Maths or Applications of Maths. Which should I choose?

A common question asked by students is which type of maths should I study. There is more information available on each of them elsewhere. Here, we hope to let you know the basic difference between the Maths courses that are offered to help students make informed choices.

In a nutshell:

Mathematics is offered at National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. This is your traditional Maths subject. Full of algebra, trigonometry, calculus etc. All the topics that are extremely useful for those pursuing a career in STEM but likely not used much again by those who don't

Applications of Mathematics is offered at National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher. This is a more useful course to those who need a maths qualification but don't need the topics mentioned above. The course is more focused on finance, statistics and real life calculations like areas, volumes etc. This is the course for those who want to be a teacher, nurse, etc. or any other career other than STEM.

Both courses share the same tariff points etc. In our experience some students are reluctant to take Applications of Maths because they don't know enough about it or think it a lesser qualification. This is not the case. It is just different. In fact, an S5/6 could in theory do both Mathematics and Applications of Mathematics on their course choice if they wanted to. A bit like some people do 2 sciences or social subjects. However, in most cases it will be one or the other.

In the table below I have tried to simplify what is required for entry into each level. You will notice we would like anyone attempting Nat 5 Maths to have already achieved Nat 5 Numeracy. The Nat 5 Applications of Maths course includes Nat 5 Numeracy within it. Nat 5 Maths does not and there is no time to do this as an extra.

Course	Entry requirements
Advanced Maths	Good pass at Higher
Higher Maths	Good pass at Nat 5 Maths
Higher Applications	Pass at Nat 5 Maths or Nat 5 Applications
Nat 5 Maths	Pass at Nat 4 Maths **and** Nat 5 Numeracy
Nat 5 Apps	Pass at Nat 4 Maths **or** Nat 4 Apps
Nat 4	Pass at Nat 3

I hope this helps. Any questions please ask a member of the Mathematics department.