



## Being a first-year student at SU

# for the students

At Stellenbosch University we want our students to feel welcome and at home. We understand how important your first year will be and the effect it may have on the rest of your academic career. We hope that the information in this pamphlet will help you in different ways to prepare yourself for university life. We look forward to you joining the Stellenbosch University community and to working with you as you start out on your academic career. May it be a great experience!



### What you, as a future SU student, need to know

- There's quite a difference between school and university – at university you'll be treated like a young adult. While the university desires the success of each student, the responsibility rests with YOU to realise your 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.
- There are many things to consider when you are at university, such as the cost of university studies and living away from home. The university can help you in dealing with these challenges.
- During your first few weeks at university, you'll hear about a whole range of activities, opportunities and support systems - be sure to ask for help when you need it.
- Think about your expectations, your dreams and what you hope to achieve – students who have clear goals are often more likely to succeed.
- When in doubt, talk to people around you such as your lecturers, the mentors in the residences or private student organisations, your student representatives and other successful students.
- Many first-years are not used to all the freedom that is part and parcel of university life. They may find it difficult to deal with the lack of boundaries which could result in them making wrong or inappropriate choices – don't make that mistake!
- You may find yourself involved in many extra-curricular activities and have an exciting social life, but just remember that keeping a balance between your academics and your social life is really important and shouldn't be underestimated.
- Due to the large number of students at the university, lecturers are often unable to monitor the progress of individual students. This means you'll need a lot of self-discipline especially with regard to class attendance and time management.

### The First-year Academy (FYA)

All first-year students form part of the First-year Academy, which 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 for you to see the progress that you are making at this early stage in your university career. The results are made available to you electronically and sent to your postal address during April. Faculties often use these results to advise students and may require you to attend academic support sessions, such as additional tutorials.
- **The Welcoming Programme** for new students takes place during the first week of the university year and aims to help you experience

a smooth transition into the university environment. Attendance of this programme is very important.

- The out-of-class experience, including **peer mentor support**, is largely organised through the residences and PSO wards in clusters. Your mentor will meet with you and your fellow students in small groups to further help with your 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 Programmes**, **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 really important that you check these regularly to make sure you remain up to date.
- The university's website is a rich source of information and should be visited by parents and prospective students at **www.sun.ac.za**.
- The e-mail address for enquiries from prospective students 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 you 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.