



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

# Destination South Africa

Using your Cambridge  
qualifications to study  
in South Africa

# Contents

A pathway to success using Cambridge International AS & A Levels .....	1
Why choose to study at a South African university? .....	2
Meeting the conditions and requirements for a certificate of exemption.....	3
Applying for a certificate of exemption .....	4
Student success stories .....	5
What qualifications do I need to get a place on a course at a South African university? .....	6
How do I apply to study at a South African university? .....	7
Public universities in South Africa.....	8
Learn more .....	10

## About us

Cambridge Assessment International Education is part of the University of Cambridge. We prepare school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning.

Our international qualifications are recognised by the world's best universities and employers, giving students a wide range of options in their education and career. As a not-for-profit organisation, we devote our resources to delivering high-quality educational programmes that can unlock learners' potential.

Find out more about us at [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)

### Cambridge Assessment English

Our sister organisation, Cambridge Assessment English, help millions of people learn English and prove their skills to the world. They provide the world's leading range of qualifications and tests for learners and teachers of English. Globally recognised by more than 20,000 leading universities, employers and governments, these research-based assessments are a mark of excellence that open doors.

Find out more about Cambridge Assessment English Recognition by visiting their website at [www.cambridgeenglish.org/recognition](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/recognition)

# A pathway to success using Cambridge International AS & A Levels

Cambridge International AS & A Levels are recognised as a passport to success in education, university and employment. They are valued by South African education institutions as academically rigorous qualifications that equip students with the skills they need to succeed.

At Cambridge International, we work closely with universities worldwide to make sure we are preparing students to succeed at university and beyond. Our aim is not just to help students get in to university – we want to make sure that students holding Cambridge qualifications are well equipped with the necessary academic skills to do well in their studies.

South Africa is a top destination country for many students from Sub-Saharan Africa who want to further their studies after completing their Cambridge International AS & A Levels. In order to study a Bachelor's degree at a South African university, a student with Cambridge International AS & A Levels will need to qualify for a certificate of complete or conditional exemption issued by Universities South Africa (USAf) – a membership organisation representing South Africa's public universities. See page 3 for more information.

A certificate of exemption will be granted to holders of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma, provided they meet the minimum qualification combinations and the subject group requirements. A certificate of exemption is required to pursue first degree studies at a South African university but it does not guarantee acceptance at a university. Each programme will have entry requirements over and above those of the requirements to obtain a certificate of exemption.

## Did you know?

We work with over 100 independent schools to offer Cambridge qualifications in South Africa and over 800 schools across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Candidates wanting to apply to study a certificate or diploma at a South African higher education institution or a TVET College (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) will be required to apply to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for an evaluation against the National Senior Certificate, without exemption.

For more information please go to [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)



**Please note:** All information is correct at March 2019. For the latest information and statements on South African universities accepting Cambridge qualifications, search our recognition database at <http://recognition.cambridgeinternational.org>

# Why choose to study at a South African university?

There are many reasons to consider studying at undergraduate level in South Africa. South Africa is home to some of Africa's leading universities and they welcome applications from international students.

Universities across South Africa welcome applications from Cambridge students. Cambridge International AS & A Levels are widely accepted for direct entry to undergraduate degree courses as long as a certificate of exemption has been issued by Universities South Africa and the faculty entry requirements have been met. In recent years, South African universities have featured in the top 200 universities in the annual Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

In 2015 foreign students accounted for nearly 8 per cent of the total enrolments at public higher education institutions in South Africa. More than a third (37.9 per cent) of foreign national students were from Zimbabwe, while 2 per cent were from the United States of America and 2.1 per cent from Kenya<sup>1</sup>.

## Facts and figures

- There are 26 public universities and over 90 private higher education institutions in South Africa.
- The academic year usually starts in January/February.
- The costs of studying in South Africa depend on the institution and the level of study chosen; the first year of a degree in Humanities can cost on average US \$2800\* and in Engineering and the Built Environment, US \$3500\*.

*\*Fees vary from institution to institution.*

According to a study of international students in South Africa, undertaken by Lee and Sehoole, affordable fees, government subsidies for students from the region, the strong reputation of higher education and currency of its qualifications are major pull factors for students wanting to study in South Africa.

The primary economic reason to study in South Africa is affordable fees compared to the United States and United Kingdom. Another important factor is the SADC protocol – under which regional students pay the same fees as local students and are subsidised by the South African government.

Also mentioned were proximity to home and the cost of living, bursary and scholarship requirements, future job prospects and the search for better living conditions<sup>2</sup>.

Students from other parts of the world are liable for international fees but these are more affordable in comparison to other countries. The lower cost of living is also an attraction for international students<sup>3</sup>.

“The students who thrive at university are those who come to us with not only a strong academic background, but also strong personal attributes and a desire to get the most out of the institution. In our experience, Cambridge schools in southern Africa prepare their students well for further study.”

Carl Herman, Director of Admissions, University of Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>1</sup> [www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202015.pdf](http://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202015.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20140905134914811](http://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20140905134914811)

<sup>3</sup> [www.iapo.uct.ac.za/iapo/app/fees](http://www.iapo.uct.ac.za/iapo/app/fees)

# Meeting the conditions and requirements for a certificate of exemption

Cambridge students need to apply for a certificate of exemption in order to pursue a first degree at a South African university.

You need to apply to Universities South Africa (USAf) for a certificate of exemption. You must have a Senior Certificate without endorsement in South Africa or an equivalent school-leaving qualification, such as Cambridge International AS & A Levels in order to apply.

You must also meet the requirements of the regulations published in the Government Notice, Department of Education, Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) No. 1317 dated 5 December 2008, if you wish to pursue first degree studies at a South African university with Cambridge International AS & A Levels.

## Qualification combinations

You must meet the minimum qualification combinations and subject group requirements to obtain the certificate of exemption. The following options are available:

### Cambridge International A Level exemptions

- **Four subject option**  
Three subjects at Cambridge International A Level (A\*–E) plus one subject at Cambridge IGCSE™ (Grade A\*–C).
- **Five subject option**  
Two subjects at A Level (A\*–E) plus three subjects at Cambridge IGCSE (Grade A\*–C).

### Cambridge International AS Level exemptions

- Four subjects passed at Cambridge International AS Level (Grade A–D) plus one subject at Cambridge IGCSE (Grade A\*–C).
- The two-sitting rule applies to this exemption (see below); need not be consecutive years.
- Two languages must be passed for complete exemption.

## What is the two-sitting rule?

In terms of Cambridge qualifications, the two-sitting rule for USAf exemption applies to Cambridge International AS Levels and the Cambridge AICE Diploma.

Candidates qualifying for the exemptions for Bachelor degree purposes need to meet the minimum qualification combination requirement in two examination sittings, e.g. four AS Levels and one IGCSE. Examinations taken within a 12-month period are regarded as ONE sitting.

Where a subject is only examined in either the November or the June series, the following or preceding November or June series will be regarded as the same sitting, e.g. we do not offer Afrikaans Language in the June series and Portuguese Language in the November series.

You can find more on the conditions and subject requirements to gain exemption for entry to South African public universities on our website at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/universities-south-africa-brochure](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/universities-south-africa-brochure)

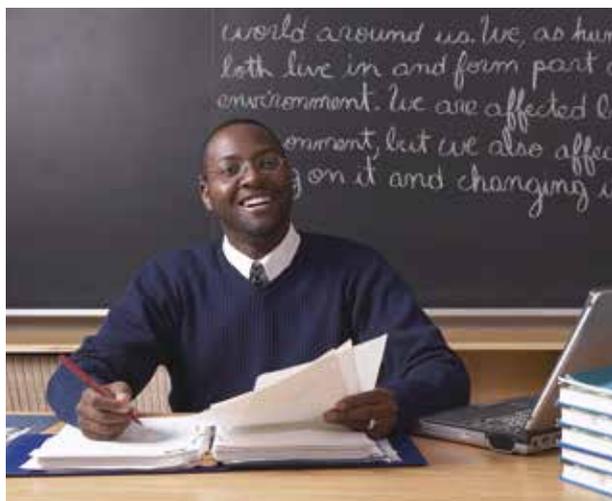
# Applying for a certificate of exemption

Cambridge students need to apply directly to Universities South Africa (USAf) for a certificate of exemption, or your chosen university might apply on your behalf.

USAf will grant matriculation exemption certificates to holders of Cambridge qualifications provided they meet the requirements we explained on page 3.

You can apply online for a certificate of exemption at <http://mbit-application.hesa.org.za/assessment>. Alternatively, you can download the M30e application form from USAf's website and return it to them in person, by post, courier, fax or email. All original documents to support your application, such as certificates, must be couriered to USAf and you must ensure they are certified by a public notary, the registrar of the university or the South African Embassy/High Commission in a foreign country.

A non-refundable exemption fee is payable up front for all applications. Payment can be made by cheque, credit card, debit card, Electronic funds/bank transfer or postal order. All cheques and postal orders must be made payable to the Matriculation Board. The surname and initials of the applicant must be clearly indicated on the electronic payment instruction so the fee can be linked to the applicant.



Some universities will submit applications for certificates of exemption directly to USAf on your behalf. Please make sure you submit copies of the following documents (certified by the university concerned, a South African foreign mission or a public notary) to the university if they offer this service:

- form M30e
- copies of educational qualifications
- copy of proof of identity, passport or birth certificate
- exemption application fee – confirm current fee at <https://mb.usaf.ac.za>
- sworn English translation of documents, where applicable.

USAf's recognition of Cambridge qualifications applies to all universities in South Africa. Please note that a complete or conditional exemption does not guarantee your admission to a university as you may not have satisfied the programme or faculty entry requirements.

## Conditional exemption certificates

USAf may grant a certificate of conditional exemption to an applicant who lacks one requirement in meeting the exemption conditions. This is solely at the discretion of USAf. You can find more about complete or conditional exemptions at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/universities-south-africa-brochure](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/universities-south-africa-brochure)

## Student success stories

### A passport to study in South Africa

**Daniel Johnson** is in the first year of a BSc degree at the University of Cape Town. He is majoring in Physics and Astrophysics and would like to go into research in one of these fields. He was previously a student at St Charles College, South Africa.

“ My studies taught me the value of not only working hard, but also of taking an active interest in my subjects. Cambridge syllabuses build a foundation for later studies, rather than treating the work we do as isolated and irrelevant in the bigger picture. The work we did in preparation for our Cambridge exams was more advanced than that covered by other syllabuses, and so I have had a very noticeable advantage over other people on my course. While [the qualifications were] challenging at times, I always felt the work I was doing was meaningful, and was helping to prepare me for university, a feeling which was often not shared by my friends in the local education systems. I appreciated knowing that the work we did was of an international standard. The content was interesting, and presented in a way which made sense, so I was very grateful for choosing Cambridge programmes. ”



**Coba Kellerman** is studying for her Master's in Urban and Regional Planning at Stellenbosch University, after completing a BSc in Geo-Informatics and BSc Hons in Geo-Informatics. She was previously a student at El Shaddai Christian School, Durbanville.

“ Following the Cambridge curriculum at school taught me how to absorb information faster and to build on existing knowledge. I gained time management skills through my experience, and I am grateful for learning how to push myself to achieve my potential. I enjoyed my Cambridge studies because the curriculum allowed me to study fewer subjects, but in a more focused and in-depth way, rather than studying the surface of many subjects. My Cambridge studies and the pace at which I had to study prepared me well for tertiary education and opened many doors. I often felt more confident about university assignments and the workload than fellow university students in some of my classes. ”

**Cullen Stewart-Burger** is studying Electronic Engineering at Stellenbosch University. He was previously a student at St Charles College, South Africa.



“ The way in which the Cambridge curriculum focuses on conceptual understanding, and trains learners to apply their knowledge and understanding to their studies made studying for my Cambridge qualifications a positive experience. Grasping an understanding of new work is always an extremely rewarding experience. Always being able to see the relevance or applications of what I was studying also contributed to the positive experience.

The Cambridge system helped prepare me for university in three major ways:

Firstly, the content of the courses offered by Cambridge International is very in depth. In practice, this has made the adjustment phase from high school to university significantly easier for me than for my peers that came through other education systems. There are many other ways in which one has to adapt when beginning university. Having already covered some of the first-year syllabus gave me a sort of buffer period in which I could adjust to the other aspects of university life without academic stress.

Secondly, my Cambridge studies prepared me for the high workload experienced at university. The manageable increase in workload moving from Cambridge studies into university made for a smooth transition.

Lastly, Cambridge studies focus on methods of thinking and understanding, rather than merely content. These tools have enabled me to better cope with my university studies and I am confident that they will continue to aid me throughout both my studies and career. ”

# What qualifications do I need to get a place on a course at a South African university?

## Entry requirements

Universities in South Africa are autonomous and can set their own entry requirements. You'll have to achieve certain exam grades and you may need qualifications in particular subjects to ensure you have the right skills and knowledge to successfully complete the course.

Universities list the entry requirements for each of their courses on their websites alongside other requirements, such as an admissions test or an interview. Check the entry requirements for each of your selected courses carefully since these vary from university to university, even for the same course of study.

## Applying with Cambridge International AS & A Levels

You need to make sure that your choice of Cambridge International AS & A Level subjects meets the minimum requirements for the certificate of exemption and the entry requirements for your intended degree course. This is especially important if you have a specific career path in mind such as medicine, engineering or law. A number of courses have subject-specific requirements, so bear this in mind when selecting your university course. Check the entry requirements carefully for your chosen course before submitting your application.

## Do I need to sit an admissions test?

You may be asked to take the National Benchmark Tests (NBT). The NBTs measure your academic readiness for university. The NBTs are used by many universities in South Africa to help them interpret school leaving results. Some institutions use the NBTs for admission and others use them to determine whether you will need extra academic support during your studies. You need to ask the institution you are applying to whether you are required to take the tests. Go to [www.nbt.ac.za](http://www.nbt.ac.za) for further information.

## Study visa

To apply for a student visa, you must be provisionally accepted to study at an educational institution in South Africa. You should carefully check student visa information on the Department of Home Affairs website ([www.home-affairs.gov.za](http://www.home-affairs.gov.za)) and the institutions' websites for the English language requirements.

## Do I need to calculate my Admissions Point Score (APS)?

Some universities use a point score as a basis for admission to a programme. Applicants may be required to meet the stated APS of the specific faculty or programme. Meeting the minimum APS for a particular programme does not guarantee admission. The APS is most often calculated using six subjects but this varies from university to university. The APS conversion table below is an indication of how subjects at Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International AS & A Level are rated. This may also vary slightly from university to university.

APS	IGCSE/ NSSC/ O Level	HIGCSE/ NSSC HL	AS Level	A level
10				A
9				B
8				C
7		1	A	D
6		2	B	E
5	A	3	C	
4	B	4	D	
3	C	5	E	
2	D/E			
1	F/G			

## Demonstrating your English Language ability

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the most common way of demonstrating your English language ability. Find out from the institution you are applying to what their English language proficiency requirement is as these vary between universities and according to the course you want to study. For entry into law and medicine, for example, the English language requirements are generally higher than other courses.

# How do I apply to study at a South African university?

Choosing a university and the course you would like to study is a very important decision. You will need to think about the university you are most interested in, the courses offered, the location of the university, the choice of activities on offer and the costs.

## The application process

### Step 1:

#### Choosing the university and course

- Identify your preferred destination and university.
- Decide on the institution and course.
- Check entry requirements for the course and visa requirements (if necessary).



### Step 2:

#### Applying

- Make your application directly to the university well in advance of the deadline date.
- Apply for a certificate of exemption from Universities South Africa if the university you applied to does not do this on your behalf.
- If you are successful, you will then receive your offer letter.
- If it is the right course for you, accept the offer and receive confirmation of enrolment.

Each university has their own application process, however, all first-time South African applicants to institutions in KwaZulu-Natal must apply via the Central Applications Office (CAO).

Go to [www.cao.ac.za](http://www.cao.ac.za) for more information. International applicants must apply directly to the institutions.

### Step 3:

#### Starting your course

- The academic year starts in January/February.
- Apply for a study visa if you need one. ([www.home-affairs.gov.za](http://www.home-affairs.gov.za))
- Plan your travel.
- Check the university's website and information about preparations you need to make to start your course.

# Public universities in South Africa

The 26 public universities in South Africa recognise Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications for entry to Bachelor degrees.

## **Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

Western Cape  
[www.cput.ac.za](http://www.cput.ac.za)

## **Central University of Technology**

Free State  
[www.cut.ac.za](http://www.cut.ac.za)

## **Durban University of Technology**

KwaZulu-Natal  
[www.dut.ac.za](http://www.dut.ac.za)

## **Nelson Mandela University**

Eastern Cape and Western Cape  
[www.nmmu.ac.za](http://www.nmmu.ac.za)

## **North-West University**

North-West and Gauteng  
[www.nwu.ac.za](http://www.nwu.ac.za)

## **Rhodes University**

Eastern Cape  
[www.ru.ac.za](http://www.ru.ac.za)

## **Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University**

Gauteng  
<http://smu.ac.za>

## **Stellenbosch University**

Western Cape  
[www.sun.ac.za](http://www.sun.ac.za)

## **Tshwane University of Technology**

Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North-West  
[www.tut.ac.za](http://www.tut.ac.za)

## **University of Cape Town**

Western Cape  
[www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)

## **University of Fort Hare**

Eastern Cape  
[www.ufh.ac.za](http://www.ufh.ac.za)

## **University of the Free State**

Free State  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)

## **University of KwaZulu-Natal**

Durban, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg,  
KwaZulu-Natal  
[www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

## **University of Johannesburg**

Johannesburg, Gauteng  
[www.uj.ac.za](http://www.uj.ac.za)

## **University of Limpopo**

Limpopo and Gauteng  
[www.ul.ac.za](http://www.ul.ac.za)

## **University of Pretoria**

Gauteng  
[www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)

## **University of South Africa**

All provinces  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## **University of Venda for Science and Technology**

Limpopo  
[www.univen.ac.za](http://www.univen.ac.za)

## **University of the Western Cape**

Bellville, Western Cape  
[www.uwc.ac.za](http://www.uwc.ac.za)

## **University of the Witwatersrand**

Johannesburg, Gauteng  
[www.wits.ac.za](http://www.wits.ac.za)

## **University of Zululand**

KwaZulu-Natal  
[www.unizulu.ac.za](http://www.unizulu.ac.za)

## **Vaal University of Technology**

Gauteng, North-West, Mpumalanga and  
Northern Cape  
[www.vut.ac.za](http://www.vut.ac.za)

## **Walter Sisulu University**

Eastern Cape  
[www.wsu.ac.za](http://www.wsu.ac.za)

## **Mangosuthu University of Technology**

KwaZulu-Natal  
[www.mut.ac.za](http://www.mut.ac.za)

## **University of Mpumalanga**

Mpumalanga  
[www.ump.ac.za](http://www.ump.ac.za)

## **Sol Plaatje University**

Northern Cape  
[www.spu.ac.za](http://www.spu.ac.za)



# Learn more

## Recognition database

You can find more information on which universities formally recognise Cambridge programmes and qualifications by searching our online recognition database. Go to [www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognitionsearch](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognitionsearch)

## Online help

You can find answers to frequently asked questions about Cambridge exams and services on our website at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/help](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/help)

Simply type your question into the search box, or use the menu to guide you.

## Customer Services

You can email us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) or call us on +44 1223 553554.

We are available 24 hours a day, 6 days a week.



Cambridge Assessment International Education  
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road  
Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

t: +44 1223 553554

[www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)

© UCLES June 2020

