilities and interests.**

### NOTE

#### Instructions

Place a tick under "Yes" if you can honestly answer "yes" to the question. If you can't, or if you're unsure, tick "No". Work quickly. When you've finished, check out the scoring guide at the end of the list.

## 1. Part-Time Study

This is a sensible alternative to over-loading oneself with unrealistic study burdens on the one hand and not studying at all on the other. As a part-time student, you won't necessarily have to complete a full course in one year. So shorter skills-directed courses can be a great way to boost your capabilities.

Short courses are growing in importance as South Africans realise that they must sharpen their career tools to obtain a position, win a promotion or survive in a competitive job market. They are also a popular choice for schoolleavers who develop income-earning skills from courses on radio presenting, first-aid, beauty therapy, fashion, decorating, electronics, data capture, book-keeping, journalism or travel and tourism – to name a few.

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## 2. Distance Learning

Distance learning refers to teaching and learning events in which the student is separated (at a distance) from the instructor or fellow students. In other words, you register at an institution and then study at home. Amazingly enough, learning can be extended to locations away from the classroom by using video, audio, computer, multimedia, or some combination of these with other traditional methods. The great value of distance learning is that it enables you to learn at your own pace and at a time and location that is convenient to you. You also don't have to incur additional relocation, accommodation or travel costs.

Ensure that any training you undertake is in demand in the workplace, acceptable to employers and academically credible. Find out whether equipment and facilities are up-to-date, whether the college can fulfil its promises and whether its examinations are internationally recognised. (See Tertiary Education Credibility.)

### Distance learning requires enormous discipline!

- Other things happen in the background, like work and family. They may distract you. Are you sure that your personal and professional responsibilities won't interfere with your studies?
- You'll be working alone and there'll be little support in the form of educators or peers. It may also take time to get feedback on your work.
- You'll have to motivate and encourage yourself if you want to keep up with your workload. How will you make time to study? Is your employer/family supportive?
- You'll have to find access to a library, post office and computer facilities. These will greatly help your studies.
- You'll also have to use the time management, effective study and goal setting guidelines that have been presented to you elsewhere in JumpStart, if you really, truly want to succeed. For instance, try to form a study group with other people taking the same course.

## 3. Private Colleges

In an emerging economy like South Africa, vocational training and skills-based qualifications are critically important to schoolleavers and employers. But some schoolleavers can't afford to study full-time for long periods. This highlights the need for programmes that are shorter, more affordable, offer "quicker" qualifications and present a greater variety of options when it comes to skills. It also highlights the benefits of private college study.

At a private college, knowledge and proficiency are taught with their application (use) in mind. How do private colleges know what sort of knowledge and proficiency will be applicable in the wide, wide world? Well, they communicate with the different industries as to what the job market requires from graduates. And the result is graduates who are immediately productive in the workplace and who find jobs easily. For a list of registered, recognised and accredited private institutions, visit [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za) and see the section titled "Higher Education Institutions". Or call (012) 312 5411 to inquire about the latest Register of Private Higher Education Institutions.

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## 4. FET Colleges

In addition to offering pre- (N1-N3) and post-Grade 12 (N4-N6) education, FET colleges (formerly “technical colleges”) offer formal and non-formal career-specific programmes of varying length. Theory is linked with practice, so that the student can be productive as soon as he or she is appointed to a position. What’s more, most programmes at FET colleges include entrepreneurship training to prepare students for their own business ventures.

**Many well-qualified individuals also go the FET route to upgrade their skills in an ever-changing and highly competitive job market**

The trick is to decide exactly what you’re looking for and then locate the right institution. With around 50 FET colleges in South Africa you’re spoiled for choice, so phone the FET division of the Department of Education on (012) 312 5303 for a comprehensive list of what’s available in your province - or to confirm the quality of the college to which you’d like to apply.

## 5. Universities of Technology

Many people don’t understand the true nature of South Africa’s former technikons. They imagine that they are inferior to universities; that they’re for people who aren’t “university material”. But nothing could be further from the truth. An education from a university of technology is valuable because it places equal emphasis on theory and practice. It is distinguished from university education not by the quality of its educational product, but rather by its focus.

The basic qualification is the three-year National Diploma, which may be followed by a one-year degree programme. The introduction of degree programmes has resulted in accredited BTech (four-year), MTech (five-year) and DTech (six-year) programmes.

To get into a university of technology, you’ll need a Senior Certificate (Matric) or an equivalent qualification approved by the Committee of Technikon Principals. Certain faculties (departments) also require certain school subjects, a personal interview, a selection test or an entrance examination.

**Be aware that the tertiary education system as we knew it has transformed. Some institutions merged or were incorporated at the beginning of 2004. By the end of 2005, South Africa had six universities of technology with new names, new profiles and new contact details. (See Tertiary Education Transformation for the latest list.)**

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## 6. Universities

Universities have been around for over 800 years and are often described as centres for advanced learning. To be considered by a university, you'll need a Matric with full university exemption. If you're over 23 you can apply for what's known as a "mature age exemption".

But the minimum requirements on their own don't guarantee automatic entrance to any university or course. Many institutions also use a rating system – where you are guaranteed a place if you have the required number of points for the degree in question. Applicants who meet the minimum requirements but don't have the required points may be asked to undergo selection procedures, which include tests and/or interviews.

**Certain university faculties have additional minimum requirements, like a healthy pass for Maths if you want to study Finance or a good grade for English if you're keen on Communications.**

Are your parents going to pay? Will you work and pay yourself? Will you be awarded a bursary or scholarship (see Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education)? Will you apply for a student loan from a bank (see Apply for a Loan)? What's your plan to pay for your university studies? One of the first things you'll need to learn at university is how to manage your time (see Time Management). Deadlines for essays, assignments, tests and exams often seem far off and you'll feel like you've got loads of free time between lectures. Unlike school, no-one will check on your progress. But don't be misled by the apparently "easygoing" student lifestyle. They give you the time because you need it to get things done!

### University is the place for you if you:

- are academically able;
- love to learn;
- enjoy reading;
- are able to communicate effectively;
- are motivated and disciplined;
- and
- have a plan to pay for it!

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## 7. Choosing The Institution

Wherever you decide to study, be sure to select an institution with the facilities you need for all round development.

### **In addition to academic tuition, look out for:**

- aptitude testing;
- career planning or placement counselling;
- student clubs, community involvement, arts, culture and sport;
- well-developed student governance structures;
- student residence facilities; and
- opportunities to visit the campus, like open days.

The geographical location of the tertiary institution is also important. If you live in the south of Johannesburg, for example, a day college in Pretoria might not be practical from a transport perspective. Try to find somewhere close to home. It'll make attending classes easier, more convenient and more appealing. Even if you're planning to live on campus, distance from home is a factor. Some students dislike being far from a loving home and family, while others thrive on independence.

## 8. Campus Tours

A campus tour is a fantastic way to experience an institution. And it helps to turn brochure information into reality. So look out for open days – usually advertised on the radio, in newspapers or on street-poles – or phone the institution itself to ask if you can have a private visit.

### **When on the campus tour, have questions ready to get the best out of your visit:**

- ask about campus culture and extramural (after-study) activities
- ask about academic support, financial support, library facilities, computer facilities and the size of classes
- ask about the international recognition of courses
- chat to existing students to hear their opinions on academics, sport, clubs and societies and student government; and
- If you want to, ask for personal meetings with admissions staff, career counsellors and lecturers

**Tertiary institutions are selling a product, education, and if you want to buy their product, you have every right to know what you're getting for your money!**

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The Minister of Education and other important people recently decided to transform tertiary education in South Africa, by merging or incorporating the country's public institutions.

## Mergers vs Incorporations

A merger involves the combining of two or more universities or technikons into one new institution, with a new identity, brand and administration. An example is the merger of the Rand Afrikaans University and Technikon Witwatersrand into the University of Johannesburg. Incorporation is when one institution becomes part of another larger one, but loses its own name and administration. Vista University's campuses, for instance, have been incorporated into other larger universities and technikons, so that Vista itself has ceased to exist.

## What Will The Results Of The Transformation Be?

Of a total of 36 tertiary education institutions, there'll now be 21. Of 21 universities, there'll now be 11, while the 15 former technikons will become six universities of technology. There'll also be four comprehensive institutions. A university plus a technikon equals a comprehensive institution.

## Why?

- to provide potential students with greater access to education;
- to enable tertiary education to better represent South African diversity;
- to address language issues by offering courses in more of the official languages;
- to make a South African education more globally competitive;
- to develop a knowledge economy (which runs on knowledge, information and skills as much as on money); and
- to place greater emphasis on research.

## When Will The Transformation Happen?

The tertiary education system has already begun to change, as some institutions merged or were incorporated at the beginning of 2004. By the end of 2005, South Africa's educational overhaul was completed. But it could take another one to two years before the effects become obvious, as new institutions need time to adjust to their new identities, cultures, student bodies, staff and courses.

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Here are the new institutions, so far:

<b>Border Technikon</b> P O Box 1421 5200 EAST LONDON	Tel: 043 708 9200 Fax: 043 708 5276	<b>Eastern Cape Technikon</b> Tel: 047 401 2000 Private Bag X3182 (East London) Tel: 043 726 9026 4960 BUTTERWORTH Fax: 047 492 0721
<b>Cape Peninsula University of Technology</b> P O Box 652 8000 CAPE TOWN	Tel: 021 460 3911 Fax: 021 460 3700	<b>Mangosuthu Technikon</b> P O Box 12363 4026 JACOBS
<b>Central University of Technology Free State</b> Private Bag X20539 9300 BLOEMFONTEIN	Tel: 051 507 3911 Fax: 051 507 3199	<b>Tshwane University of Technology</b> Private Bag X680 0001 PRETORIA
<b>Durban Institute of Technology</b> P O Box 1334 4000 DURBAN	Tel: 031 308 5111 Fax: 031 308 5194	<b>Vaal University of Technology</b> Private Bag X021 1900 VANDERBIJLPARK
<b>University of Cape Town</b> Private Bag 7701 RONDEBOSCH	Tel: 021 650 2105/6 Fax: 021 650 5100	<b>Rhodes University</b> P O Box 94 6140 GRAHAMSTOWN
<b>University of Fort Hare</b> Private Bag X1314 5700 ALICE	Tel: 040 653 2312 Fax: 040 653 1338	<b>University of South Africa</b> P O Box 392 0003 UNISA, PRETORIA
<b>University of the Free State</b> P O Box 339 9300 BLOEMFONTEIN	Tel: 051 401 2114 Fax: 051 401 3669	<b>University of Stellenbosch</b> Private Bag X1 7602 MATIELAND
<b>University of Johannesburg</b> P O Box 524 2006 AUCKLAND PARK	Tel: 011 489 2911 Fax: 011 489 2260	<b>University of Transkei</b> Private Bag X1 5100 UMTATA
<b>University of KwaZulu-Natal</b> Private Bag X54001 4001 DURBAN	Tel: 031 260 1111 Fax: 031 262 2192	<b>University of Venda</b> Private Bag X2220 0950 THOHOYANDOU
<b>University of Limpopo</b> Private Bag X1106 0727 SOVENGA	Tel: 015 268 2140 Fax: 015 267 0142	<b>University of the Western Cape</b> Private Bag X17 7535 BELLVILLE
<b>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</b> P O Box 1600 6000 PORT ELIZABETH	Tel: 041 504 2075/2011 Fax: 041 504 2699	<b>University of the Witwatersrand</b> Private Bag 3 2050 WITS
<b>North West University</b> Private Bag X6001 2520 POTCHEFSTROOM	Tel: 018 299 2601 Fax: 018 299 2603	<b>University of Zululand</b> Private Bag X1001 3886 kwaDLANGEZWA
<b>University of Pretoria</b> University of Pretoria PRETORIA 0002 Tel: 012 420 4111 Fax: 012 420 5141		

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## Tertiary Education Credibility

Picture this scenario: You're accepted to study computer literacy at a small private computer school. You're excited. You work hard. You spend a hefty sum of money completing your course. But when you look for a job, you're told that your qualification isn't worth the paper it's printed on!

Students are often unaware that some small colleges border on the dubious and that the courses they offer are worth little or nothing at all. Which is why it's very important for you, as a potential student, to check out the credibility of the institution you'd like to attend.

Enter the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the body that oversees the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF is a system that ensures that all institutions, public and private, are accredited and recognised and that their courses – whether certificates, diplomas or degrees – meet certain standards.

SAQA has placed a list on its website, citing all private institutions that are registered, recognised and accredited. They also list provisionally registered institutions and those whose registration has lapsed. Visit [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za) and see the section titled "Higher Education Institutions" for the necessary info. If the school you're applying to isn't on SAQA's list, it didn't make the grade. And if you

### **SAQA should be your first stop when applying to study at a lesser-known private institution**

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#### **NOTE**

**If the school you're applying to isn't on  
SAQA's list, it didn't make the grade. And if  
you study there, neither will you!**

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