



# The National Benchmark Tests:

The students of 2025

**Analyses of NBT trends for the current, 2025 student cohort**

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Assessments



# What are the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs)?

The primary purpose of the NBT is to promote student success in higher education through the assessment of an applicant's academic readiness for university.

They complement and support, rather than replace or duplicate the National Senior Certificate.

## The tests are:

- Academic Literacy (AL)
- Quantitative Literacy (QL)
- Mathematics (MAT)

The AL & QL tests are combined into one multiple-choice test.

The Mathematics test is also a multiple-choice test.



# What are the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs)?

AL - Students' capacity to engage successfully with the demands of academic study in the medium of instruction within the context of higher education.

QL - Students' ability to manage situations or solve problems of a quantitative nature in real contexts relevant to higher education.

MAT - Students' depth of understanding and knowledge relevant to mathematically demanding disciplines within the context of the NSC curriculum (tests are explicitly designed to probe higher education competencies).



# NBT Benchmarks

## DEGREE Benchmark Performance Levels (CURRENT, SS2019)

Benchmark Performance Levels	AL		QL		MAT	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Proficient	69	100	70	100	69	100
Intermediate	35	68	40	69	37	68
Basic	0	34	0	39	0	36

## DIPLOMA & HIGHER CERTIFICATE Benchmark Performance Levels (CURRENT, SS2019)

Benchmark Performance Levels	AL		QL		MAT	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Proficient	61	100	66	100	63	100
Intermediate	33	60	34	65	33	62
Basic	0	32	0	33	0	32

# What is the difference between the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and the National Benchmark Tests (NBT)?

## THE NSC

In respect of each subject:

To what extent has a Grade 12 student met the Curriculum Statement expectations as expressed in the Subject Assessment Guidelines?

## THE NBT

In respect of each domain:

To what extent is a school-leaver, who is applying to University, prepared for the core academic literacy, quantitative literacy and mathematics demands of higher education study?

# How do institutions use an applicant's NBT scores?

The NBTs provide additional information to:

- **Help make decisions about an applicant's access to university.**
  - NBT results are used in addition to, and do not replace school leaving academic performance and exam results.
  - For certain faculties (Health Sciences), NBT results make up a specific proportion of an overall admission score.
  - NBT results may be used as an indicator of eligibility for an early offer (in addition to the Grade 11 results) or an Entrance Scholarship.
- **For placement within the university.**
  - May guide recommendations for additional support, augmented courses or extended degree programmes.
- **To help develop curricula within the universities.**
  - NBT scores for the cohort allow teaching to be responsive to student needs and guide and inform curricular changes.



# Higher Education Landscape in SA

Nationally only 32% of students at university finish in regulation time (DHET: Post-school Education and Training Monitor, 2024)

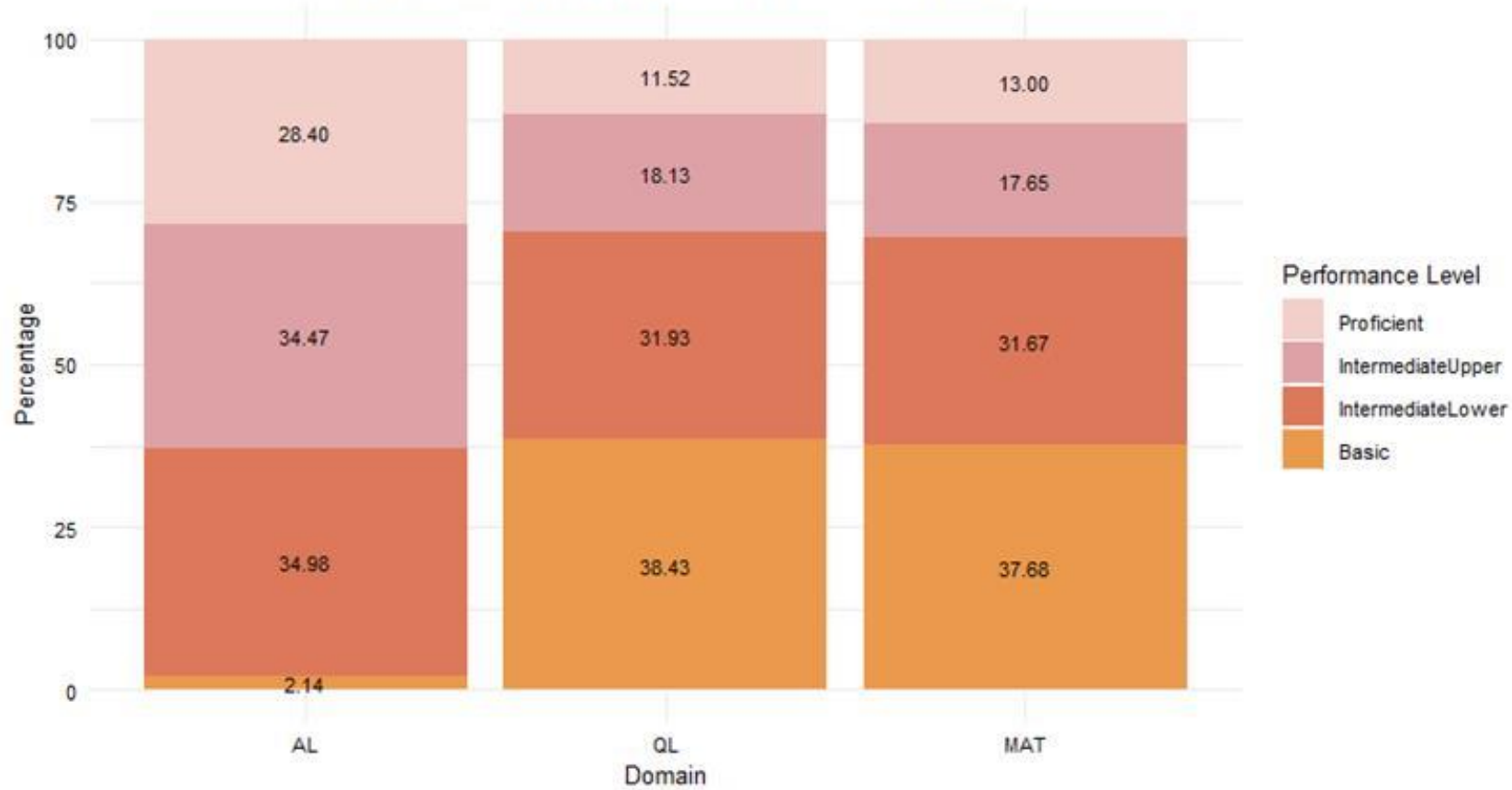
## Cost of failure:

- University Fees 2025
  - R45K to R110K per year
- Dropping out
- Debt!

NATIONAL TOTAL: CONTACT								
Intake year	Graduates (%)							
Year 1	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
2009	25.0	45.6	58.4	64.7	68.1	70.2	71.5	72.6
2010	27.9	49.4	62.4	68.4	71.6	73.4	74.7	75.7
2011	28.6	50.2	63.3	68.9	71.9	73.9	75.2	76.4
2012	29.1	50.4	63.1	68.8	72.0	73.9	75.4	76.4
2013	30.4	51.7	63.7	69.5	72.9	75.0	76.3	
2014	31.1	52.0	64.2	70.2	73.6	75.7		
2015	31.9	53.6	65.8	71.9	75.1			
2016	32.2	53.5	66.9	72.3				
2017	31.0	54.7	67.9					Data not available
2018	30.8	54.6						
2019	31.6							

# NBT Performance indicators: 2025 applicants to HE

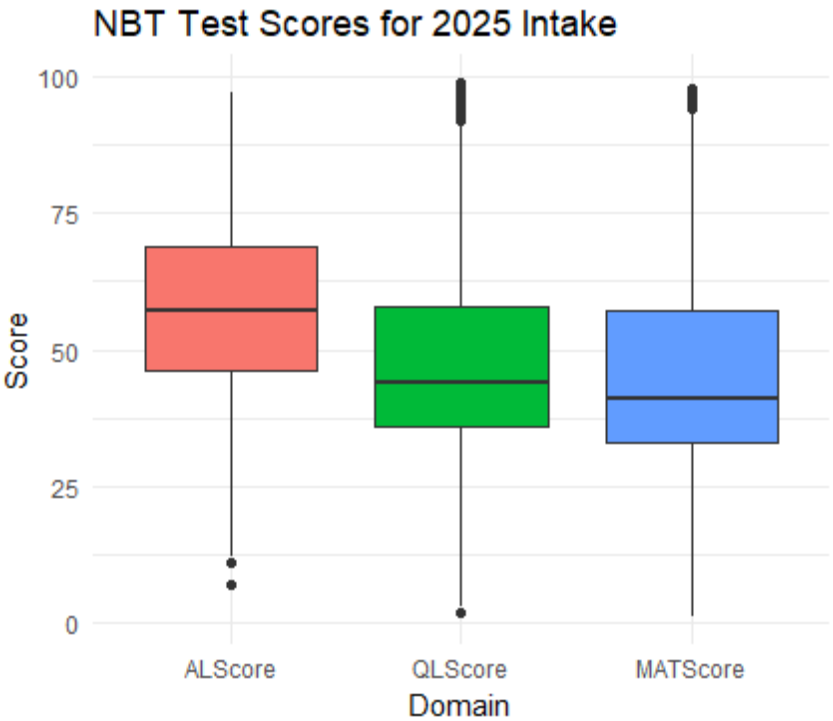
2025 Intake - NBT Performance Levels for AL, QL, and MAT



Domain	Basic	Intermediate Lower	Intermediate Upper	Proficient	Total
AL	1095 (2.1%)	17902 (35.0%)	17641 (34.5%)	14534 (28.4%)	51172 (100%)
QL	19661 (38.4%)	16338 (31.9%)	9275 (18.1%)	5892 (11.5%)	51166 (100%)
MAT	15107 (37.7%)	12698 (31.7%)	7076 (17.6%)	5213 (13.0%)	40094 (100%)



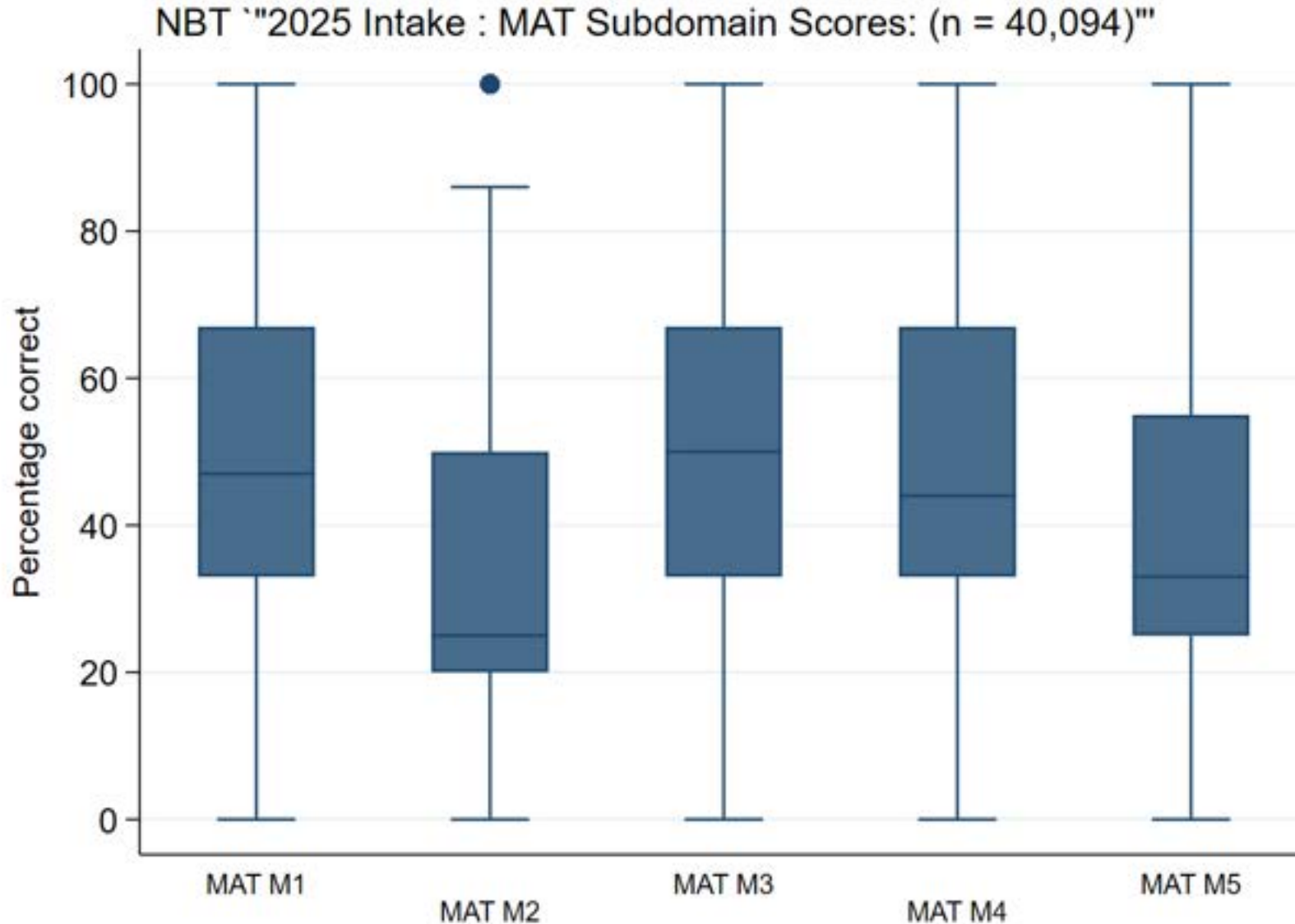
# NBT Performance indicators: 2025 applicants to HE



Statistic	ALScore	QLScore	MATScore
N	51172	51166	40094
Mean	58	48	46
SD	14	15	17
Min	7	2	1
Q1	46	36	33
Median	57	44	41
Q3	69	58	57
Max	97	99	98



# NBT MAT subdomains: 2025 applicants to HE



M1 - Algebraic processing: Involves recognising and manipulating patterns, sequences, and algebraic expressions, solving exponential equations, and interpreting measurement-related problems.

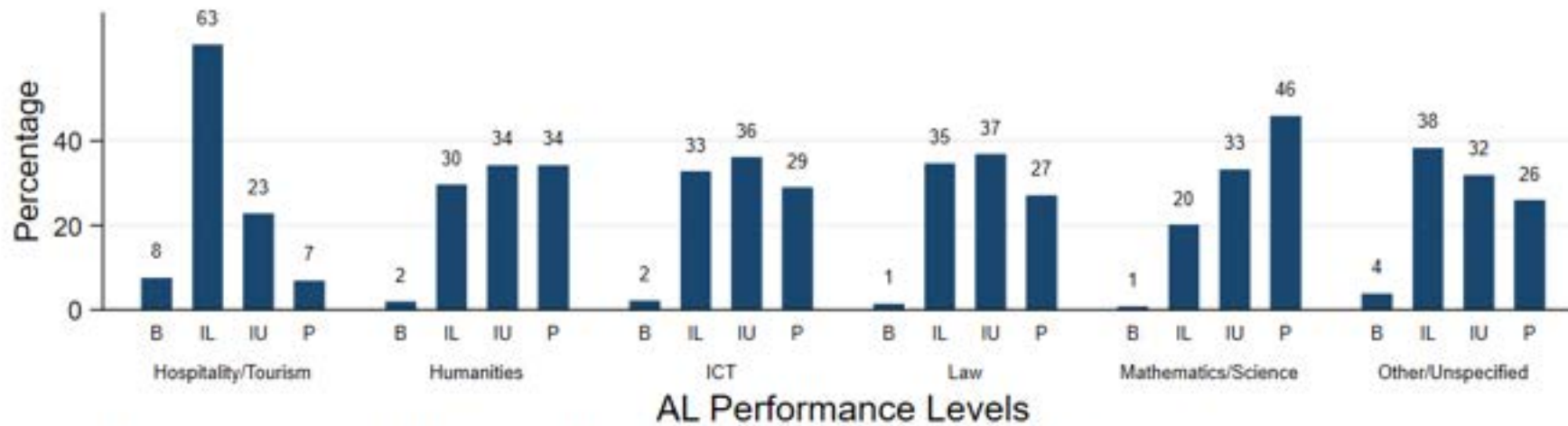
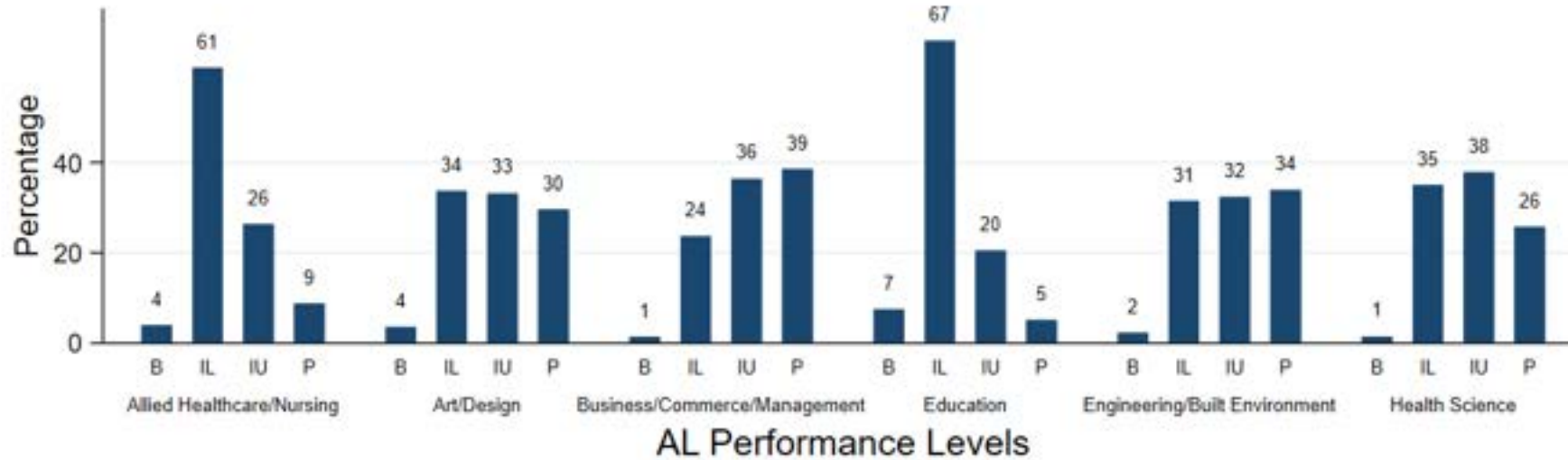
M2 - Number sense: Encompasses operations with various types of numbers, understanding number systems, and performing financial and probability calculations without the need for calculators.

M3 - Functions and graphs: Focuses on understanding and analysing functions and their properties, interpreting and solving related graph problems, and applying principles of differential calculus.

M4 - Trigonometric functions and graphs: Involves solving trigonometric equations, understanding trigonometric identities, and applying trigonometric concepts to two- and three-dimensional problems.

M5 - Geometric reasoning: Includes understanding properties of shapes, calculating perimeter, area, and volume, and linking geometric properties with algebraic concepts.

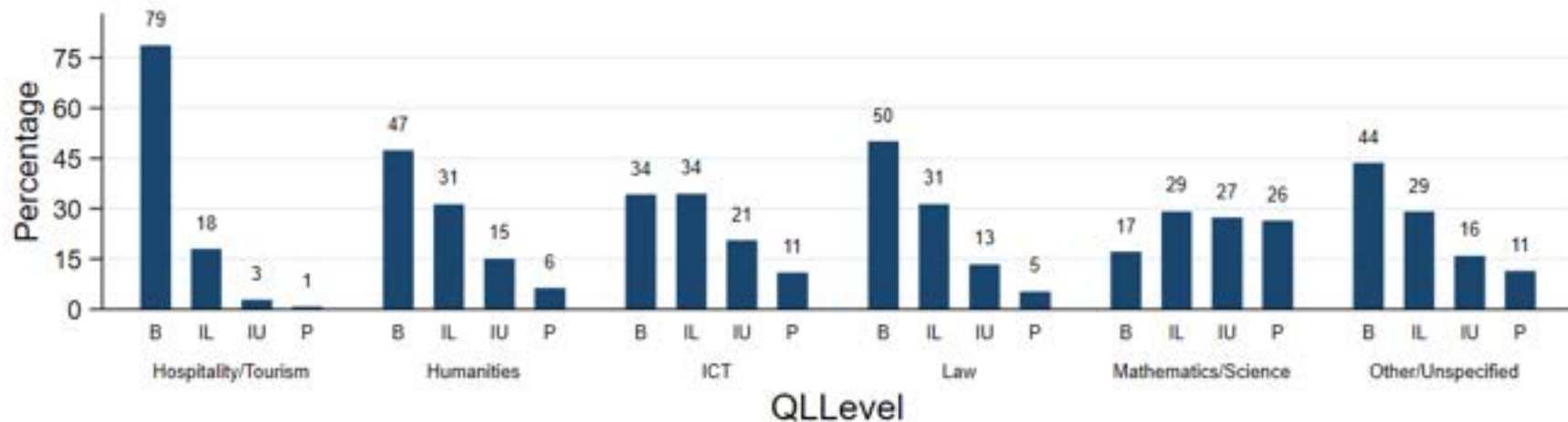
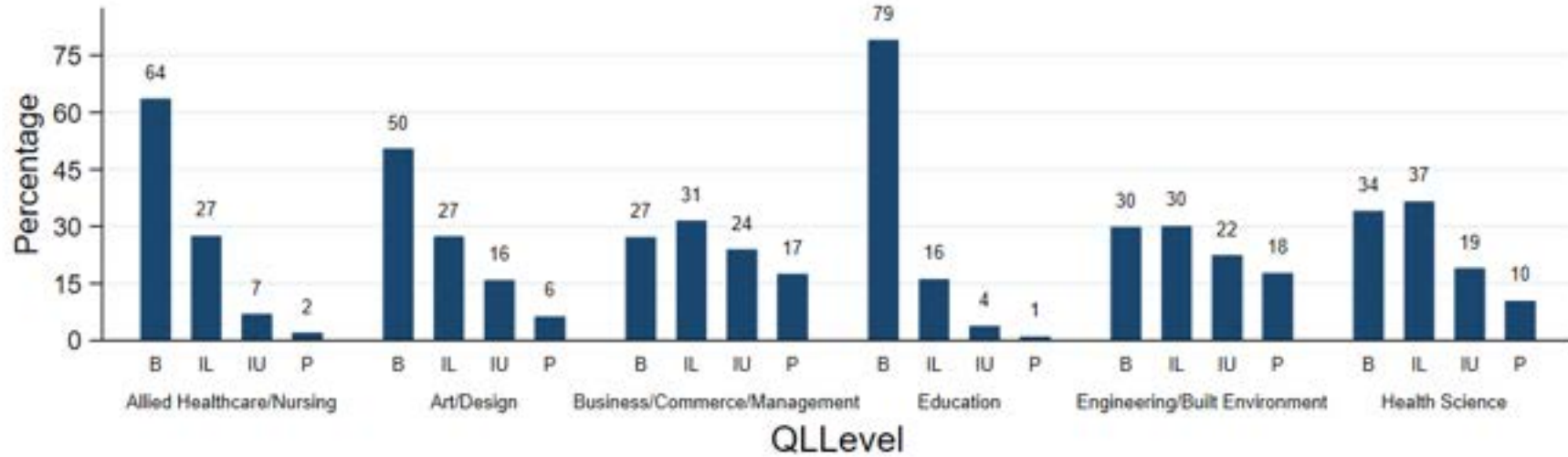
# NBT Academic Literacy performance levels by intended faculty of study, intake 2025



B = Basic; IL = Intermediate Lower; IU = Intermediate Upper; P = Proficient; (n = 51,172)



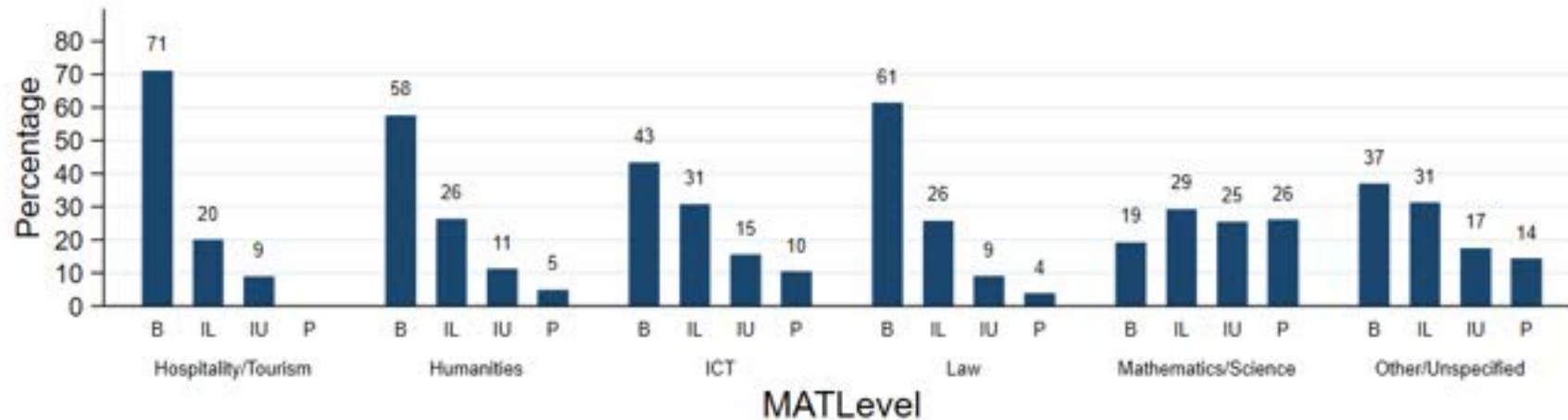
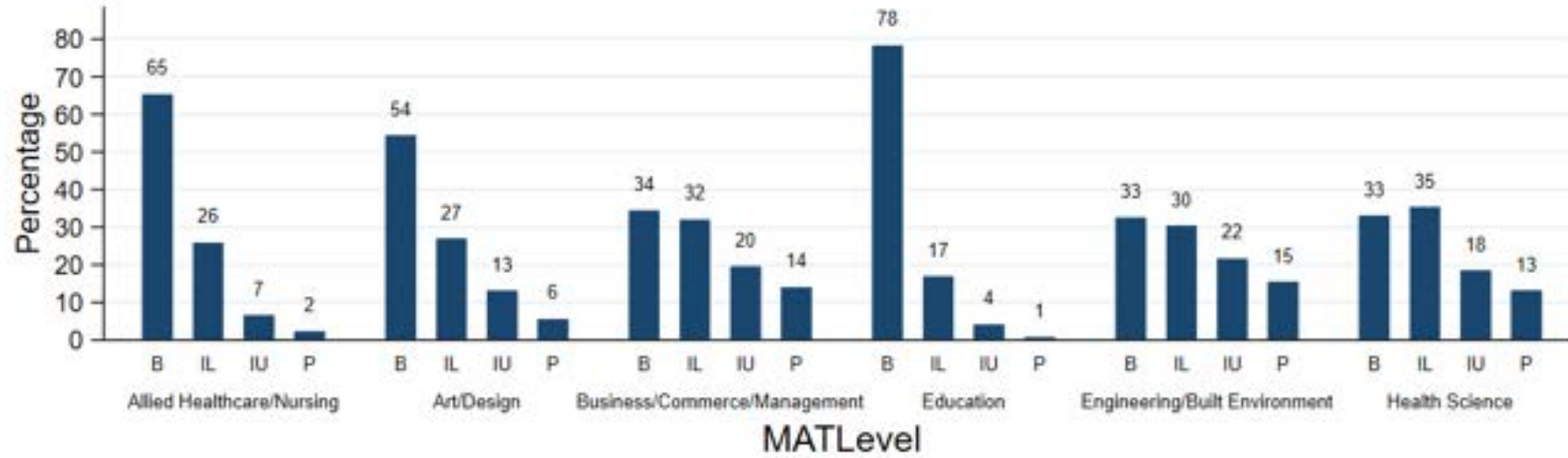
# NBT Quantitative Literacy performance levels by intended faculty of study, intake 2025



B = Basic; IL = Intermediate Lower; IU = Intermediate Upper; P = Proficient; *n* = 51,166



# NBT Mathematics performance levels by intended faculty of study, intake 2025



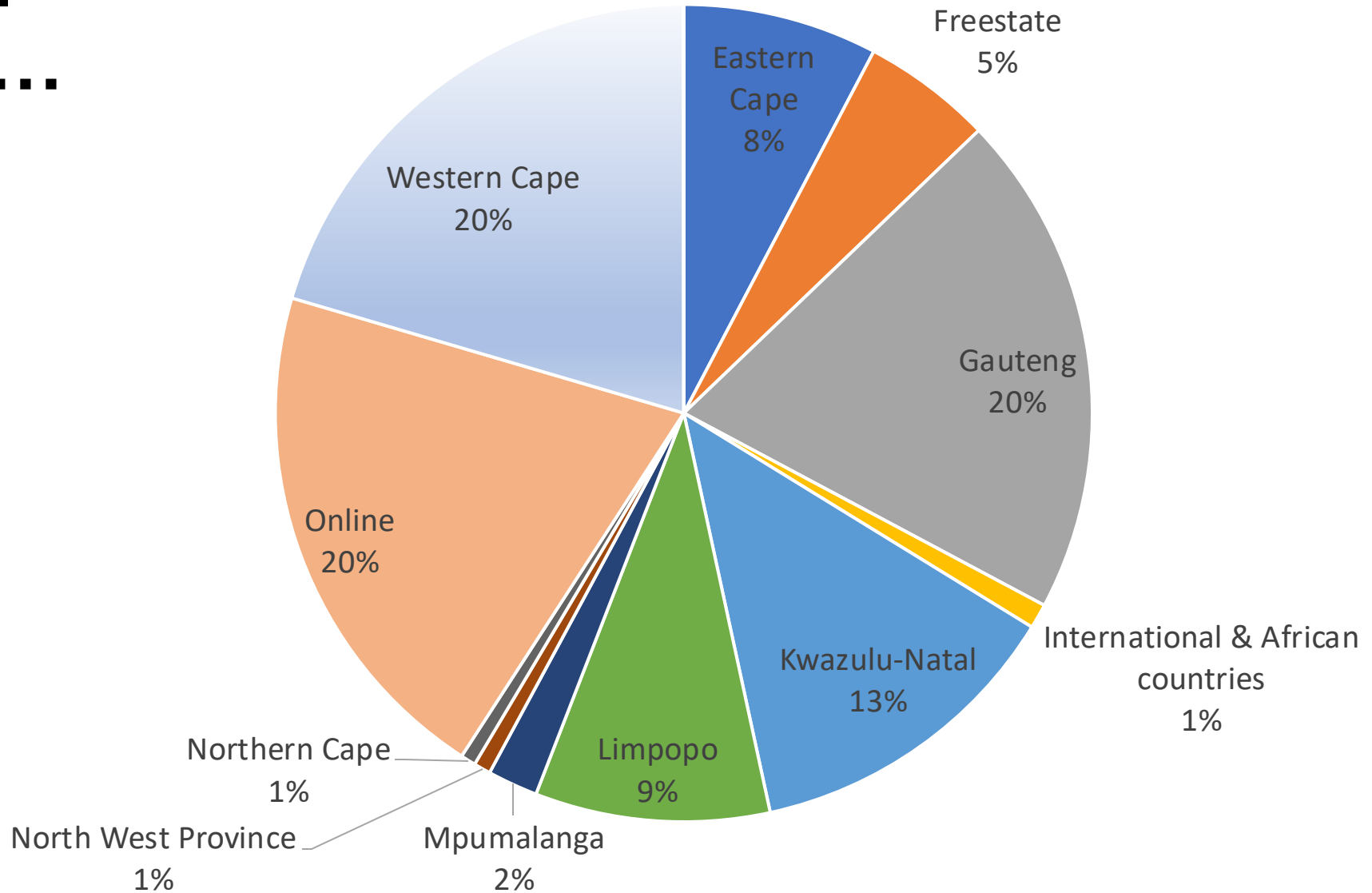
B = Basic; IL = Intermediate Lower; IU = Intermediate Upper; P = Proficient;  $n = 40,094$



# NBT Provincial snapshot...

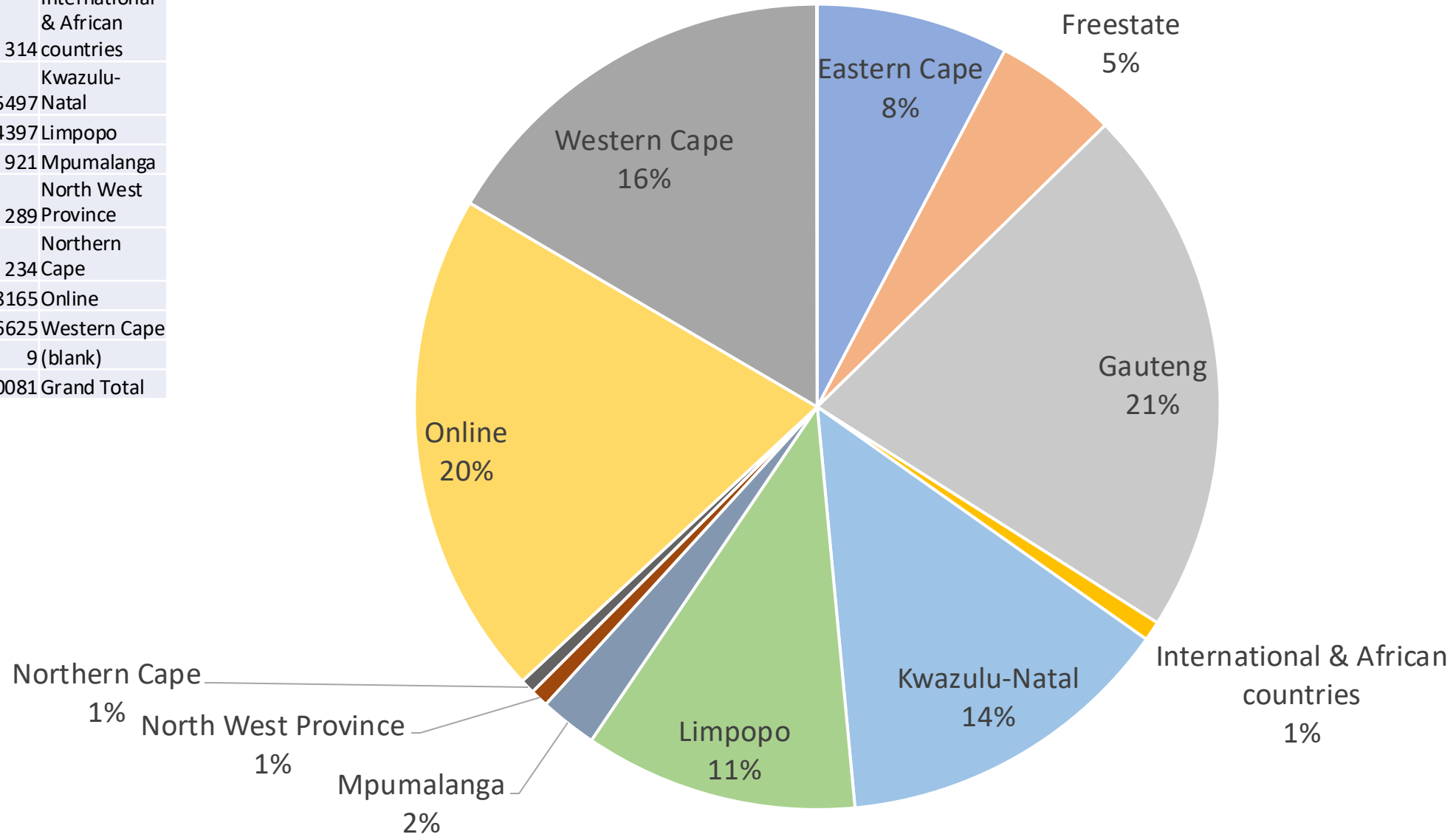
Grand Total	Province
3931	Eastern Cape
2624	FreeState
10186	Gauteng
497	International & African countries
6553	Kwazulu-Natal
4742	Limpopo
1017	Mpumalanga
342	North West
304	Northern Cape
10409	Online
10433	Western Cape
10	(blank)
51048	

## Number of AQL writers per province

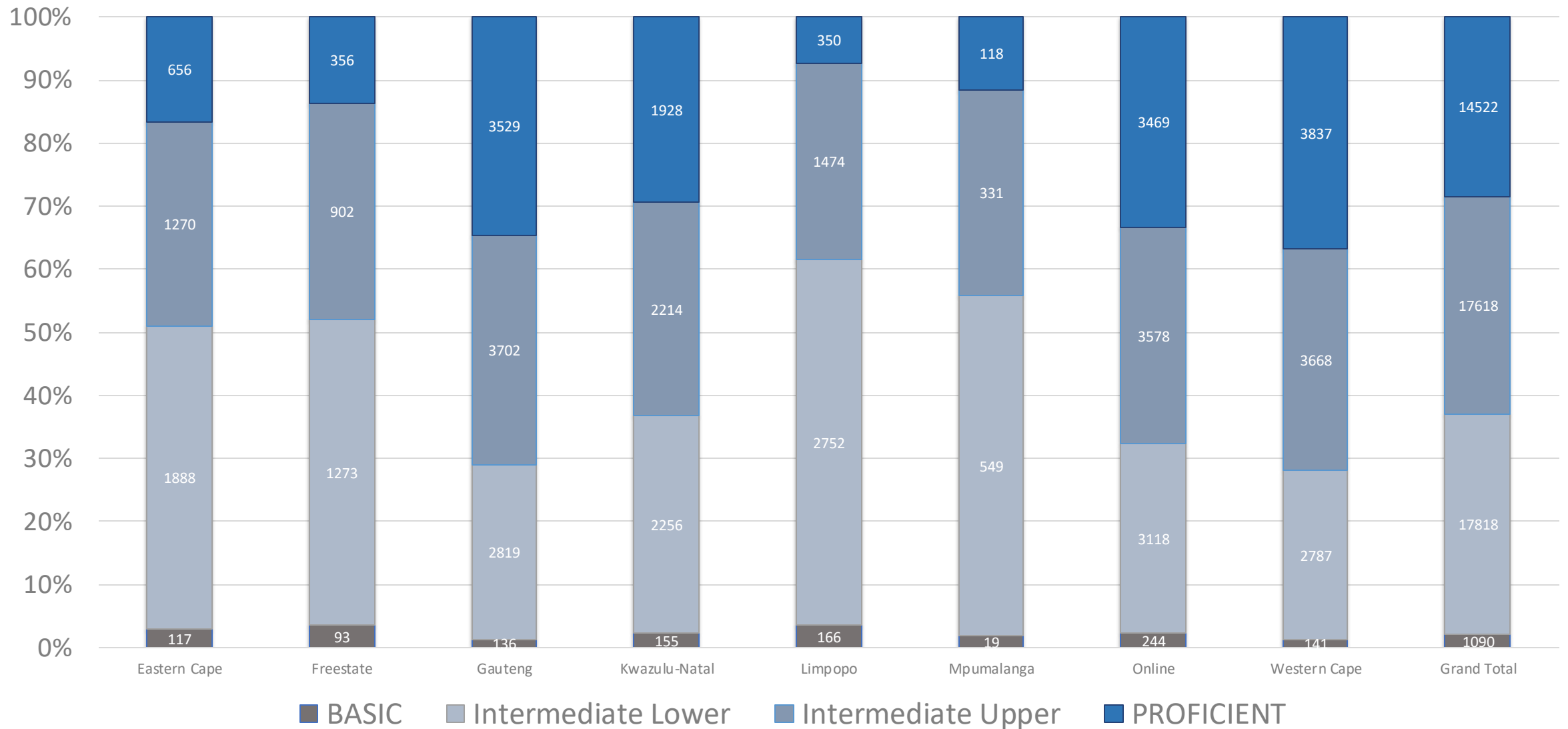


# Number of MAT writers per province

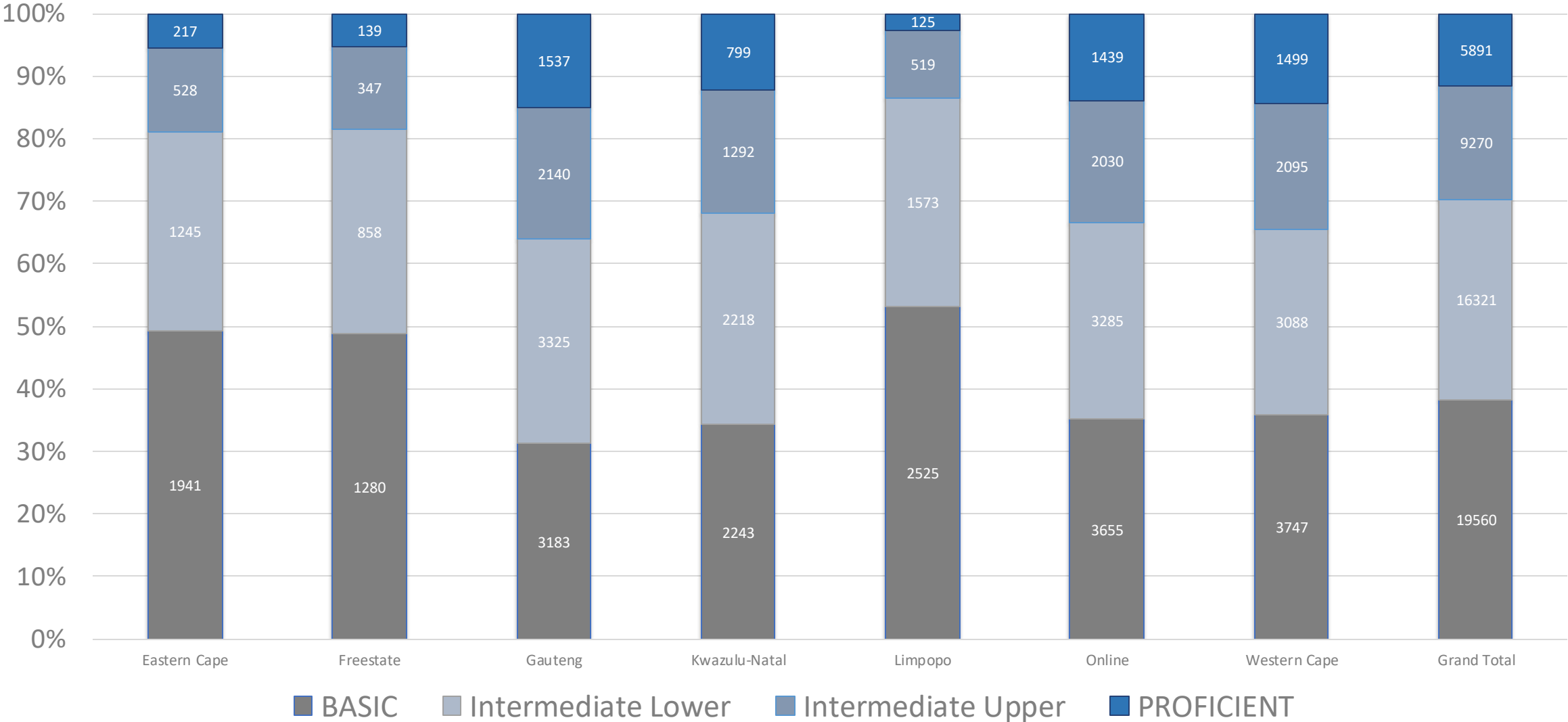
MAT TOTAL	PROVINCE
3091	Eastern Cape
1988	Freestate
8551	Gauteng
314	International & African countries
5497	Kwazulu-Natal
4397	Limpopo
921	Mpumalanga
289	North West Province
234	Northern Cape
8165	Online
6625	Western Cape
9	(blank)
40081	Grand Total



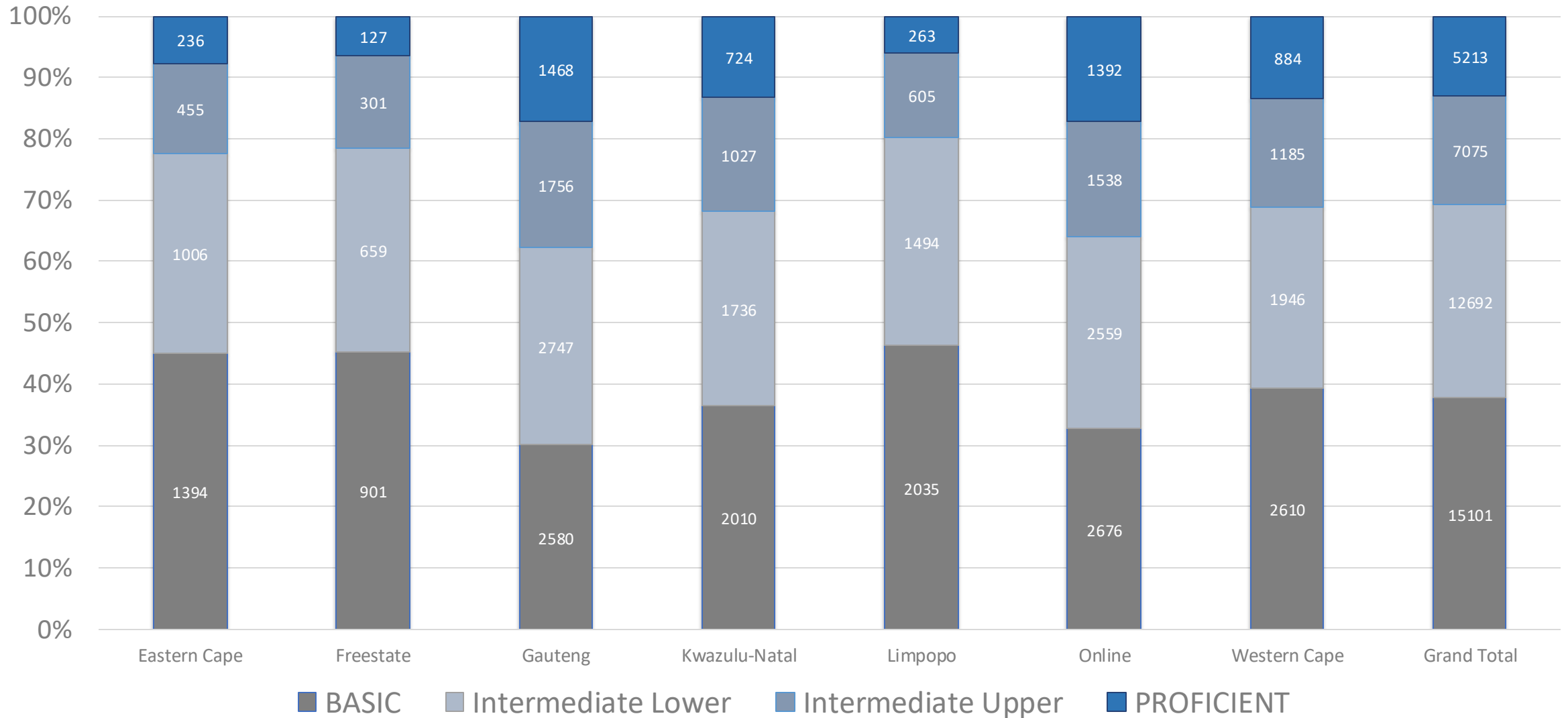
## Academic Literacy Benchmarks: selected provinces (number of writers > 1000)



# Quantitative Literacy Benchmarks: selected provinces (number of writers > 1000)



## Mathematics Benchmarks: selected provinces (number of writers > 1000)





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# Thank you for attending this presentation

**NBT Project Website:** [www.nbt.ac.za](http://www.nbt.ac.za)

**NBT Project Email:** [nbt@uct.ac.za](mailto:nbt@uct.ac.za)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/ NationalBenchmarkTestSA](https://facebook.com/NationalBenchmarkTestSA)

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