

Studying in South Africa: Information for international students

South Africa's public universities are located across the length and breadth of the country, and offer hundreds of courses in all study fields leading to national certificates, diplomas, undergraduate or postgraduate degrees.

South Africa's public universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities have multi-cultural campuses that are well-resourced and alive with academic and research opportunities, as well as extra-curricula activities ranging from sports and societies to pubs, clubs and student events. Residential accommodation is usually available and most universities have bureaus that help students locate accommodation, a short distance from campus.

Because all our universities have international students, even the smallest university has a dedicated international office that acts as a first port of call in the case of queries or problems.

Universities have elected Student Representative Councils (SRC) that offer student services and play an important role in institutional governance. Most campuses also operate voluntary, or academically related, community programmes that enable students to engage with local people outside of the university and also play a role in South Africa's development.

Qualifications

South African university qualifications are internationally recognised. The most basic qualification, at traditional universities is the Bachelor degree, followed by Honours, Master's and Doctoral degrees, although some courses offer certificates and diplomas. Bachelor degrees such as the BA, BCom, BSc or BSocSc take three years to complete, while career-focused degrees such as the BEng and BA (Ed) take four years and others, for instance medicine or architecture, take longer. Honours degrees, which require a completed Bachelor degree, are generally one-year courses.

Master's degrees require a minimum one year of full-time study following an Honours, and Doctoral degrees are awarded after a minimum of two years of study and an original research thesis.

Universities of technology offer a wide range of qualifications, from one-year certificates to diplomas, advanced diplomas, Bachelors of Technology degrees and postgraduate qualifications up to Doctoral level. The study period for the BTech is four years, although in most cases there are exit points at lower levels enabling students to enter a career with a diploma qualification at an earlier stage.

Comprehensive universities offer a combination of both of these types of qualifications.

Application Requirements Applying for a study permit and visa

Anyone who is not a South African citizen, or a permanent resident, requires a visa in order to enter, as well as a permit to stay (or sojourn) in South Africa. The South African High Commission, Embassy or Consulate in your country of residence issues a visa so that you may travel to South Africa. At your 'port of entry' (for example, Durban International Airport, Johannesburg International Airport, Cape Town International Airport or Beit Bridge), your visa is endorsed and becomes your temporary residence permit.





How to apply for a study permit

A university is not permitted to register you until you have produced your valid study permit.

It usually takes at least six weeks for your study permit application to be processed. It is also important for you to note that your Study Permit is issued to study at one institution and you would have to apply for a change of status, should you want to change institutions.

This can be done in the city applicable to the new institution of study.

You are required to apply for a study permit at the South African High Commission, Embassy, Consulate or Trade Mission in your country of residence. If there is no South African representative in that country, you must apply to the nearest South African High Commission, Embassy, Consulate or Trade Mission.

The following are the current requirements to be submitted to the South African Embassy/Consulate in your country to obtain your Study Permit:

- A passport valid for not less than 30 days after intended studies.
- Administrative fee of R425 (as at December 2006).
- Confirmation and proof of payment of a South African Medical Aid Cover with a medical scheme registered with the SA Medical Schemes Council. Cover must remain valid for the duration of the calendar year (see health insurance).
- Letter of Offer from the University stating the duration of degree, confirming that the student is not taking the place of a local student and undertaking to inform the Department of Home Affairs when the student deregisters.
- Medical and Radiological reports (less than six months old).
- Yellow Fever vaccination certificate, if relevant.
- Relevant certificates if married, widowed, divorced or separated.
- Details regarding arranged accommodation while in South Africa.
- Proof of sufficient funds to cover tuition fees and maintenance.
- A police clearance certificate for the past 12 months or longer since the age of 18.
- A cash deposit or a return ticket to country of origin.
 - Nationals of African countries are not required to pay this deposit if their Government undertakes, in writing, to cover all costs relating to any repatriation action that may become necessary. You are advised to submit the documentation as soon as possible to the South African High Commission, Embassy, Consulate or Trade Mission – do not send the documentation to the university. We, however advise that you keep a copy of your submission and all receipts.

Some South African Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and Trade Missions require a letter of undertaking from

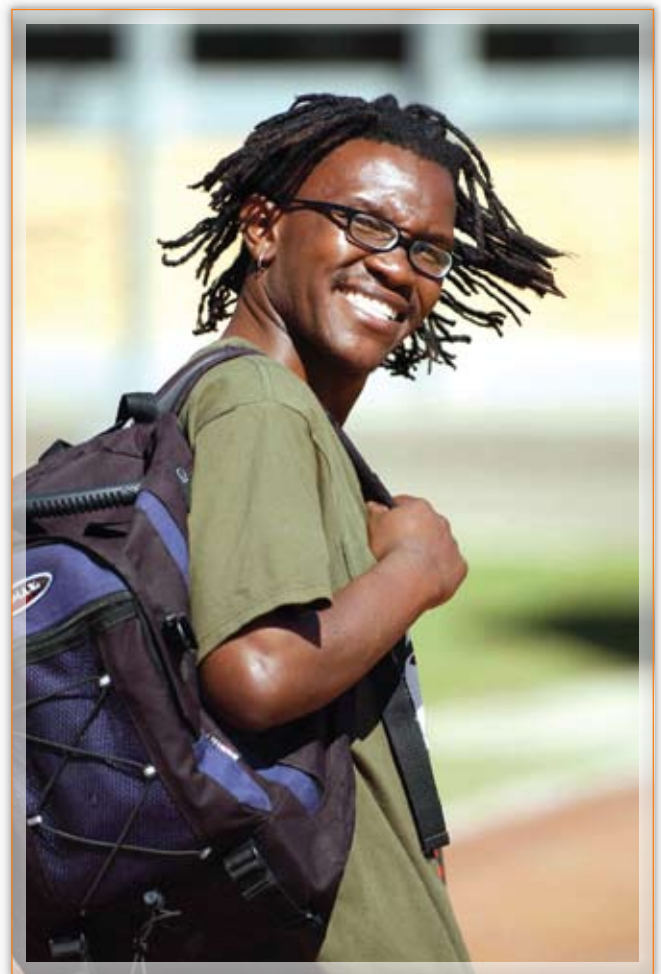
the university stating that a student will not be taking the place of a South African citizen and that the university will inform the Department of Home Affairs should the student discontinue his/her studies. While this is not necessary according to the regulations; if you require such a document, the university will be able to facilitate this request.

Part-time study

New interpretations of the regulations have been issued on the conditions of part-time studies. If you are a holder of a work or business permit you may apply for an endorsement to study part-time. The endorsement will only be valid for the period of the holder's prospective business or work permits.

To apply for the endorsement you will need to complete form BI1739. There is no cost for the endorsement:

- Complete form BI1739.
- Letter of Acceptance/firm offer letter from the university.
- Original Passport and Work Permit.
- Proof of Medical Aid.
- Proof of Finance.
- Proof of Employment.



International students must have proof of medical insurance cover that is recognised in South Africa.





Extension of a study permit

The following should be submitted to the Department of Home Affairs:

- BI1739 form (R425.00 – application fee).
- Spouse ID & Marriage Certificate.
- Proof of Registration with an Institution.
 - And an accompanying letter from the Faculty/School/Department advising of extension period required
- Proof of Payment of Tuition Fees.
- Proof of Funds Available.
- Proof of a South African based Medical Aid Cover.
- Proof of Repatriation Deposit Paid.
- Proof of Guardianship for Minor if Applicable.
- Passport (Original).
- Apply 30 days before Permit Expires.

Your application for the extension of a study permit needs to be signed by a representative at the university before it is submitted to the Department of Home Affairs.

Though the university will make copies of these documents for your student file, it is advised that you retain a copy for your own records.

Part-time work

The holder of a study permit for studies at a higher education institution may conduct part-time work for a period not exceeding 20 hours per week during term and full-time when the university is closed.

Changing conditions of a study permit

A change in conditions of a study permit refers to a situation where you hold a valid study permit with a condition to study at another institution in South Africa other than the one you are applying to.

This is usually the case for learners and students studying at South African high schools, colleges and other academic institutions and their permits would therefore be endorsed with a condition to study at institutions in any of the categories above. In order to register at another university the permit will need to be endorsed for the applicant to study at that specific university.

Application for change of conditions of a study permit constitutes a new application of a study permit. Though the applicant will need to complete a separate form, the requirements are the same as for the initial application of a study permit. These forms are available at any of the South African Visa Issuing Authorities (Home Affairs Offices, Consulates or Embassies).

Entrance requirements

International student applicants have to qualify for either a certificate of complete exemption or a certificate of conditional exemption, as long as they are accepted as equivalent to the South African entrance requirement. To find out whether your school leaving or tertiary qualification meets South African university requirements, visit the website of Higher Education South Africa's Matriculation Board, which advises universities on minimum general admission requirements and administers endorsement and exemption requirements.

Requirements for admission to certificate and diploma programmes are determined by universities.

Go to <http://www.hesa-enrol.ac.za/mb> and select 'Foreign qualifications'. This section on the site contains detailed information on entrance requirements. You will also be able to select your country and determine what is required to study in South Africa. The website also contains information on the latest endorsement requirements and regulations for certificates of exemption, including the fees payable and application forms. An online assessment and application system is being introduced where South African and foreign first degree applicants can assess their qualifications and apply for certificates of exemption online.

Health in Higher Education Health insurance

It is essential when applying for a study permit to have proof of medical insurance cover that is recognised in South Africa.

The South African Department of Health supports the Department of Home Affairs' directive requiring all international students to have appropriate South African medical cover while studying in South Africa.

To ensure that international students will not be dependant on South African public health services, it is imperative that the



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medical cover provides for all medical categories, and is not merely hospital care.

In terms of the **Immigration Amendment Act 19 of 2004** any prospective student to the Republic of South Africa, must provide proof of medical cover with a medical scheme registered in terms of the **Medical Schemes Act, 1998 Act 131 of 1998**.

Although you may, with some other foreign insurance products, secure a study visa from a South African diplomatic mission **IEASA recommends that students purchase a South African medical aid product**.

Most higher education institutions require proof of full medical aid cover with a South African based medical aid scheme for each full academic calendar year. This cover must usually be valid until 31 December in the year of study in order to qualify to register.

It is thus advisable that international students make the necessary financial arrangements for the medical aid cover **prior** to entry into South Africa. Should the student rely on sponsorship, he/she should ensure that the sponsor is advised of this requirement at the onset of the sponsorship or the admission offer from the institution. Most institutions do not accept a letter from the sponsor in lieu of payment. Payment for the required medical aid cover fee is normally made directly to the medical aid Company, separately from the tuition fees.

The following are medical aid companies with developed student focused products that are registered in terms of the Medical Schemes Act. They also offer the minimum benefits that a student may need while in South Africa. They are also accepted by the Department of Health's medical facilities.

Over years of experience, IEASA has established that the current list of medical aid products that follow, meet the legislative requirements as well as the personal needs of international students. Institutions may obviously augment this list or impose their own specific medical aid requirements.

- **Bestmed Medical Scheme**
<http://www.bestmed.co.za/> | +27 (0)12 339 9800
- **Ingwe Health**
<http://www.ingwehealth.co.za>
+27 08 60 102 493 | +27 (0)12 671 8511
- **Protea Medical Aid Society**
<http://www.studenthealth.co.za/>
0860 PROTEA | +27 860 776 832 | +27 (0)21 552 7111
- **Bonitas Medical Fund**
<http://www.bonitasmedicalfund.co.za> | +27 (0)11 510 2000



For more details about all Medical Aid providers in South Africa, contact:

- **SA Medical Scheme**
<http://www.medicalschemes.com/> | +27 86 1123 267

Travelling Information Health

Malaria is mainly confined to the north-eastern part of South Africa, especially the coastal plain. Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia) is also found mainly in the east but outbreaks do occur in other places, so you should always check with knowledgeable local people before drinking free water or swimming. Tap water in South Africa is safe to drink.

South Africa is in the grip of an HIV-AIDS epidemic that has infected millions of people. The country has embarked on an extensive campaign to provide those infected with ARVs and according to a recent HSRC study, there are signs that the epidemic is stabilising. However, local and international students are advised to always practice safe sex.

Visas

Entry permits are issued free on arrival to visitors on holiday from many Commonwealth and most Western European countries, as well as Japan and the United States.

South Africa requires entry visas from travellers from some countries, which must be obtained in a visitor's home country from the local or the nearest South African Embassy or Mission.

General

Time: GMT +2 (+1 in northern hemisphere summer)

South Africa country dialling code: 27

Electricity: 220-230V; 50Hz

Weights and measures: Metric



International students, with a study permit, may conduct **part-time work** for a period not exceeding **20 hours per week**.

