USAC ACADEMIC GUIDE
Stellenbosch University (SU)
Summer 2024-2025

QUICK FACTS
Expanded details on the pages that follow

ACADEMIC MODEL

Structure: Weekly lectures, seminars, or a mixture of the two
System: Greater reliance on independent study
Course Levels: 100-400 undergraduate

CREDIT LOADS

Summer Session: 12-18 ECTS credits; 24-36 SA credits; 6-9 U.S. credits

COURSES & REGISTRATION

- Some courses may have prerequisites.
- Find syllabi/courses on the host university's website
- **Mandatory course**: Introduction to South Africa's Political History
- Internships are not available.

- Sign up for courses during host university application process.
- Final course registration upon host u acceptance
- No changes made after April 1

IN THE CLASSROOM

- **Class Schedule:** Available at on-site orientation
- **Textbooks:** Provided onsite if needed
- **Final exams:** Calendar will be posted ahead of time

ACADEMIC/DISABILITY SUPPORT

- A number of available resources exist at SU
- Accommodations may vary from the ADA
- Request accommodations on the host univ. app.

RELATED RESOURCES

Universities abroad use different terminology that you might find confusing. Note the differences below.

U.S. Terms	Host University Terms
Class or Course	Module
Credit	Credit (4 ECTS/8 SA credits = Approx. 2 U.S. credits)*

* The conversion can differ – you should check with your home university to see how exactly credits will transfer back.

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ACADEMIC MODEL

ACADEMIC SYSTEM AND STRUCTURE

The structure of Stellenbosch courses will vary depending on if you take the General Elective Programme or a Specialized Track Programme.

General Elective Programme courses will differ between departments, and you may encounter different teaching styles and course processes while abroad. Some courses within the General Elective Programme are taught in a traditional classroom setting and may be held seminar-style, while others will combine lectures with weekly practicums or tutorials.

Specialized Track Programmes combine traditional coursework and instruction methods with practical hands-on methods of learning.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN U.S. AND HOST UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is important to be prepared for some differences that you may notice between the education system in South Africa and the education system in the U.S. Pay close attention to the guidelines set by the professor and be respectful of any rules put in place.

Course assessments (grading) may be different from what you are used to. A typical setup for course grading would be a test, an essay, presentations, journal submissions, proposals, and perhaps some tutorial tasks, which are completed during the term. Each academic department may alter it according to their preference and approval.

Pay close attention to the advice provided for international students as you adjust to a new academic culture.

COURSE LEVELS

Upper vs Lower Division Courses

All courses in the SU summer programme are taken for undergraduate credit. However, the level can be difficult to determine, as it depends on how your home university will accept each course for credit. If you are concerned about how your credits will transfer back to your home university, you should strongly consider seeking preapproval for your course selections from your home university academic advisor.

Graduate Level Course Availability

Graduate level courses are not currently available.

CREDIT LOADS

Courses are typically 4 ECTS credits or 8 SA credits (about 2 U.S. credits) each. If you Top Up, the course will increase to 3 U.S. credits.

Definitions of full-time status may vary between USAC, the host university, the agency monitoring your visa, your home university, and any agency providing you with a scholarship or grant. Therefore, it is extremely important that you take the time to review all the agreements you have made with USAC and beyond (visa, financial aid, scholarships, etc.).

Below are USAC's required full-time credit requirements.

	SUMMER
Min	6 U.S. (12 ECTS / 24 SA)
Max	9 U.S. (18 ECTS / 36 SA)

Courses taken online or concurrently through your home university do not count in meeting the USAC full-time credit requirement. You should check with your home university, financial aid office, etc. to see what additional minimum credit requirements you might have. **Maintaining full-time status is your responsibility.** If you're concerned about whether you're taking a full course load, contact your USAC Program Advisor.

Note to Graduating Students

If you plan to graduate the semester you study abroad, there is a very high likelihood that your transcript from the host university will not arrive in time. You should plan to delay graduation one semester if your last semester in college is abroad with USAC and your home university has very strict deadlines for submitting the final transcript. When available, check the **Transcript and Grade Reporting Guide** on Gateway for more information about official transcripts and when they're expected to arrive in our office.

COURSES AND REGISTRATION

COURSES

Top Up Credits

You have the option to "Top Up" courses. If you choose to Top Up, you are electing to earn 3 U.S. credits instead of 2 U.S. credits. Each topped up course will be an additional $150. Topping up a course requires you to successfully

complete schoolwork, in the form of readings and written assignments, **before** you arrive in Stellenbosch. Failure to complete the additional schoolwork will not result in a refund of the Top Up fee.

Courses Available to USAC Students

USAC students may enroll in either the General Elective Programme (and choose from electives in a variety of disciplines), or in one of three specialized tracks. **However, all students are required to take the [Introduction to South Africa's Political History](#) course.**

Option 1: General Elective Programme

In addition to the required course, you would enroll in two additional electives worth 2 U.S. credits each (electives have an optional 1 U.S. credit Top Up option). Courses are subject to change.

Elective options for second part of programme:

- [Bio-Diversity: Plants for the People in the Western Cape](#)
- [Visual Narratives and South-North Interaction](#)
- [Equity & Leadership in the Global Classroom](#)
- [Travel Photography](#)

Elective options for third part of programme:

- [Transitional Justice](#)
- [Present Imperfect: Negotiating Identities in South African Literature and Film](#)
- [Understanding HIV in South Africa: A Health & Social Justice Perspective](#)
- [China in Africa](#)

Option 2: Specialized Track Programmes

In addition to the required course, students will earn credits in **one** of the following fields:

- [Global Service Learning (GSL):](#) GSL (formerly known as Learning Sustainability and Community Engagement – LSCE) is an experimental learning, writing-intensive community engagement programme that includes theoretical and practical work. Academic weight of 8 U.S. credits, can Top Up 1 U.S. credit for a total of 9 U.S. credits.
- [Doing Business in Southern Africa:](#) This programme allows students to investigate the unique institutional and policy conditions in Southern African countries to better understand the challenges that will confront future businesses and impact economic growth. Academic weight of 7 U.S. credits, can Top Up 2 U.S. credits for a total of 9 U.S. credits.
- [Public Health:](#) This programme focuses on public health within a South African context using a thematic approach that allows students to learn about multiple key topics, including HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis; Non-Communicable Diseases and Infectious Diseases; Substance Abuse; Domestic Violence; Mental and Psychosocial health; and Sexual and Reproductive health. In addition to traditional instruction methods, students supplement their coursework through visits to health care facilities. Academic weight of 7 U.S. credits, can Top Up 2 U.S. credits for a total of 9 U.S. credits.

Prerequisites

The host university will have prerequisites like any other university. Staff at the program site will have a copy of your official transcripts and will work with academic departments to determine whether or not you fulfill the prerequisites.

Course admissions are based on the prerequisites. You should review and compare course/specialized track programme prerequisites with your own academic background when selecting your courses.

Obtaining Course Descriptions/Syllabi for Home University Pre-Approval

You can access the course syllabi links on page one of this Guide. The course descriptions for the academic year may be finalized later than what you are used to at your home university. Usually, the schedule isn't released until shortly before the term begins. We advise you to review the offering that is currently published for the host university, even if it shows courses/programmes from the previous academic year. This should be a good estimate of what may be offered; however, you should expect that there would be variations from year to year, as there would be at any university. For this reason, you should be flexible with your courses and always have alternatives in mind.

Mandatory Course

USAC students are **required to enroll in Introduction to South Africa's Political History.** This weeklong course is designed to familiarize students with South Africa's unique history and current social, cultural, and political climate. This required course will be part of your total credit load. **Failure to complete this required course may result in your dismissal from the program.**

Courses Offered in English.

All summer courses are in English.

Courses Equal to Less than/More than 3 U.S. Credits

In some cases, a course may be worth the equivalent of more/less than 3 U.S. credits. It is important to discuss this with your academic advisor, especially if your home university does not offer courses worth that number of credits. Transferring these credits to your home university and making sure you are fulfilling degree requirements may require some exceptions. Plan ahead so this does not surprise you when your school receives your transcript.

INTERNSHIPS

Stellenbosch University does not facilitate internship experience for international students. Local volunteer opportunities may be available, but these would be non-credit experiences.

COURSE REGISTRATION

Once you have been approved by USAC, you will need to complete an application to Stellenbosch University. Your Program Advisor will email you information regarding the online application once it's time to start working on this. You will make your course selection on your application to Stellenbosch University. Make sure you have chosen your preferred courses before attempting to complete the host university application as you cannot save your progress.

The Stellenbosch University International (SUI) office will facilitate the approval once your Stellenbosch University application is received, so please do not attempt to contact academic departments at Stellenbosch directly. Unless you are notified otherwise, you can safely assume you have been approved to take the course/programme.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to seek sufficient academic advice, to know and meet your degree requirements, and to enroll in and complete the appropriate courses for your individual progress toward your degree.

Courses and Subject Areas Not Guaranteed

Students are not guaranteed their preferred courses or subject areas. However, Stellenbosch University plans efficiently for the number of students accepted into the program and usually accommodates students' class requests.

Classes are seldom cancelled, but changes in schedules do occur and cancellations are possible if enrollments are low.

Acceptance to courses or a programme is subject to host university approval of prerequisite requirements.

Add/Drop Courses

You may be able to change your course selection by contacting your Program Advisor in writing prior to April 1. After April 1, no changes can be made to your academic option selection.

If you make any changes to your course selection, notify your academic advisor at your home university as this could affect your financial aid or your degree plan.

IN THE CLASSROOM

CLASS SCHEDULE

You will find out your final class schedule once onsite. Remember that you must stay enrolled in (and complete) the required course, Introduction to South Africa's Political History.

TEXTBOOKS

All course material and textbooks are included in your USAC program fee.

FINAL EXAMS/ASSESSMENTS

Generally, grades will consist of several different assignments, and you may not have a traditional final.

ACADEMIC / DISABILITY SUPPORT

STUDY SUPPORT

Generally, courses have tutorials scheduled once a week which is an extra hour to do assignments or ask questions. If one-to-one tutoring is needed, students should approach the department to see if there are opportunities available or if there is a senior student who can act as a tutor.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Students who may need any academic support during the term may ask the SU International Office Summer Mobility Coordinators to assist with the process. There are a number of services available facilitated by the Centre for Student Counselling and Development:

- The Equality Unit
- The Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services
- The Unit for Academic Counselling and Development

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

While abroad with USAC, you will be enrolled at a host university and will be able to access any of the existing disability support for the local students. Keep in mind that the Americans with Disabilities Act does not apply in other countries, though most countries have a similar regulation. You can find more information regarding disability accommodations in your Student Gateway in a document called **Wellness Guide.**

Different educational systems and teaching styles may prevent some of the accommodations you are used to receiving at your home university. We encourage you to be flexible and have a serious conversation with your disability office to make sure you have a plan to stay on track in a new classroom environment.

ACCOMMODATIONS REQUEST WITH THE HOST UNIVERSITY

You will have a host university application process, be sure to provide any accommodations that you may need on this application in order to initiate the local process for requesting accommodations. You should also mention it on your **Medical Information Form** in Gateway so we can discuss how best to proceed. If you get stuck, email health@usac.edu to get in touch with the USAC Health and Safety Assistant.

RELATED RESOURCES

Host University Application Guide	Once approved by USAC, you will need to apply directly to the host university. This guide will include detailed instructions for how to submit your host university application, including required supplemental materials.
Transcript & Grade Reporting Guide	You will receive an official transcript from your host university with international credit. Refer to this guide to determine how your grades will transfer back and how to receive your transcript.
Host University Transcript Request Form	If this form is on your USAC Gateway account, be sure to complete and return it to your Enrollment Specialist so your official transcript can be processed at the end of your program.
Wellness Guide	Helpful information about how to manage your health, wellness, and any disabilities while abroad.
Medical Information Form	Complete this form to inform USAC about needed accommodations and work with the Health & Safety Team to determine which are possible while abroad.
Helpful People at USAC	See your Gateway account "Contacts" tab to find useful individuals and general email accounts to address any additional needs you may have.