

Academic Bulletin for South Africa 2025-26 and 2026

Introduction

The Academic Bulletin is the CSU International Programs (IP) “catalog” and provides academic information about the program in South Africa. This bulletin applies to students who begin their program in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026. This bulletin supersedes any previous bulletin(s) published.¹

CSU IP participants must read this publication in conjunction with the *Academic Guide for CSU IP Participants* (aka the “*Academic Guide*”). The *Academic Guide* contains academic policies which will be applied to all IP participants while abroad. Topics include but are not limited to CSU Registration, Enrollment Requirements, Minimum/Maximum Unit Load in a Semester, Attendance, Examinations, Assignment of Grades, Grading Symbols, Credit/No Credit Option, Course Withdrawals, and other policies. The *Academic Guide* also contains information on academic planning, how courses get credited to your degree, and the academic reporting process including when to expect your academic report at the end of your studies abroad.

To access the *Academic Guide*, go to our [website](#) and click the year which pertains to your study abroad period. For general information about the South Africa programs, refer to the CSU IP website under “[Programs](#)”.

Academic Program Information

CSU IP is affiliated with the Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa.

Opened on January 1, 2005, Nelson Mandela University, formerly known as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, was the result of a merger of three academic institutions and offers a range of academic, professional, and technical programs. The faculties are spread across these seven campuses and some programs may be available on more than one campus. The main campus of Nelson Mandela University, situated in Summerstrand, Gqeberha, is where most CSU IP students will be enrolled. Based on academic offerings, some students may take courses at other Nelson Mandela University campuses except for the Missionvale campus (due to its distance from the Summerstrand campus). The Nelson Mandela University website is < <http://www.mandela.ac.za> >.

Academic Year

The academic year in South Africa consists of two semesters. As the seasons are reversed from those in the Northern Hemisphere, the first semester begins in February and runs until late June or early July. The second semester begins in July and ends in late November or early December. Students can study for one semester or two semesters.

At Nelson Mandela University (NMU), each semester consists of at least 14 weeks of teaching, and has two terms which make up the semester as follows:

- Semester 1 classes run from February to June
- Semester 1 = Term 1 + Term 2
- Semester 2 classes run from July to November
- Semester 2 = Term 3 + Term 4

Students take a combination of half-semester (term) courses, full semester courses, and year-long courses. Single semester students will not be able to select courses which are year-long courses as these courses may not be taken as a semester course.

Academic Program

All CSU IP students beginning their studies at NMU are required to take:

¹ This bulletin has been updated to clarify retaking of exams and the assignment of the CSU grade of WU (Withdrawal Unauthorized). This clarification does not constitute a change in policy.

- Two Xhosa (isiXhosa) language courses during the semester. Students may also take a one semester Afrikaans course instead of two Xhosa language courses. Note that only letter grades will be reported to CSU campuses. If a student withdraws from these language courses without authorization from the CSU IP Office, a grade of 'WU' will be reported to the student's home campus, which is equivalent to an 'F' in GPA calculations.
- Courses to total a minimum of 15 CSU semester units not to exceed 20 units per semester.

Students who study for two consecutive semesters are required to take the following courses in their second semester:

- Two Xhosa (isiXhosa) language courses. Students may also take a one semester Afrikaans course instead of Xhosa.
- Community Development Service Learning in the second semester for two units of CSU academic credit. This course is given lower division credit and is given a letter grade.
- Courses to total a minimum of 15 CSU semester units not to exceed 20 units per semester.

Community Development Service Learning: This includes weekly instruction, an experiential component, and self-study each week for a period of 12 weeks. At the beginning of the course, students receive a four-hour site tour to possible placement sites and a site orientation after a placement is made.

Single semester students have the option of enrolling in Community Development Service Learning course for academic credit.

Academic year students are required to take Community Development Service Learning in their second semester. Normally, this course cannot be taken both semesters.

While in South Africa, CSU IP students are required to take a minimum of 15 CSU units each semester (comparable to the host university's normal load for its own students, which is 60 credits at NMU). Serious financial aid and academic consequences may result if fewer than the minimum required units are taken.

Any exceptions to the above requirements must be approved by the CSU IP Office. To request an exception, students must submit a General Petition Form located in their CSU IP portal (in their Academic Toolkit).

Registration

Registration is done online with in-person assistance during orientation week. Courses with prerequisites require academic approval in order to enroll for the module.

Academic Advising

The South African system of higher education is like the British model in that undergraduate students enroll in a program of study that is relatively fixed and highly focused within a particular subject area. Most degree programs take three years to complete. CSU students will enroll in courses within the approved field of study in which they are placed, following the same general plan as their South African counterparts.

Academic Culture

Academic expectations are high at the South African universities, particularly at the upper levels. Instruction takes a more independent approach, and academic expectations are less well defined than what students usually experience at CSU. Assigned readings and other class requirements may appear deceptively light. Lectures may be less structured than is usual at CSU; normally lectures do not repeat or review the reading material. Students are expected to set their own pace of mastering the subject matter and to incorporate readings and lectures into their schedule without detailed syllabi from instructors. Science courses include strong practical lab requirements and an advanced level of research technique skills.

Students should have good reading, note-taking, and creative-thinking habits. Written work is expected to demonstrate strong writing skills, critical interpretation of oral and written sources, and the clear and cogent expression of

understanding of the subject matter. Students should not make assumptions about a lack of academic rigor based on the seeming lack of English language skills by some students in lower-level courses. Former students have reported that some classes require more homework and considerably more reading than their CSU courses. Top grades require evidence of independent learning, originality of insight, familiarity with additional reading, and exceptional formulation and expression of ideas.

Students must make a special effort to find out the requirements and adapt to the pedagogy of their classes and not assume that they will be the same as they are at CSU. Fourth-year courses (“Honors” courses) are taught at a substantially higher level than second- and third-year courses; consequently, the standard of student work is expected to be much higher, and students are expected to have mastered academic research and writing skills.

The schedule for class meetings at universities in South Africa is somewhat different than at CSU. Most courses involve four 45-minute lectures each week for the duration of the semester, with additional 45-minute discussion classes (“tutorials”) held on a weekly or biweekly basis. Given the British background of higher education in South Africa, students may find that the relationship between students and instructors is more formal than what they have been accustomed to at their home campuses.

Course Codes, Course Levels and Unit Conversions

Students should be aware that there is a distinction between first-, second-, and third-year courses (called “modules”). First-year courses are usually introductory courses and taken by students in their first year of university study. Depending on course content, these are generally considered lower division courses with some exceptions. Most second-year courses are considered equivalent to upper division courses with some exceptions depending on course content. Third-year courses are more advanced and considered equivalent to upper division courses. American students will find that second- and third-year courses can require more prerequisites and students are expected to have met prerequisites if they wish to take the course.

CSU IP students with sophomore or junior standing should take first- and second-year courses while seniors should concentrate on taking second-year courses, and possibly third-year courses if they have the academic background to take the course. If in doubt about whether the course is a first-, second- or third-year course, students should look at the course description or ask their advisor at NMU during their academic advising sessions after arrival.

Each NMU course is given a unique course code number. The numbers represent the following levels (although there will be some exceptions depending on course content):

- 100 – 1999 First year (level) - lower division*
- 200 – 2999 Second year (level) - upper division*
- 300 – 3999 Third year (level) - upper division
- 400 – 4999 Fourth year (level) / honors - advanced upper division**
- 500 – 5999F Fifth year (level) / Masters - graduate**

*Some exceptions will apply depending on course content.

**Undergraduate students are not permitted to take courses numbered 400 and above unless approved by the CSU IP Office and NMU as these courses are very advanced.

Below is a table of how NMU credits convert to CSU units for semester-long courses with some exceptions:

Unit Conversion Guidelines	
NMU Credits	CSU Semester Units
4 - 5	1
6 - 9	2
10 - 14	3
15 - 19	4

20 - 25	5
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To calculate the CSU semester unit value for year-long courses, divide the NMU credit value by two and use the unit conversion table above. For example, if a year-long course has a total of 36 units, the course would be worth four (4) CSU semester units each semester.

Students are required to take a minimum of 60 NMU credits each semester which is approximately 15-16 CSU semester units.

Assessment and Grading

CSU IP participants are required to meet all academic requirements as determined by the host university departments. They must take all examinations, meet all course requirements, and carry out all laboratory/field work. It is also important that students become familiar with the test-taking policies by reading these policies after arrival at their host university and again before taking exams. CSU students are expected to comply with the policies implemented by their host university as well as CSU IP.

Grading systems used in South Africa differ from the system used at CSU, so students should not be shocked by the numerical marks that they receive on their papers and exams. Assignments and exams are given a percentage grade that in most cases is much lower than what would be expected according to the usual CSU scale for comparable work done at home. For example, excellent work, which would earn an A at CSU, may be given a grade of 75 percent. It is quite normal for average work to be marked 60-65, and marks in the 60s are considered indicative of good, solid work.

The numerical grades are converted into CSU equivalent letter grades by the CSU IP before being reported to student's home campus registrar.

Exams/Final Assessments

Most South African universities place considerable emphasis on the final written exam given at the end of each semester course. Permission to take the final exam will require a certain percentage of class attendance and a certain level of achievement on assignments and classroom performance. Final exams are held in designated locations, not in the rooms where classes are held.

The university sets the exam schedule, and the Assessments and Graduation office publishes it by e-mailing it to all students. Students must take the initiative to check the draft and especially the final schedule of exams; students cannot expect anyone to tell them to do so. **The exam schedule is not flexible.** Exam dates cannot be changed to accommodate travel plans, so students must book their return tickets after the last day of the exam period since the exam schedule is only published a month before the exam commences. Arrangements for early exams are not permissible for any reason. **All exams must be taken at the host university unless they are being taken online.**

All final exams typically take the form of a three-hour exam in which students are given a set of questions and are required to write essay answers to three or four of them. Some courses use multiple-choice questions for at least part of the exam. The grade obtained on such an exam typically counts for about 60 percent of the final grade for the course; assignments and tests during the semester make up the remaining 40 percent. In other courses, continuous assessment is conducted throughout the semester and takes the place of final examinations.

CSU IP participants are not permitted to retake exams once students have completed their studies without CSU IP approval.

Grading

Grading at NMU is done through a percentage system. Below is the grade conversion that is used to convert NMU grades to the CSU.

NMU Grades	CSU Grade
75-100	A
70-74	B+
65-69	B

60-64	B-
57-59	C+
54-56	C
51-53	C-
50	D
00-49	F

The CSU grade of WU (Withdrawal Unauthorized) may be given in some circumstances. Refer to the Academic Guide for additional grade information.

Course Offerings

Students select courses offered only at the Summerstrand (South) Campus except in some instances when this is not possible and modules in the student’s area of study are not available at the Summerstrand Campus. Students are advised to consult the university’s website for course offerings, keeping in mind that CSU IP students are limited to the disciplines indicated in the following table, and sometimes to courses for international students.

Most courses are offered once each year and some courses are not offered every year. Most departments issue syllabi, course outlines, reading lists, and assignments. Faculty members are generally available after-class consultation and during posted office hours.

Admission to courses is subject to availability, approval of the host university and the particular department’s prerequisites.

It is extremely important that students communicate their selection of courses to Nelson Mandela University representatives to ensure that courses are available and that they meet course prerequisites.

Academic Terminology

In order to search for courses to take at NMU using their website, you will need to understand the academic terminology used by universities in South Africa, which will be used in the rest of this section.

CSU Terminology	S. African Terminology
bulletin or catalog	prospectus
course	module
degree	qualification
academic division	faculty
major or program of study	course
schedule of classes	timetable

Academic Areas of Study

CSU IP students are admitted to study in one of the following areas listed in the left column of the table below. The right column shows the corresponding faculty at NMU in which students can take modules in their area of study (subject to the conditions stated under “Course Offerings”). Note that students are only allowed to choose undergraduate modules. These are modules with modules codes that start with the numbers 1, 2, or 3. For example - LMC102, LMC202, LMC303.

Areas of study	Relevant modules can be found in the following faculties (course prefix codes are also listed below)
Accounting	Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences (RV, REV, ROV, RTV, RKV)
African Studies	Students can look at various departments to find relevant courses.

Anthropology	Faculty of Humanities (SAV)
Architecture	Faculty of Humanities (DBS, DKP, DKD, DHA, DPA, KESV, ATV, ACUV)
Biology (including Marine Biology/Science and Zoology)	Faculty of Sciences (BCV, BMV, BOTV, ZOOV)
Business and Economics	Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences Faculty of Humanities (EB, EBMV, EZAV, EZBV, EZCV, EZDV, EZEV, EZZV)
Computer Science	Faculty of Science, School of Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics and Statistics (WRAV, WRCV, WRFV, WRIV, WRWV)
Engineering	Faculty of Engineering, The Built Environment & Technology (WIH, WCN. EMAR, MMDV)
English and Literature	Faculty of Humanities, Department of Literature and Language (LESV, LLEV)
Environmental Science (including Geography)	Faculty of Sciences (GENV, GEOV, GGLV, ZOOV)
History	Faculty of Humanities (SSHV), School of Government and Social Sciences
Hospitality Management	Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences (BACC, BCC, TEHM, EZS, EBHM, EBEB, STBS)
Journalism	Faculty of Humanities (JMC, JMP, JMI, JIF, JAR, LMCV)
Kinesiology	Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Human Movement Science (HMD, HSD, HMSV)
Linguistics	Faculty of Humanities (students need to be fluent in either Afrikaans, isiXhosa or French in order to take undergraduate linguistics modules) LTTV, TFPV, LXSX
Mathematics	Faculty of Science, School of Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics and Statistics (MATT)
Music	Faculty of Humanities, School of Music, Department of Music (MFPV, MGSV, MCCV, MKSV, MSPV, MTSV)
Philosophy	Faculty of Humanities, School of Language, Media and Culture, Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy (SFV)
Photography	Faculty of Humanities, School of Music, Art and Design, Department of Art and Design Bachelor of Visual Arts (KPP, KDS, KTD)
Political Science (Government/International Relations/Global Studies)	Faculty of Humanities (SLPV, SLCV), School of Governmental and Social Sciences
Physics	Faculty of Science, School of Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics and Statistics (FVV)
Psychology	Faculty of Health Sciences (SPV)
Sociology	Faculty of Humanities (SSV, SSAV, SSSV), School of Governmental and Social Sciences (SS, SSA, SSS)

To search for information about modules (courses) offered, watch an [instruction video](#) on how to search for module descriptions. NMU's main webpage is: <https://www.mandela.ac.za/>. Note: Module information for 2024 (prospectus and timetables) was not available at the time that this publication was printed. Students are advised to check the NMU website periodically for updates.

Contact Information

For questions about courses, registration, or the university, contact Mr. Johannes Van Rensburg at Johannes.VanRensburg@mandela.ac.za. For questions about CSU IP academic policies and requirements, email csuip@calstate.edu or IPacademics@calstate.edu