

Important Changes in SATS' Degree Offerings

SATS was originally accredited for a four-year, 480-credit Bachelor of Theology (BTh 4) exiting on NQF 8 with a built-in three-year, 360-credit Bachelor of Theology (BTh 3) on NQF 7 (see Table 1 for a list of NQF levels). In other words, we could offer both a three-year and a four-year BTh. Due to changes in the higher education rules in South Africa, it is no longer possible to continue with that structure. Therefore, we are in the process of changing our offerings to a three-year Bachelor of Theology on NQF 7 and a Bachelor of Theology Honours (BTh Hons) on NQF 8. We have already received accreditation from the Council on Higher Education for the BTh 3 and BTh Hons, and we are now finalising some of the details of making the transition. We have been told all the details should be wrapped up by the end of April. Therefore, from around May 2011 (God willing) we will discontinue the BTh 4 and replace it with the BTh 3 and BTh Hons combination.

Table 1: Qualifications by NQF Level

NQF 10	PhD (360 credits)		Post-graduate
NQF 9	MTh (180 credits)		
NQF 8	BTh Hons (120 credits)	BTh 4 (480 credits)	Under-graduate
NQF 7	BTh 3 (360 credits)		

Please note in the diagram that although the BTh 4 and the BTh Hons both exit on NQF 8, the Honours is classed as a postgraduate degree, whereas the BTh 4 is an undergraduate degree. For this reason, the BTh Hons is deemed a more prestigious award than the BTh 4.

What this means for you

1. If you are registered for a BTh 4, and you are in the first or second year of your degree, we will change your registration to BTh 3 in May. You would have the option to continue with the BTh Hons, so you lose nothing. In fact, you if you complete four years of study (480 credits), you could then get two qualifications instead of one.
2. If you are registered for a BTh 4, and you are in the third year of your degree, you can change to the BTh 3 or continue with the BTh 4. If you choose to continue, you will have until the end of 2015 to complete your programme.
3. If you are registered for the BTh 4, and you are in the final year of your degree, you will have until the end of 2015 to complete your programme.

4. If you apply for a BTh 4 between now and May, you will initially be registered for the BTh 4, but your registration will be changed to the BTh 3 in May.

5. If you apply for the BTh Hons between now and May, you will initially be registered into the final year of the BTh 4, but your registration will be amended to the BTh Hons in May. These two qualifications exit at the same level, so there is no risk to you. The credits you earn while registered in the BTh 4 will count towards your BTh Hons.

Questions and answers

Why did SATS decide to make this change? We had no choice. We previously had a BTh 4 with an optional exit point after three years, so we could offer our students three-year and four-year BTh degrees. However, changes in the South African qualification structure made it impossible for us to continue with that option. Our only viable option was to replace the BTh 4 with a normal BTh 3 and a BTh Hons. With that said, we are excited about the change because the addition of an Honours degree adds significantly to our offerings.

Is there any chance the change of programmes will not happen? No, the change is guaranteed. We have already received a formal letter of approval from the Council on Higher Education.

Is the change certain to be approved by May 2011? It is likely, but not certain. The CHE have informed us that their part will be finished by 24 Feb. 2011, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) should send our certificate by April. The uncertainty relates to how long the DHET takes to send our new certificate.

Is there any risk to me if I register now? Absolutely none! We already have formal approval for the two new programmes. Although you will initially be registered in the BTh 4, the change of registration to the BTh 3 or BTh Hons is guaranteed.

Should I change to the BTh 3 if I am in the third year? If you are in the third year of the BTh 4, we strongly advise you to change. You can graduate with a BTh, and do the BTh Hons if you want to continue. For the same amount of work, you get two qualifications, and the BTh Hons is a postgraduate degree (i.e. a little more prestigious).

What if I am in the first- or second-year of the BTh 4, and I don't want to change to the BTh 3? You will be allowed to continue with the BTh 4, but you will only have until the end of 2015 to complete it. We strongly advise you to change to the BTh 3.