

FASS First Year Survival Guide

Stepping into university life is exciting—and at times, overwhelming. You're not expected to have everything figured out from day one. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), together with Stellenbosch University's support network, offers a wide circle of people and services to help you navigate your studies, look after your wellbeing, and find your place on campus. Keep this guide handy—it's your compass when things feel uncertain.



Understanding Your Studies

Starting university introduces a few new structures and terms, and understanding them will help you navigate your first year with confidence.

Your **programme** is the full qualification you're working toward — for example, a BA Humanities, BA International Studies or BMus. Within each programme, you will explore different **disciplines** — broad fields of study such as History, Philosophy, or Psychology. These disciplines are housed in departments, which oversee teaching, assessments, and student support. FASS has 18 departments, located across the Arts & Social Sciences Building, the Krotoa Building, the Visual Arts Building, the Journalism building, Adam Small, and the Conservatory.

Your programme is built around **modules**, the individual courses you register for that shape your academic year. Some programmes allow more flexibility in choosing modules, while others are more structured. Be sure to consult the **FASS Yearbook** when selecting modules to ensure you meet all the requirements of your programme

(visit <https://www.su.ac.za/en/about/governance/registrar/yearbooks>).



Modules carry **credits**, which reflect how much work they involve. As you pass modules, these credits convert to **HEMIS** points — a record of your academic progress. Over time, your programme builds up from modules and credits to a full degree. Your Timetable

At Stellenbosch, the academic year is divided into two **semesters**, each of which is made up of two terms.

You can tell **when** a module is offered in the year by its module code (i.e. Philosophy **152**). The **middle number** shows the teaching period:

- 1–3 first semester (e.g., Sociology **114**)
- 4–6 second semester (e.g., Philosophy **152**)
- 7–8 year-long module (e.g., English **178**)

Understanding this helps you plan your timetable, manage your workload, and avoid conflicts. Knowing your module schedule in advance gives you clarity, control, and confidence as you navigate your first year.

Your **timetable** is generated automatically based on the modules you register for and is always available through your mySUN portal or the official SU timetable page. If you notice any issues, you can contact Maudriel Classen for assistance (maudriel@sun.ac.za).



For anything related to registration, credit transfers or programme changes, the **Faculty Officers** in Admin A are available at askfass@sun.ac.za

At the start of each module, you'll receive a **course or module outline**, typically in class or on SunLearn. Think of it as your roadmap: it explains what you'll study, how you'll be assessed, important deadlines, and any required readings or materials. If you ever feel unsure about course content, assessments, or module expectations, your first point of contact should always be your lecturer or module tutor — they're there to provide guidance and support. You can find their details on your course outline.



Class Attendance is Key to Success

Your modules are built around lectures, tutorials, and/or practical sessions. Attending classes is crucial—not just for absorbing content, but for connecting with your lecturers, tutors, and classmates. Regular attendance helps you understand the material, keep up with assessments, and develop the study habits that will carry you through your degree. Research shows that students who miss classes are far less likely to pass or graduate. Each class is an opportunity: to ask questions, clarify concepts, and deepen your learning. The more you engage, the more confident and prepared you'll feel for assignments and exams.

4



Faculty Support & Academic Guidance

Don't worry if you're new and things feel unfamiliar. The Faculty has support services designed to guide you through academics, personal challenges or administrative matters.

Our Student Support Coordinator, Khanyisa Xinwa is your first port of call for general guidance or referrals to academic advisors and specialist services. You can email her at khanyisa@sun.ac.za or visit Room 460 in the Arts & Social Sciences Building.

Keep an eye out for the lunch-time sessions Khanyisa will be hosting this year, together with the Vice-Dean Teaching and Learning. These sessions will offer practical academic guidance and introduce you to many of the role-players mentioned in this guide. They will also be a great opportunity to ask questions, get advice, and meet other first-years.



The Stellenbosch University Library is one of your most valuable academic resources. It's far more than a place to borrow books—it's a learning hub where you can study, explore digital resources, and get expert help with your research. Librarians can guide you in finding reliable academic source and using databases. You'll also have access to a wide range of online journals, e-books, and subject-specific guides through the library website. These tools are essential for assignments, essays, and exam preparation, and they're available to you anywhere, on or off campus.

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FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Wellbeing & Personal Support

University life brings change — new routines, new demands and sometimes new stresses. You do not have to navigate it alone.

The **Centre for Student Counselling & Development (CSCD)** offers confidential support for mental health, academic adjustment, and personal challenges. Through CSCD, you have access to:

- Psychotherapeutic support and counselling for emotional or psychosocial needs;
- Academic counselling to help with study strategies, time management or career planning;
- Social support services — including help for students facing food insecurity or in need of work-readiness guidance.



Visit: <https://www.sun.ac.za/en/students/support/counselling>

Contact: supportus@sun.ac.za
021 808 4707

There is also an **Anonymous Student Self-Help Portal** for online resources to help you cope, plan and manage your wellbeing: <https://selfhelp.sun.ac.za/>

If you have a medical condition — temporary or ongoing — that might affect your assessments, you may apply for concessions. Valid medical documentation is required; contact concessions@sun.ac.za or disability@sun.ac.za or Khanyisa Xinwa for guidance.

Remember: reaching out isn't a sign of weakness — it's a sign of strength and self-awareness.

Academic Literacy

If you need help improving your academic writing or reading, the Language Centre's Writing & Reading Lab can assist with essays, assignments and study texts. Contact skryflab@sun.ac.za or call 021 808 2989.

Funding Your Studies

Managing the cost of university can feel challenging, but support is available. The Bursaries and Loans Office provides guidance on bursaries, loans, and financial aid applications, helping you explore your options and stay on track with your studies. You can contact them via email at studentegelde@sun.ac.za or visit Admin A for assistance.



Accommodation Support

Finding the right place to live is an important part of settling into university life. The Accommodation Office can help with placements in university residences as well as advice on private accommodation. They provide guidance on applications, housing options, and support for any accommodation-related queries. You can reach them by calling the Client Services Centre (021 808 9111)

Student Representation & Community

Being part of FASS isn't just about lectures and exams — it's also about building community, making your voice heard, and shaping student life. The BA Student Committee (BASC) organises faculty-level events and represents student interests within FASS. Contact them at basc@sun.ac.za or visit Room 200b, 2nd Floor, Arts & Social Sciences Building.



Welcome to FASS

Your first year will bring new challenges, new friendships, and plenty of growth. You don't have to figure everything out on your own. There's a community here that wants to see you succeed — academically, personally, and socially.