



TEFL IBERIA

SPANISH VISA GUIDE

SOUTH AFRICA

USE THIS GUIDE TO DIRECT YOU THROUGH
EACH AND EVERY STEP INVOLVED
IN STARTING A NEW LIFE IN SPAIN

2027 edition

WELCOME TO TEFL IBERIA

If you're reading this, you're thinking of starting a new adventure in Barcelona! We couldn't be more excited for you, and we hope you feel the same.

Before you set off, there are a few important pieces of paperwork to take care of. But don't worry, we're here to help. This guide walks you step by step through the student visa process, which is essential for your legal status in Spain.

If you have a question at any point, our coordination team is here to help:

Coordination team

coordination@tefl-iberia.com

We'll do our best to make the process as stress free as possible.

¡Hasta pronto!

UPDATED OCTOBER 2026



Let's get
STARTED

tefliberia

Why a student visa?

South African citizens need a visa to visit Spain, even for a short stay. To live and work there for longer, you need a long-stay visa, like everyone else from outside the EU.

A work visa is hard to get: your employer has to sponsor you, which is expensive and complicated, and show that no EU candidate could do the job.

A far easier option is a student visa. You need a course of at least 20 hours a week, and once your employer gets a work permit for you, you can work up to 30 hours a week. We'll help you both with the paperwork.

Our student visa programme starts with the 4-week Trinity CertTESOL in Barcelona, followed by 6 or 11 months of Spanish, 20 hours a week (09:30 to 13:30), at our accredited partner Spanish school, with occasional teacher development workshops. Classes are in the morning, as most English teaching work is in the afternoon.

[See our student visa programmes](#), and our [Dates & Fees page](#) for prices.

The next steps guide you through applying for a Spanish student visa and the documents you need.



STEP 1

Choose your visa type

There are 2 types of student visa. Which one you need depends on how long you plan to stay in Spain and whether you'd like to work.

Short-term (up to 180 days)

- Fewer documents and less paperwork.
- You can't work, or renew your visa from Spain.

Long-term (over 180 days, so 7 months or more)

- You can work up to 30 hours a week once your employer gets a work permit for you.
- You can renew your visa from Spain.
- You also need a police clearance certificate.

Both our programmes (7 or 12 months) need a long-term visa. We strongly recommend the 12-month option, even if you're not sure you'll stay a full year: most of our students end up wanting to stay at least 12 months.

When to apply: at least 2 months before your Spanish course starts. Your student visa then starts 1 month before the course. Talk to us before you book your CertTESOL dates. Some documents have a time limit (see Step 2).

Documents required	Short-term visa	Long-term visa
Passport	✓	✓
Visa application form	✓	✓
Visa fee	✓	✓
Enrolment letter	✓	✓
Passport photo	✓	✓
Proof of funds	✓	✓
Health insurance	✓	✓
Medical certificate (Cape Town: long-term only)	✓	✓
Proof of address	✓	✓
SAPS police clearance certificate		✓

Got questions about your documents?

CONTACT US: COORDINATION@TEFL-IBERIA.COM

STEP 2

Gather your documents

For any student visa

- **Visa application form** ([download here](#)) and a recent passport photo. [Here](#) is an example of a completed form, and we'll help you fill yours in.
- **Your passport**, issued in the last 10 years, with at least 2 blank pages, plus a photocopy of the page with your details. Pretoria and BLS want it valid for at least 1 year, and Cape Town for your whole stay.
- **Enrolment letter** from our accredited partner Spanish school for full-time study (20 hours a week), with your course dates and timetable and proof that your course is paid. We send you the letter in Spanish (or in Spanish and English) as soon as you've paid, so it doesn't need a translation.
- **Visa fee** of R1,775, plus BLS's service charge of R333. You pay both at the BLS centre by debit or credit card (Visa or Mastercard); BLS doesn't take cash. The fee isn't refundable.
- **Proof of funds** of **€600 a month** for your stay (Spain's IPREM in 2026), for example €4,200 for 7 months. Pretoria asks for 6 months of bank statements, originals stamped by your bank (or a notarised letter from your parents with 6 months of their statements). Cape Town gives no number of months. Prepaid accommodation reduces the amount you need.
- **Health insurance** from an insurer authorised in Spain, with the same cover as Spain's public health system, for your whole stay. Pretoria adds: no co-payments, reimbursements or waiting periods, any limit at least €30,000, and no travel insurance. *For a quote, contact Lluís López at Atlantida, llopez@atlantida.net.*
- **Medical certificate** from a registered doctor, stating that you have no disease that could have serious public health consequences under the International Health Regulations (2005). Pretoria asks for it from everyone, issued no more than 3 months before you apply, with its own wording (next page). Cape Town asks for it for stays over 180 days. It needs an apostille and a sworn translation (see page 7).
- **Proof of address** in your office's area, such as a bill, a bank statement or your driving licence.

You hand in your application at a BLS centre, by appointment, and leave your passport there while your application is processed. The visa is a sticker fixed to one of its pages.

STEP 2

Gather your documents

For a long-term visa (over 180 days)

- **All the documents on the previous page**
- **Police clearance certificate** from the South African Police Service (SAPS), plus a police certificate from any other country you've lived in during the last 5 years. Each one needs an apostille and a sworn translation into Spanish (see the next page).
 1. Apply to SAPS for your police clearance certificate.
 2. Get the apostille from DIRCO.
 3. Get it translated. Our sworn translator gives TEFL Iberia students a 10% discount (see Useful links).

Police certificate: Cape Town, issued no more than 90 days before you apply; Pretoria, no more than 6 months.

Medical certificate (Pretoria): issued no more than 3 months before you apply.

DIRCO won't apostille a police clearance certificate that's more than 6 months old.

For a stay of over 6 months, Pretoria issues a visa valid for 1 year and Cape Town one valid for 90 days. Either way, within 1 month of arriving in Spain you apply for your foreigner identity card (TIE), which you then use for the rest of your stay. With our Premium Visa & Bureaucracy Service, we book the appointment for you.

Applying for a long-term visa? You need one more document, and two of your documents have a time limit.

Tips for your application

- **Check your office's own list** before you apply: the requirements differ from one office to the other (see Step 3).
- **Bring the original and a photocopy** of every document.
- **Time your police certificate:** in Cape Town's area it must be no more than 90 days old when you apply, so don't ask for it too early.
- **Don't book flights** until you have your visa.

Applying in Pretoria? The Embassy asks for the medical certificate to say, in these words or similar:

"This health certificate states that Mr./Mrs. (...) does not suffer from any of the diseases that may have serious public health repercussions in accordance with what is stipulated by the International Health Regulations of 2005"
Your doctor must be registered, and the certificate needs a sworn translation into Spanish. Cape Town doesn't prescribe a sentence: follow its own requirements (see Step 3).

Police clearance and the apostille

Your SAPS police clearance certificate

You apply directly to the South African Police Service, Criminal Record and Crime Scene Management. SAPS sets the requirements, the fee and the processing time: see www.saps.gov.za (FAQs, Police Clearance Certificates).

DIRCO only apostilles the **original** certificate as SAPS issued it: not a copy, not laminated, and no more than 6 months old. Avoid unregistered agents: DIRCO warns that police certificates from “alternative channels” are often counterfeit.

What is an apostille?

An apostille is a certificate fixed to a South African public document so that it's recognised in Spain. For police and medical certificates, it comes from the Legalisation Section of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in Pretoria. DIRCO's legalisation service is free.

Your police certificate: DIRCO apostilles it directly.

Your medical certificate: the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) stamps and signs it first, to confirm your doctor is registered; then DIRCO apostilles it. Don't take it to a notary: Pretoria wants the apostille on the doctor's or police officer's signature, not a notary's.

Applying to DIRCO

1. Book an appointment online ([DIRCO bookings](https://www.dirco.gov.za/bookings)): daily except Wednesdays. Since 1 September 2026 DIRCO only serves clients with a booking. Up to 5 documents are usually done the same day.
2. Or send your documents by courier with DIRCO's cover letter, and allow 3 to 4 weeks, to:

DIRCO, Attention: Legalisation Section
OR Tambo Building
460 Soutpansberg Road
Rietondale, Pretoria 0084

Questions: legalisation@dirco.gov.za. See [DIRCO's page](#).

Translation

Both offices want your police certificate translated into Spanish by a sworn translator, and your medical certificate too unless it's in Spanish. BLS's checklist asks for every document that isn't in Spanish to be translated, except bank statements in English or French. Your enrolment letter is already in Spanish.

Take aways

The police certificate and the apostilles take the longest, so plan them as soon as you've booked your course. But not too early: in Cape Town's area your police certificate must be no more than 90 days old when you apply.

STEP 3

Submit your application

You apply to the Spanish office that covers the province where you live, and hand in your application at a BLS centre, by appointment. Full list: [consular areas](#).

Pretoria, Embassy of Spain (Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga, Lesotho)

- Hand in at **BLS Pretoria**: 1st Floor, Landmark Building, 13 Umgazi Street, Menlo Park, Pretoria. (Cape Town's page still shows an old Centurion address.)
- Visa questions: emb.pretoria.vis@maec.es or +27 63 681 3908. The Embassy's visa section is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:00 to 12:00.
- Requirements: [Embassy page](#).

Cape Town, Consulate General (Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal)

- Hand in at **BLS Cape Town**: 10th Floor, The Tower Building, 2 Hertzog Boulevard, Foreshore, Cape Town 8000, or **BLS Durban**: 1st Floor, Silver Oaks Building, 36 Silvertown Road, Musgrave, Durban 4001.
- Visa questions: visacapetown@maec.es.
- Requirements: [consulate page](#).

Booking and paying at BLS (both offices)

- Book your appointment on BLS's [booking site](#).
- Hand-in hours: Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 12:30 and 13:30 to 15:00.
- Pay the visa fee and BLS's service charge at the centre, by debit or credit card only.
- BLS checks that your file is complete, but doesn't advise on your documents.
- BLS call centre: 010 500 2032. Email info.pry@blshelpline.com (Pretoria), info.cpt@blshelpline.com (Cape Town) or info.dur@blshelpline.com (Durban).

Which office?



Pretoria

Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga and Lesotho



Cape Town

Western, Eastern and Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal

What happens next?

Now your application is in the office's hands. It needs approval from Spain before it can issue the visa. The legal deadline for a decision is 1 month, but it can be longer if they ask for more documents or an interview. You can follow your application online with the code on your receipt. Your passport comes back to the BLS centre (see the next page). Don't book flights until you have your visa.



Next stop: **BARCELONA!**

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to go in person, or can I post my documents?

You hand in your application in person at a BLS centre, by appointment; it can't be posted. Someone you've authorised can hand it in for you, but in Pretoria you then collect the visa in person.

How long does it take to get an appointment?

Neither office publishes a waiting time for study visa appointments. Book through BLS as soon as your documents are ready: you must apply at least 2 months before your Spanish course starts.

What is the appointment like?

It's short: BLS checks that your file is complete and your photo is right, takes the fees by card and gives you a receipt. Bring everything on your office's list: if something is missing, your application is delayed.

What happens after I apply?

The office needs approval from Spain before it can issue the visa. The legal deadline for a decision is 1 month, but it can be longer if they ask for more documents or an interview. You can follow your application online with the code on your receipt.

Your passport comes back to the BLS centre, and you have 2 months from the decision to collect the visa. Collect it with your receipt (Monday to Friday, 15:00 to 16:00), send someone with an authorisation letter, or ask BLS to courier it to you when you apply.

Which documents need to be translated?

Your police clearance certificate and your medical certificate, into Spanish, by a sworn translator. BLS also asks for other documents that aren't in Spanish to be translated, except bank statements in English or French. Your enrolment letter is in Spanish, so it doesn't need one. *See Useful links for our sworn translator.*



Next stop:
BARCELONA!

Frequently asked questions

How many hours can I work on a student visa?

You can work up to 30 hours a week once your employer gets a work permit for you. We'll help you both with the paperwork. The permit only covers work in Catalonia, the region that issued it.

Do I need to sign up for 7 to 12 months?

If you'd like to work in Barcelona, yes. A course of 7 to 12 months gives you a long-term student visa (legally, a stay of over 180 days, so 7 months is the minimum). That's the visa that lets you work with a work permit and renew from Spain.

You can study for less time and get a short-term visa instead, but you won't be able to work or to renew your visa from Spain.

How long does it take to get a student visa?

We recommend allowing 3 to 4 months to gather your documents, apply and receive your visa, so start about 5 months before you'd like to arrive. The police certificate and the apostilles take the longest. You must apply at least 2 months before your Spanish course starts.

Can I extend my student visa from within Spain?

Yes. If you have a long-term visa (7 months or more), you can renew it from Spain by signing up for another year of Spanish with us. A Spanish course visa can be renewed once, and for the renewal you'll need to have passed the DELE or SIELE Spanish exam, or be enrolled for the DELE. If you'd like to stay for 2 years or more, please get in touch.

What happens if my visa is refused?

First you appeal the decision. If the refusal is confirmed, we refund your Spanish course minus an admin fee. Some refusals aren't refundable, for example if you don't meet the financial requirement. See our [terms and conditions](#).

Any other questions? Email our team at coordination@tefl-iberia.com.



Next stop:
BARCELONA!

Frequently asked questions

Do I need a visa for the Trinity CertTESOL course?

Yes. South African citizens need a visa to enter Spain, even for less than 90 days: for the CertTESOL on its own, a Schengen (short-stay) visa. On our programme, your student visa starts 1 month before your Spanish course if you apply at least 2 months before the course. Talk to us before you book your CertTESOL dates.

Can I leave Europe to reset my time as a visitor?

A Schengen visa lets you spend up to 90 days in any 180-day period in the Schengen area, and you can't work on it. Time outside Schengen doesn't count, but the 180-day window keeps rolling, so a short trip out doesn't reset it.

Can I work as self-employed on a student visa?

Not automatically. On a Spanish course, any work needs an authorisation first, whether you're employed or self-employed. Talk to us before you start.

Can I apply for a student visa from within Spain?

Not for a Spanish course: you need to apply from South Africa. You can't arrive on a Schengen visa and then change to a student visa.

I already have a student visa with a different school. Can I renew with TEFL Iberia?

Yes, as long as your previous course was a Spanish course at a school accredited by the Instituto Cervantes or at an Escuela Oficial de Idiomas. You'll need a certificate of completion (certificado de aprovechamiento) from your old school and an enrolment letter from our accredited partner Spanish school.

Any other questions? Contact our coordination team at
coordination@tefl-iberia.com

An aerial photograph of a dense urban area in Barcelona, showing numerous multi-story buildings with red-tiled roofs and narrow streets. The text 'Next stop: BARCELONA!' is overlaid on the image.

Next stop:
BARCELONA!

Useful links

- [Pretoria Embassy: study visa](#)
- [Cape Town consulate: study visa](#)
- [Which office covers your province](#)
- [BLS South Africa: study visa and fees](#)
- [BLS: book an appointment](#)
- [Spanish visa application form](#)
- [Example of a completed form](#)
- [DIRCO: apostilles \(legalisation\)](#)
- [DIRCO: police clearance certificates](#)
- [DIRCO: medical certificates](#)
- [Schengen visas for South Africans](#)
- [Our student visa programmes](#)

Consulate websites can differ between their English and Spanish versions, between offices, and between a consulate and BLS. If in doubt, follow the stricter rule or ask the office.

Health insurance and translations

We've researched the market for good-value health insurance and sworn translators. Whichever insurance you choose, the insurer must be authorised to operate in Spain.

- [Atlantida health insurance](#): contact **Lluís López** at llopez@atlantida.net
- [Sworn Spanish translator](#): contact **Susana García** at info@traductorjurado.org for a 10% discount for TEFL Iberia students

Our Premium Visa & Bureaucracy Service

An optional extra to take the stress out of Spanish bureaucracy. [See the student visa page](#) for details.

Before you set off

Guidance on gathering your paperwork, help with the application form, a discount on health insurance, a quick enrolment letter, and access to an immigration lawyer (extra fee).

Once you're in Barcelona

We book your TIE appointment, check your documents, pay the local tax and go with you to the foreign office. Help with your padrón, social security number, bank account and a local SIM.



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BARCELONA!

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Carrer d'Aragó 403, 08013 Barcelona, Spain

www.tefl-iberia.com

coordination@tefl-iberia.com

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