

Attention: Civil Engineering Prospective Students

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

GENERAL MATTERS AND TERM DATES

Who should read this FAQ?

The FAQ is aimed at prospective students who had applied to study Civil Engineering at Stellenbosch University and were provisionally accepted to start with studies at Stellenbosch University early in 2019. Parents, guardians and bursary providers of prospective students may also be interested to read the FAQ.

How can I contact the Civil Engineering Department?

Feel free to visit us at the Civil Engineering Department, send an online query, email or call. The Department contact details are given at:
<http://civeng.sun.ac.za/contact/>

Alternatively feel free to send a WhatsApp to the Department cell phone number if you have any queries relating to acceptance:
082 460 5719

We have set up a WhatsApp broadcast group for all provisionally accepted students. If you would like to join the group, make sure you add the Department cell phone number to your contacts, and send us a WhatsApp with the text, "Please add me to the Civil Engineering WhatsApp broadcast group."

You can also follow us on the Civil Engineering Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/CivilEngineeringStellenboschUniversity/>

What is studying Civil Engineering going to cost me?

For provisional 2019 study fees, go to:
<https://web-apps.sun.ac.za/student-fees-estimate/#/home>

When does the University open for business early in 2019?

Your matric marks would probably be finalised late in December, so students may have queries relating to acceptance over the holiday period. The office of the Civil Engineering Department will re-open for business on 7 January 2019. Mrs Alet De Waal-Louw will be available in the Civil Engineering Department to assist with any queries after this date:
<http://civeng.sun.ac.za/contact/>

When would I need to arrive on campus to study if I choose Civil Engineering @ Stellenbosch?

Key dates for the start of the 2019 academic year include:

- 22 January: Start of welcoming programme for international students.
- 25 January: Welcoming of new 1st year students and their parents.
- 4 February: Start of classes, Term 1.
- 20 March: Last day of classes for Term 1.
- University recess (holiday): 21-31 March.

If you have been accepted to one of the University residences they will provide the arrival date for new first years. Check with the residence, who will generally communicate quite well with their students.

ACCEPTANCE AND CAREER

How many candidates apply to study Civil Engineering at Stellenbosch? How many are accepted?

The number of applicants notably exceeds the number of available spaces each year to allow for some who eventually decide not to register for Civil Engineering. Only the best candidates are accepted up to a maximum limit, as determined by available resources. We focus on accepting the best candidates – student quality rather than quantity. In 2018 a total of 170 new students started their studies in Civil Engineering.

How would my matric marks affect my provisional acceptance?

Your matric marks are used to calculate the final score for entry to the B.Eng. programme. You will only finally know which programme(s) at which Universities you were accepted for after conclusion of the final matric results. You should be able to recalculate your own marks and see whether you will be accepted with certainty.

The selection score is calculated as follows:

Selection score = Mathematics mark (%) + Physical Science mark (%) + (6 x Average % mark)

The minimum selection score for Civil Engineering is currently 610, but you also need to gain at least 75% for Mathematics and 65% for Physical Science. A limited number of applicants that had not been selected for the B.Eng. programme will be considered for admission to the Extended Degree Programme. The EDP admission and selection requirements differ from the above.

I have provisional acceptance to Civil Engineering. If my matric marks are the same or better than the Grade 11 marks used to calculate my provisional acceptance, would I be certain of acceptance to study Civil Engineering?

Yes. If you are uncertain about this or have not received correspondence in this regard, please contact the Department directly.

If my matric marks were lower than the marks used to calculate my provisional acceptance, would I automatically drop off the list and lose my acceptance to study Civil Engineering?

No. If your matric marks are lower than the Grade 11 mark, that was used to determine your provisional acceptance, then you fall in a “grey area”, but you do not necessarily lose acceptance. These candidates are considered for entry to the programme by the Engineering Faculty and Civil Departmental management. Entry for these persons depends on the total number of applicants who have already gained entry with marks above the required score, thus filling up the number of available spaces. The new cohort would fill up with additional names until all the available spaces have been filled.

I applied for various different programmes (e.g. computer science, medical, engineering), or for different programmes at Stellenbosch Engineering Faculty (e.g. Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Process, Industrial), or maybe at different Universities as well.

How do I know which courses I have been accepted for – and which I should enrol for if I have more than one option?

The Department of Civil Engineering has a list of names of provisional 1st year students who have been accepted for Civil Engineering in 2019. Feel free to contact the Civil Engineering Department if you are unsure. We would be able to confirm your status.

Civil Engineering cannot gain access to the provisional acceptance lists of other institutions or other Departments, but we would be glad to assist you with any queries about Civil Engineering. We would love to have you enrol at Civil Engineering and hope to see you next year.

Once I have selected an Engineering programme (e.g. Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Process, Industrial), could I switch to another programme?

Yes. Switching between programmes within the Stellenbosch Engineering faculty within the first semester involves some administrative work, but is quite easy. You should be able to switch without any complications, provided that your matric marks were good enough to gain access to the selected programme. Switching between programmes within the Stellenbosch Engineering faculty after the first year is possible, but may involve catching up a missed course (depending on which programme you were enrolled for initially and which one you want to switch to).

With regards to switching between Universities after enrolling, this is possible but becomes more complicated the further you progress with the programme from 1st year to 4th year. Most students who switched from other Institutions to Stellenbosch University in the past did so after the 1st year (or 2nd year) when it is quite uncomplicated. If you plan to do so, make sure you pass all first year modules before the switch.

Would I be employable as Civil Engineering graduate in South Africa and could I work abroad?

Yes on both counts. Our graduates are highly regarded by Civil Engineering firms and typically find employment before graduating, or shortly after graduating. A good study record would place you in a strong position, while a poor study record may hamper your chances.

A number of our graduates find employment abroad, especially after registration with the South African Engineering Council (ECSA) as professional engineers. International recognition of your degree and subsequent ECSA registration by signature countries of the Washington Accord is useful in this regard. Read more here, also to see the list of signature countries:
<https://www.ecsa.co.za/SitePages/WashingtonAccord.aspx>

Could I progress with postgraduate studies abroad after graduating?

Yes. A number of our students have progressed immediately after graduating to further studies (master's and even doctorates) abroad, including highly rated institutions in the UK, Europe, Canada, etc.

What is my career path provided that I graduate with the Civil Engineering degree?

It is all up to you. The most common employment options for Civil Engineers include consulting firms, contracting firms and places of governance, who typically control large sums of money to fund infrastructure projects. At large corporate employers, you are likely to work on projects with budgets in the tens- or hundreds of million Rands.

The best part of Civil Engineering is the flexibility offered by this career path. You could work with small projects or huge projects; indoors or outdoors; work fixed office hours or have highly flexible hours; could travel a lot or choose to work online at home; you could face a computer screen, type reports, use software suites, employ smart metering technology, and even fly drones as part of your work. Our past graduates have found employment in the financial sector and banking, export farming, insurance industry, senior management, software development and computer programming, property development and logistics. Some find employment as academics and researchers.

Recently we have noticed a strong drive by entrepreneurs, inventors and dreamers to take a risk by starting small and setting up their own firm, or micro-enterprise. Stellenbosch University encourages this practice – and it is linked to job-creation. The University “Launch Lab” is well established with a number of success stories and has been established for this purpose (see below). As a Civil Engineer you could make a living by living your dream.

What is the Launch Lab?

LaunchLab is located about 3min walk from the Civil Engineering building and facilitates valuable connections between startups and corporates. It is a great platform for students with innovative ideas and big dreams to start a micro-enterprise.

<https://launchlab.co.za/>

ACADEMIC

What is the language policy at the University and how is it implemented in Civil Engineering?

The University language policy and implementation plan are available at:
<http://www.sun.ac.za/afrikaans/faculty/eng/language>

All undergraduate programmes are accessible for students who studied in Afrikaans or English at school. The language offering is broadly as follows: Modules of the first year and the first semester of the second year, with a few exceptions, are offered in both English and Afrikaans lectures (parallel sessions in different class groups); in the other modules English lectures are offered, with simultaneous interpreting to Afrikaans in the second year and Afrikaans summaries in the third year.

All test and exam papers are made available in both English and Afrikaans and students are free to write any paper or assignment in either English or Afrikaans.

All postgraduate programmes are offered in English.

Can I cope at University if I cannot understand any Afrikaans?

Yes – a number of students in the Civil Engineering programme, including international exchange students, cannot understand any Afrikaans.

What language is used in textbooks and class notes?

All textbooks used in all years are published in English. However, in some modules you will receive additional notes, or PowerPoint slides, available in English and Afrikaans.

In which language would I submit assignments and project reports?

The student has the option to use either English or Afrikaans.

I would love to know the typical profile of students in a class, but it is hard to get reliable information anywhere?

The profile of students in class varies notably from year to year and group to group. A sample was taken from a 3rd year Civil Engineering module in 2018 to gain some insight. Remember that students pick the home language from a list when registering in the first year, and many select English or Afrikaans even though they may in fact speak a different home language. In the particular group for 2018 the home language mix (with all cultural groups included) was: 50% Afrikaans, 35% English, and 15% other. A few years ago the same module had almost 10% German students, while another year group comprised almost 10% students from Zimbabwe. Be sure, your 1st year group will be unique, and special.

What language would I use to communicate with my lecturers?

Individual students typically communicate with lecturers naturally in the language in which they feel most comfortable, when outside the formal classroom environment. All academic staff in our Department are fluent in English, while some individuals may be able to speak additional languages. About 90% of the academic staff in our Department are also fluent in Afrikaans.

Afrikaans is widely used in individual discussions between Afrikaans students and those lecturers who are comfortable in Afrikaans, for example in tutorials, informal discussion after class and in practicals. You can opt to speak Afrikaans exclusively when doing individual student projects such as your final year report, when you have regular one-on-one meetings. Afrikaans final year students often present their final year oral examinations in Afrikaans.

Do I need a drawing board?

Yes you do, but the University has a system by which you could order the required drawing board after being accepted – it gets delivered to the Faculty. You will of course be exposed to 3D CAD drawing, but at present drawing boards are still used to teach certain concepts.

Do I need to buy textbooks?

Yes. All prescribed textbooks are ordered during the orientation week.

Do I need to bring my own laptop, tablet, or computer?

No. All computers and related equipment such as printers, scanners and software products that you may need are available in the computer lab. The FIRGA computer room provides access exclusively to engineering students. Read more on:
<http://rga.sun.ac.za/firga/>

CAMPUS LIFE

How do I find accommodation?

The application process for University residences for 2019 has closed. The Engineering Faculty has no control over local accommodation. You could contact local estate agents, or consult private advertising sites online. Those with Apple devices could ask Siri for help.

The SU International office provides a special service intended for international students, and provide help with finding accommodation for international students at this link:
<https://www0.sun.ac.za/international/about/accommodation-in-stellenbosch.htmls>

What is the internet speed on campus?

The internet on the LAN provides about 100mbps in the FIRGA computer room. The WiFi speed is much lower.

Can I link my cell phone to the University Internet?

Yes. You can link up to 5 devices on your account.

Do I have to pay for internet use?

Yes – it is a pay-as-you go system and is linked to your student account. The cost varies from year to year. The current rates are available here:
<http://rga.sun.ac.za/firga/>

More information regarding printing & copying, internet access, personalised email addresses, WiFi and IT-related issues is available from:

<http://rga.sun.ac.za/firga/>

Where can students (who are not in “res”) get food?

The Engineering faculty has its own cafeteria called “Chalk Board”, but the “Neelsie” student centre is about 5min walk away from Civil Engineering, with a large variety of options, including the best coffee in the world. Another cafeteria close to the Civil Engineering building is located in the Launch Lab. In addition, the town of Stellenbosch offers numerous restaurants and cafés.

Do I need a car? Is parking available if I decide to drive to campus, or own a car?

Stellenbosch University, the surrounding campus area and the town centre are very accessible by foot and bicycle, so a car is not necessary for student life. The University also provides a free shuttle service between key University locations, including the Engineering Faculty, Coetzenburg sporting facilities, Neelsie centre, and the University gymnasium.

Stellenbosch, generally, has a parking problem. Parking is available at the Engineering Faculty for students. Use of the access controlled parking area at Civil Engineering has to be applied for online and comes at a cost. First year students may also apply for parking. For more information on university parking see:

<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/welcome/Pages/Parking.aspx>