

## Studying in SA: study permits

*Note: This article is currently under review as the regulations covering immigration and visas have been changed. In the meantime, please visit the Department of Home Affairs at [www.dha.gov.za](http://www.dha.gov.za) for more information.*

Read more:

- South Africa tightens immigration rules
- South Africa opens new visa facilitation centres
- South Africa to enforce new regulations on travelling with kids

Are you an international student considering enrolling at a South African educational institution? Here's information on study permit requirements and application procedures, and answers to some frequently asked questions.

*Note: This information is meant to serve as a guide only. Requirements for studying in South Africa are subject to change, and each application is treated as an individual case. Always make enquiries before travelling to South Africa.*

### Where can I find out about study permits?

You should make enquiries at your nearest South African office abroad (see the 'SA offices abroad' box on the right) or to the [Home Affairs office](#) closest to the institution where you will be studying.

**Postal address:** The Department of Home Affairs  
Subdirector: Temporary Residence  
Private Bag X114  
Pretoria, 0001  
South Africa  
**Contact centre:** 0800 601 190 (inside SA) or +27 (11) 461-9252 (abroad)  
**email:** [skills@dha.gov.za](mailto:skills@dha.gov.za)

### Info and enquiries on the Internet

Make the Department of Home Affairs' information on [applying for temporary residency](#) your first stop.

### Who needs a study permit?

If you are an international student intending to study in South Africa – whether at a primary, secondary, or tertiary educational institution – you must first apply for and be granted a study permit. A South African educational institution cannot register an international student until a valid study permit has been issued. If someone in your family is taking up a job in South Africa and you plan to attend school or another educational institution, you also need to apply for a study permit.

## Apply for your study permit before you leave

Apply for your study permit, and await the outcome of your application, *before* leaving for South Africa. The fact that you have been accepted by a South African educational institution does not guarantee that you will be issued with a study permit. And you cannot enter South Africa on a visitor's visa and then apply for a study permit.

- See [Visiting South Africa](#) for more information about basic requirements for entry

## How to apply for your study permit

Once you have received conditional acceptance from the South African educational institution you want to attend, complete a study permit application and submit it to your nearest South African office abroad (see box on the right).

Your application must be accompanied by:

- Your passport, which should be valid for at least 30 days more than the application period.
- The relevant permit fee (cash or bank-guaranteed cheque). [Contact Home Affairs](#) for the latest fee.
- Proof that you are financially able to pay your tuition fees and have adequate means of support. You will need to submit three months' worth of bank statements.
- Proof of medical or health insurance cover that is registered or recognised in South Africa.
- A repatriation guarantee. Unless you have a written undertaking of support from a South African, you will need to lodge a cash deposit equivalent to the value of a return ticket. In the case of African students, proof that your country has signed a written undertaking to pay costs for deportation should it become necessary. However, if your course is less than a year, or you will be attending a religious institution, you will be exempt from this requirement, and you only need a valid return/onward ticket.
- A medical certificate and a radiological report (chest X-ray) or skin TB test.
- If you are a minor – that is, under 18 – you will need written permission from both parents or sole custody parent, along with proof of sole custody.
- If you are a minor, you must supply particulars of the person in South Africa who will act as your guardian and a letter of confirmation from the intended guardian.
- An official letter from the institution in South Africa confirming your acceptance and detailing the duration of the course.
- If you are older than 18, a police clearance certificate.

Make sure you've got copies of your application forms and all the supporting documents.

## Permit application forms

You'll need to complete BI-1738. Only original forms will be accepted.

## How long does it take?

It usually takes around six weeks for a study permit to be processed. It's a good idea to make your application as early as possible. If you are applying for a renewal, you should do so at least 30 days before the expiry date of your original visa.

### **When should I renew my study permit?**

Study permits are generally valid for the duration of the course for which they were granted, or for three years for school and two years for other institutions. Depending on what your original visa stipulates, you may have to apply for a new permit if you plan to change your course of study or institution.

### **If I am here on a study permit, can I work?**

If you have a valid study permit, you are allowed to work part-time for no more than 20 hours a week (although not during academic vacations).

If you plan to work as part of your studies or to get work experience, you will need to apply for permission from Home Affairs and include:

- A formal offer to do practical training.
- Consent from the educational institution.
- Proof that you are still a registered student.

### **I'll be back soon. Will I need a re-entry visa?**

If you are in South Africa on a valid study permit, and you leave the country temporarily, you will *not* need a re-entry visa, provided your permit does not expire while you are out of the country. This holds even though your permit may have "single entry" endorsed on it.

### **I've been offered to join an exchange programme. Do I need a study permit?**

If you are younger than 25 and wish to participate in a cultural, economic or social exchange programme, you must apply for an exchange permit, not a study permit. Your eligibility will also depend on who is administering the programme.

Exchange permits are generally valid for the duration of the programme, and they may not be renewed or extended. If you should be issued with an exchange permit, you will not qualify for a temporary residence permit until you have lived outside South Africa for at least 12 months.

The requirements for these permits are slightly different to study permits so contact your nearest South African office abroad (see the 'SA offices abroad' box on the right) or to the [Home Affairs office](#) closest to the institution where you will be studying for more information.

- See the Department of Home Affairs' [requirements for exchange permits](#)

*Source: SAinfo reporter and the [Department of Home Affairs](#)*

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