



This issue

AP Credits Introduction & Benefits **P.1**

When, Who, What & Where? **P.2**

Difficulty thereof & Conclusion **P.3**

Earning Advanced Placement Program® (AP) credits

Introduction

The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little bit 'extra'. With the American High School Diploma your students have the opportunity to go the extra mile and distinguish themselves academically from their peers.

In **DiplomaTimes_{RSA} #03** we provided an overview of 'Earning college credits during high school in the context of South Africa'. We discussed:

- Potential benefits of earning college credits during high school.
- Which credit options are available?
- When and by whom these credits can be sourced.
- The transferability of these credits.

In this issue, we'll delve deeper into one of these credit-by-exam options, namely the Advanced Placement Program®.

What is the AP's?

AP is an abbreviation for the Advanced Placement Program®. This programme was developed by the US CollegeBoard™ to enable high school students to pursue college-level introductory courses while still in high school, and are often taught in Grades 10-12.

Since its inception in the mid-1950, the program has grown

vastly, and currently there are 38 AP courses offered in seven subject categories.

The CollegeBoard™ does not mandate a specific curriculum for these courses, and you may choose the best available resource for your student.



The AP subjects each culminate in a standardized exam taken worldwide in the first two weeks of May each year.

Only a limited number of institutions offer AP courses, and these courses must be audited and approved by the

CollegeBoard™ in order to be designated as such on a student's transcript.

Potential benefits

In our previous issue we reflected on the potential benefits of earning college credits during high school. Let's take a look at which of these are relevant to APs:

Preparation for college / university. Taking college level courses during high school will ease the transition from high school to university, and various studies have confirmed that these students are more likely to continue with tertiary studies and achieve better outcomes. **Specifically, as APs**

Parents / students roles

Consider the following:

1. Will AP courses add value to your Graduation Plan based on your student's unique future plans?
2. Apply Pre-AP courses or its framework during Grades 9-10 to provide students with the content, skills and practice for AP success.
3. Ensure that your curriculum provider is aligned with the specific course and exam description as provided by the CollegeBoard™.
4. Confirm when and where the AP examination will take place.
5. Register and pay for your exam by mid-November of the year preceeding the exam.
6. Provide the AP exam results to your Diploma Provider and when applying to USAf / universities.

Cost of APs in SA

1. **Course material / preparation:** dependent on your choice of resource(s).
2. **AP exam costs:**
 - * For AP courses offered at AISCT: R3,000.
 - * For AP courses not offered at AISCT: R4,500.
3. **Logistical costs:** getting to / from the exam centre.



are academically rigorous high school courses, they develop and enhance higher order academic skill, knowledge, and student confidence in a particular field with the knowledge that they can master university level courses.

Strengthening your transcript. As a result of its worldwide recognition and well-known rigor, APs provide a great way for your transcript to stand out in university applications. This is especially important for the more prestigious international universities where admissions officers will look for challenging courses.

Focus on what you love or explore potential fields of interest before the pressure is there to declare a major (field of study). With the current 38 AP courses offered, you can really focus on your field of interest and grow your knowledge and skill base.

Cost and time. College credits are usually substantially cheaper to accumulate during high school years than as a college student, and can help the student to graduate on time or even early. Earning a qualifying score of 3+ at an AP subject exam will typically transfer to US universities as a college credit.

SA Matriculation Board exemption. APs provide a way to qualify for USAf exemption for further tertiary studies in South Africa. USAf's US regulation stipulates that a student has to pass two or more AP courses with a grade 3 or higher for this pathway to be used in an exemption application.

Did you know?

It is possible to do an AP course without taking the CollegeBoard's exam. However, without the exam the full extent of benefits will not be realized.

Relevance for local tertiary studies

As mentioned, AP exams are not required, but are recognised as a pathway through which you may apply for South African (SA) university exemption through our Matriculation Board (USAf).

A 2021 review of the Admission Policies of 9 local (South African) universities by Kairos Academy SA revealed that - apart from the role it might play towards USAf exemption - AP subjects are not yet further applied in admission and / or recognition of prior learning (PRL) policies of these local universities.

When and by whom are the courses taken?

This really depends on the student and the nature of the course. Typically though, these courses are pursued by the academically inclined students during their Grades 10-12 years.

Accessibility to exams in SA

According to the US CollegeBoard™, the only school in SA currently authorized as an AP Examination Centre is the American International School of Cape Town (AISCT).

Mr. Thorpe, AISCT's Principal & AP Coordinator, confirmed that non-AISCT students are welcome to register and sit for any AP exams at their school venue. Exam registration takes place by November of the previous year.

Which subjects are available?

Subjects are available in the following categories:

- Art
- English
- History & Social Sciences
- Maths & Computer Science
- Sciences
- World Languages & Cultures
- Capstone Diploma Program

A complete list of the available AP courses can be found here:

[AP Course offering](#)



Fun Fact

An AP exam usually consists of multiple sections, and may take up to 5 hrs.

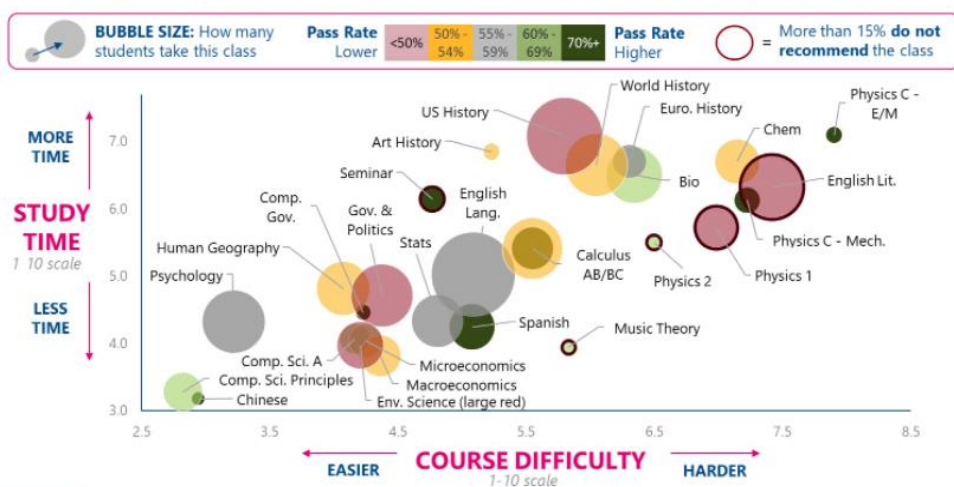
Want to know more?

I really enjoyed this article which gives flesh to the outline provided in this [article](#).

Interested to sponsor the next [DiplomaTimesRSA](#) issue or write an article?

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What are the hardest vs easiest AP classes? – from 2,627 AP alumnae class reviews and 2021 pass rates



Source: 1/APStudents class reviews survey, College Board intake and pass rate data
[ExamStudyExpert.com/easiest-ap-classes](#)



How difficult are AP courses?

Remember that these are introductory level college courses, so expect a higher volume and difficulty level than your typical high school courses.

If you are like me and have wondered which are the hardest (and easiest classes), you will find the outcome of the following recent [study](#) insightful, where the feedback from 2,627 AP Alumnae were evaluated (see infographic above).

Of course, the foundation of the student when they start with a particular subject will influence these measured parameters.

In conclusion

Earning AP credits during high school may offer your student various benefits. These include creating a stimulating environment for

the academically minded student, boosting of confidence and tertiary applications, and in the US context possible time and cost savings during tertiary studies.

While not all the intended benefits of taking AP credits can be realised in the SA context, it can be beneficial to some.

A decision to pursue this route is an individual one, and must build (and not hinder) academic ability and confidence. Your student's unique abilities (both strengths and weaknesses), available funding, and future plans should remain the main drivers for course choices.

Upcoming Events

2 April 2022: Gauteng Alternative Education Expo, 09:00-15:00 at Hearfelt Arena, Pretoria

28 May 2022: Bloemfontein Homeschool Expo, 09:00-17:00 at FS Residential Care Centre



Kairos Academy SA

This issue was compiled and sponsored by [Kairos Academy SA](#), a trusted Diploma service provider supporting a growing community of South African families.

Kairos Academy SA provides our South African families with:

- ✓ A flexible and affordable education solution (Gr R-12), culminating in a locally & internationally recognised American Diploma.
- ✓ Support, encouragement, and knowledge sharing during your homeschooling journey.
- ✓ Education consultations and administrative support.
- ✓ A community of like-minded families, with a collective strive towards excellence and integrity.