

Jamaica Student Handbook

A Brief History

Western Carolina University (WCU), located in Cullowhee, North Carolina, offers a bachelor's degree program for teachers in Jamaica who hold a diploma from a three-year Jamaican teacher's college. The Jamaica-WCU Program began in 1970 when a select group of student teachers from WCU was chosen to student teach in Jamaica. These students were interested in acquiring a meaningful educational experience in another culture. Most of these students entered the experience with little or no exposure to the world beyond the mountains of western North Carolina. WCU professors who went to Jamaica to supervise the students also taught courses to Jamaican teachers who were trained in Jamaica's teachers' colleges.

Subsequently, the Jamaican Ministry of Education invited WCU's College of Education and Allied Professions to offer a bachelor's degree program to a select cadre of highly motivated and bright Jamaican teachers. Eligible candidates would have a diploma from a Jamaican teacher's college. The first cohort pursued a concentration in guidance and counseling to fulfill a need in Jamaican schools. Since then, concentrations have also been offered in school administration, special education, early childhood education, and math/science. In addition, a graduate degree (MAEd) in administrative supervision was added in the late 90's

The primary goal of the Jamaica-WCU Program is to enable Jamaican teachers to raise their teaching qualifications to the baccalaureate level. A secondary goal is to provide Jamaican teachers with an area of concentration (school administration, special education, early childhood education, math/science education) which was not part of their three-year college program in Jamaica. Since the program's inception in the early 1970s, more than 3,500 Jamaican teachers have earned a Bachelor of Science in Education (BSEd) degree from WCU

Before teaching a course in Jamaica, WCU professors are orientated to the Jamaican educational system. During their stay in Jamaica, some of their time is spent in Jamaican schools, experiencing the school conditions under which Jamaican teachers work. Western's approach has always been to assess the level of current educational practice in Jamaican schools, monitor initiatives proposed by the Ministry of Education and then attempt to help the country's educators improve the quality of their efforts. Just as teachers are taught to "begin where the student is," WCU professors in Jamaica begin where the teachers and schools are.

The support of the Ministry of Education has been continuously strong, regardless of the person holding the office of Minister.

Program Administration

The Jamaica BSEd program is jointly administered by the Deans of Continuing Education and Education and Allied Professions, with assistance from the WCU director of Caribbean and Latin American Programs. The program is self-supporting; the costs of delivering courses are covered by tuition. Classes are taught in regular high school classrooms at four sites: Kingston, Mandeville, Montego Bay, and Discovery Bay.

Costs and Funding

Under the terms of the contract, (On-site coordinator) with some of the revenues collected for the courses, provides classroom space, facilities, equipment, instructional supplies, and administrative and clerical support, assumes responsibility for recruiting and enrolling students and collecting fees, and covers costs of postage, supplies, textbooks and materials.

Undergraduate students pay US \$650 per course taken in Jamaica, which includes textbooks. Graduate students pay \$725.00 per course for courses taken in Jamaica. The summer residency at the US campus will incur the standard summer fees which are determined by the Western Carolina University administration in the spring semester prior to your summer experience. The fee includes educational and living expenses. Students pay their own transportation to campus and any incidentals during their summer residency on the WCU campus.

Materials

Syllabi and textbooks are comparable to those used in WCU's other education programs. Of course, syllabi are revised to more adequately meet the needs of Jamaican teachers. A few courses (e.g., school administration concentration) are developed specifically for the Jamaican program.

Students are required to have a computer and to submit work in the same format required for campus students.

Textbooks and syllabi arrive in Jamaica one month prior to the start of the courses. Students are instructed to read certain portions of the textbook(s) prior to the professor's arrival. Professors also give assignments that must be completed and submitted after the two-week student contact period.

Students have access to the online resources available through the Hunter Library and learn how to access the library during their orientation which occurs during the first class of a new cohort.

Degree Program Description

Through the Jamaica-WCU Program, Jamaican teachers earn a bachelor of science in education (BSEd) degree in Middle Grades Education with a concentration in the areas described previously. Eleven

courses (33 credits) of the required 40 credit hours are taught in Jamaica. The remaining 7 credits are completed during a summer residence on the WCU campus.

Students enter and proceed through the program in cohorts. The program is usually completed in two years. Jamaican students often excel in their coursework. Western faculties regularly comment on the Jamaican students' high level of commitment, conscientiousness, thoroughness, and strong work ethic. Students evaluate the program very highly.

Classes meet three hours for 10 days for a total of 30 contact hours. Students generally will have a pre-course assignment and a post course assignment to complete before and after the professor teaches the course. Courses are usually taught in Jamaica in January, March, May, June, July, August and October. Courses are taught by regular, full-time, tenure-track WCU faculty or adjuncts to the university.

The WCU chancellor or designee and other university officials conduct commencement ceremonies in Jamaica when the culmination of the degree does not coincide with the summer graduation ceremony on the WCU campus.

Admission to the Program

Qualified Jamaican teachers are accepted into the program if they meet the following requirements:

- 1) Each applicant must provide an official copy of a Jamaican Teaching Certificate or Diploma; and
- 2) Each must provide an official Jamaican College transcript indicating a minimum GPA of 2.5.

In recognition of completing the Jamaican Teachers' College program, students receive a block of 85 credits toward a WCU degree. Students admitted to the program are asked to sign an agreement, which outlines basic expectations for all enrollees.

Academic Honesty

One of the benefits of a cross-cultural program occurs when students and instructors suspend some of their own customs and values and seek to understand those of the other culture. In the area of academic honesty, however, there must be no misunderstanding about WCU standards. Students must realize it is the instructor's responsibility to strictly enforce the following academic honesty policy:

"Western Carolina University, as a community of scholarship, is also a community of honor.

Faculty, staff, administrators, and students work together to achieve the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at WCU because it threatens the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on knowledge and integrity.

Academic dishonesty includes:

- A. Cheating -- Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- B. Fabrication -- Intentional falsification or invention of information or citation in an academic exercise.

- C. Plagiarism -- Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in an academic exercise.
- D. Facilitation of Academic Dishonesty -- Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as knowingly allowing another to copy information during an examination or other academic exercise.

... An act of academic dishonesty, including a first offense, may place the student in jeopardy of suspension from the university." (WCU Student Handbook)

A student may appeal an academic dishonesty allegation by contacting the instructor, the head of the instructor's department, the dean of the instructor's college, and finally, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Graduation with Honors

To graduate summa cum laude, a student must have earned a minimum GPA of 3.90 on quality hours attempted at WCU for the degree; to graduate magna cum laude, a GPA of 3.70; and to graduate cum laude, a GPA of 3.50. In case of transfer hours from other institutions, a student must earn the appropriate GPA in all courses taken at WCU in order to graduate with honors.

The student Grade Point Average (GPA) is computed on work completed at Western Carolina University only. The names of students graduating with honors must be jointly passed upon by the vice chancellor for academic affairs and the registrar.

Description of a two-week course in Jamaica

At least one month prior to the start of a class in Jamaica, students are expected to pay their fees so they can get their books and syllabus. Students are expected to read the syllabus and complete course requirements specified for completion before the arrival of the professor. In other words, the course starts as soon as the student receives the syllabus.

When the two weeks come, one has to be focused, and mentally prepared for the challenge of working and studying at the same time. There is an extra flow of adrenaline as students realize that each two-week course brings them one step closer to achieving their ultimate goal -- a degree!

The two-week period, however, can be difficult. During this time students have schoolwork for class assignments and presentations in addition to their career and family obligations. Sometimes friends and family get ignored, and a social life becomes non-existent. Mealtimes and other routines are disrupted, and stress creeps in. Fortunately, before these conditions become chronic, the two weeks are finished!

This is why professors expect students to complete some work in preparation for the two-week class. Students can read textbooks, keep daily journals, or do other assignments that do not require the presence of the professor. Completing work before the arrival of the professor lessens the stress associated with the two-weeks of night classes.

Students take 7 credits (3 classes) during the five-week session they are on campus. One of the purposes of this residency is to afford the opportunity for the Jamaican students to use a modern library and the teaching equipment, materials, and technology not available in many Jamaican schools.

I-20 forms are sent from WCU to cover each student's immigration into the U.S. Students are allowed into the country on an F-1 (student) status, which allows them to be in the U. S. for 60 days after the last day of classes. Students must plan on staying the whole five weeks. If an emergency occurs, special permission needs to be received to leave and re-enter the U. S.

Students arrive in early July. Students are responsible for paying their own tuition, fees and airfare to Atlanta. Student fees pay for transportation from Atlanta to Cullowhee and the return trip to Atlanta for the flight back to Jamaica. Undergraduates are able to rent books for summer courses. Graduate students books will be paid from fees.

Hunter Library

The Reference librarians in Hunter Library welcome all Jamaican students with a library tour and a brief introduction to the online computer catalog demonstrating how to find a book. The many periodicals in the library are available either in paper or on microfilm, and copy machines are located nearby. Some articles in periodicals may be found in full text on the computer where they can be printed out. *The Gleaner* is available both in paper and online.

The Curriculum Materials Center contains many books and materials for teachers and is a great source for ideas. The library also has good collections of video cassettes, compact disks and maps which may be checked out for study or pleasure. Throughout the year, the librarians work with the faculty to ensure that the Jamaican students learn how to use special course-related materials and are able to make full use of the library's many resources

Room and Board

Two students are housed in each dorm room. Each room is equipped with two beds and two desks. Bed linens are provided. A communal refrigerator and laundry facilities are available in the dormitory. Each room has a phone. Students are provided an initial calling card to call once they arrive and can get additional calling cards at local retailers.

Student fees include a university ID card. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided each day in the cafeteria.

Student Health Services

Health insurance is provided, but it does not cover medications or treatment **for any pre-existing conditions**. The campus infirmary is staffed to treat minor illness and injury. More serious conditions are referred to the local hospitals.

