



Being a first-year student at SU for the parent

At Stellenbosch University we recognise the importance of establishing partnerships with the parents of our students, particularly our first-year students. Many students find it difficult to adapt to university life and parents can assist in various ways during this time. We therefore welcome you to the Stellenbosch University community and look forward to collaborating with you towards a successful academic career for your child.

What every parent needs to know

- There is a substantial difference between school and university - at university students are treated as young adults. While the university desires the success of each student, the responsibility rests with the student to realise his or her potential by making appropriate choices about things like attending classes regularly, keeping up to date with the work and preparing in advance for tests and exams.
- Communicate with your child about the various implications of university, such as the cost of university studies and, in some cases, the challenges that come with living away from home. Give him or her the opportunity to explore options for dealing with these realities.
- During the first few weeks at university first-year students are introduced to a whole range of activities, opportunities and support systems - encourage your child to ask for assistance when required.
- Students who have clear goals for the future are often the most successful students - encourage your child to discuss his or her expectations and aspirations with you.
- In many cases, first-year students experience university life as offering unaccustomed freedom and are unsure how to respond. This may become problematic if students make wrong and inappropriate choices. Talk about this as well.
- Due to the large number of students at the university, lecturers are often unable to monitor individual students' progress. Your child will need to demonstrate self-discipline particularly with regard to class attendance and time management.
- Discuss the importance of maintaining a good balance between academics and social life with your child.

The First-year Academy (FYA)

All first-year students form part of the FYA, which is an overarching initiative that coordinates various activities aimed at facilitating first-year success. The following are examples of such activities:

- **Early Assessment** takes place within the first four to six weeks of the academic year. The aim of Early Assessment is to enable students to chart their progress at an early stage of their university careers. The results are made available to students electronically and sent to their postal addresses during April. Faculties often use these results to advise students and may require them to attend academic support sessions, such as additional tutorials, on the basis of the assessment.
- **The Welcoming Programme** for new students takes place during the first week of university and aims to facilitate a smooth transition into the university environment. Attendance is crucial.
- The out-of-class experience, including **peer mentor support**, is

largely organised through the residences and PSO wards in clusters. Mentors, for example, meet with students in small groups to further help with integration into the university. Participation in these activities is thus crucial for an optimal student experience.

- **The Rectors Dinner for Top-performing Students** (and their lecturers) is a prestigious occasion at which thirty students who have achieved significant academic success in their first year are formally recognised.
- Other activities supported by the FYA include the **training of tutors**, the **Extended Degree Programme**, **faculty directed interventions** and the **tracking of first-year progress**.

Sources of information

- The majority of communication at university takes place via **e-mail** correspondence or other electronic media, such as **WebStudies**. It is therefore vitally important that students regularly check these to ensure they remain up to date.
- The university's website is a rich source of information and should be visited by parents and students: **www.sun.ac.za**.
- The e-mail address for enquiries from prospective students' parents is **maties@sun.ac.za**.

Important terms and additional information

- A university year consists of **two semesters** with approximately 13 weeks per semester.
- **Modules** are the 'subjects' that students enrol for and can be either semester modules or year modules.
- All modules are **credit-bearing**, but the number of credits allocated can differ from module to module. Together these credits will eventually translate into the completion of a degree (a specific number of credits is needed to progress to the next year).
- A final mark of **at least 50%** is needed to obtain a pass mark in a module.

An initiative of the First-year Academy (FYA),
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