



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

MATRICULANTS' CHECKLIST FOR APPLYING TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

31 August 2015: With the year already past the half-way mark, many matriculants are now at the point in their lives where they need to make a decision about their tertiary studies. While many matriculants generally have a fair idea of what career they would like to pursue after school, it is important that they weigh up all their options to ensure they are making the right decision and that they follow the correct steps when submitting their application forms.

This is according to Rama Govenden, Executive: HR at PPS, who says many matriculants do not realise the significance of the decision they will make at the end of their Grade 12 year, as this will have an impact on the rest of their lives. "It is vital that matriculants do as much research as possible when they consider what they want to pursue as a career and what they need to study to achieve these career goals."

Govenden provides the following tips for matriculants when they apply for acceptance at a tertiary institution:

Speak to experts about the industry

At this stage of their lives, school learners have usually identified an area in which they excel and that they enjoy. This is normally a good indication of which career path to follow, but it is very difficult for a high school pupil to have a realistic view of what this career path will entail. It is important to speak to experts or mentors who have been in that specific field for a few years, to give the learner an overview of what the job entails on a day-to-day basis.

It is also advisable that learners visit career consultants to give them advice on their career path. This process involves conducting a battery of assessments on the learner to identify areas that they could consider as a career.

The importance of holiday jobs where learners can take part in shadow work for a company in their field of interest can never be under-estimated. This way the scholar will be able to determine whether they are truly interested in studying further in that field.

Attend open days

Matriculants should strive to attend as many tertiary institutions open days as they possibly can. This will allow them to fully explore the various degrees and graduate opportunities available in the country. By having a full scope of options to choose from, they can empower themselves to make informed decisions about what they want to study and which institution will provide the best academic path to achieve their goals.

It is important to note that there are different types of tertiary institutions, namely universities, universities of technology (the old technikons) and TVET (technical and vocational education and training) colleges, previously called FET colleges.

Broadly speaking, universities are institutions of higher education and research, whereas universities of technology offer technological career directed education programmes (such as Bachelor of Technology), while TVET colleges offer technical programmes to prepare learners for a range of jobs (such as courses in artisan training, like carpentry). The last two institutions listed normally have a practical workplace based component structured into their programmes, whereas university programmes do not embrace this aspect. It is also important to do an occupational programme that potentially readies the individual for a job rather than standalone skills programmes.

Conduct research about jobs available in the sector

While it is very exciting when a learner shows interest in specific career choices, it is important that the individual also conducts thorough research about job opportunities available in that sector once they have graduated.

Matriculants should preferably opt to study in a field where there is a serious demand for professionals, in this way they can increase their chances of finding a job after graduation and decrease the likelihood of having to leave the country and work overseas or remaining unemployed.

Application deadline dates

It is crucial for matriculants to pay attention to the various application deadline dates of the different tertiary institutions they are considering for their studies. Closing dates for applications are not the same for all institutions and it is therefore vital that applicants ensure they abide by these dates. Missing the application deadline could lead to an increased risk of not being able to study at their first choice of tertiary institutions.

Costs and tuition fees

A problem that many matriculants face is the issue of how their studies will be funded. Not all pupils are fortunate enough to have a family member who can pay for their tuition fees. Most matriculants have to take out student loans, apply for scholarships or bursaries or work in part-time jobs to fund their studies.

It is therefore very important that matriculants analyse their financial situation. As there are also deadlines to submit applications for student bursaries and scholarships, those who wish to apply need to submit their documents as soon as possible. Those applying for student loans need to conduct further research to ascertain which credit provider will fit their financial needs and have the funds ready as soon as their first payment is due.

“While many matriculants do not realise the responsibilities they will face when they enter the student world, it is vital for them to keep these factors in mind while they are applying to study at a tertiary institution to ensure a smooth process,” concludes Govenden.