
Qualifications needed to become a Zoologist

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Once you have decided that you want to become a zoologist (and possibly what type of zoologist you want to become), you will need to decide what qualifications you will need to achieve your goals. Two types of qualifications are usually available – a university degree or a technical diploma.

Academic qualifications

Opinions vary as to how much and what sort of training is necessary to become a professional zoologist. Obviously, the necessary qualifications will differ somewhat depending on the specific job. A university lecturer, for example, will usually need a doctorate (Ph.D.) in zoology whereas there are numerous positions where an honours degree is sufficient. Here there is often also the opportunity to work towards a higher degree while "on the job". With the minimum qualification of a 3-year B.Sc. degree, research opportunities are fewer but there are still many interesting careers in teaching and in technical positions.

Technical qualifications

Technical qualifications can only be obtained through technikons. Some of these offer 1-, 2-, or 3-year diploma courses in Oceanography, Museum Skills, Laboratory Animal Technology, and Nature Conservation.

What matriculation subjects do you need to get into university ?

Most universities require a matriculation exemption with passes in Mathematics. The specific requirements of each university are listed later (see South African institutions offering degrees in zoology). Irrespective of entrance requirements, however, Mathematics as well as Physical Science and Biology (on the higher grade) are highly recommended for prospective zoologists. Oddly enough, Physical Science (i.e. Physics and Chemistry) is a more useful matric subject than Biology because many higher training institutions start teaching Biology from the basics. It should be noted that entrance requirements may be revised from time-to-time and updated requirements should be obtained from the institution of your choice well in advance of planning your career. The various university web sites are usually good sources for this sort of information.