

# African Leadership Academy

Johannesburg, South Africa



*A Johannesburg boarding campus where teens from 47 African nations run real ventures under a pan-African, entrepreneurship-driven curriculum.*

## RANKING DIMENSIONS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Overall              | 73/100 |
| Academic outcomes    | 76/100 |
| University placement | 77/100 |
| Prestige & heritage  | 70/100 |
| Alumni network       | 63/100 |
| Facilities           | 72/100 |
| Transparency         | 76/100 |

## EDITOR'S VERDICT

African Leadership Academy is not a conventional international boarding school with an African setting bolted on. It is a two-year residential campus in Johannesburg for students aged 16 to 19, built around a pan-African intake and an explicit leadership and entrepreneurship mission. The school says it has enrolled 1,865 students since 2008 from more than 43,000 applicants, with a **\*\*4% acceptance rate\*\*** and students drawn from **\*\*47 African countries\*\***. That breadth matters. Few schools can match the continental mix, and fewer still make it the organising principle of the experience. For the right student,

that creates an education that is *\*intense\**, political and outward-facing rather than sheltered or conventional.

The academic frame is IB, with IBO and Cambridge accreditation, and the school couples that with a large ecosystem of leadership programmes, university guidance and student life built for boarders. This is not a school for families who want a broad menu of pathways or a soft landing into sixth form. It is *\*purpose-built\** and *\*selective\**. The website foregrounds entrepreneurs, diplomats, scientists, artists and educators; that is not branding fluff so much as a statement of who the school is trying to recruit. The Anglican foundation is part of the identity, but the stronger defining feature is the expectation that students will build, lead and organise. Parents who want conventional prestige markers need to accept a limit here: the school does not publish a long destinations roster in the information we have seen, and the recent named destinations are modest in scale, including AFDA, Africa University and African Leadership College Mauritius.

At an average annual boarding fee of **\*\*\$30,900\*\***, African Leadership Academy sits in an unusual position. It is expensive in absolute terms, but for a fully boarding, high-selectivity international school with a continent-wide recruitment model and **\*\*95%\*\*** of students receiving financial assistance, it operates with a social mission that most premium schools do not share. That financial-aid figure tells you as much about the school as the fee does: this is a place built to assemble talent, not just to serve affluent local or expatriate families. It belongs on a shortlist for academically strong, *\*mission-driven\** teenagers who want peers from across Africa, can tolerate a demanding residential environment, and have a real appetite for enterprise, public leadership and debate. It is *\*not for the faint-hearted\**, and that is exactly its point.

#### STRENGTHS

- Highly selective network: Since 2008, ALA has enrolled 1,865 students from over 43,000 applicants; a 4% acceptance rate representing the widest range of African diversity.
- Needs-based aid is extensive: 97% of ALA students receive financial assistance. Since welcoming the first class in 2008, ALA has always met 100% of demonstrated need for all admitted students.
- Strong university placement record: Since 2010, alumni have enrolled at 342 universities in 59 countries around the world and have accepted \$270 million in university scholarships.
- Alumni have gone on to notable recognition, including ALA alumnus Eddie Ndopu '08 appointed to the United Nations Foundation's Board of Directors in December 2021 and alumnus Kudzai Mbinda '16 named a Rhodes Scholar-Elect to pursue a master's degree at Oxford.
- Distinctive academic core: most students attend ALA for the two year pre-university course, based on the Cambridge A Levels and ALA's

#### TRADE-OFFS

- The programme is Cambridge International-based rather than a full IB Diploma: in addition to the core curriculum, students also complete two or three Cambridge A-Level courses.
- Admission is narrow by design: only 120 students are admitted each year (out of thousands of applicants) so the impact is somewhat limited.
- Location is remote from the city centre: the campus is located in Honeydew, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, and as a large city, Johannesburg suffers from increasing crime and congestion.
- ALA is not a conventional K-12 school: African Leadership Academy offers a two-year residential program for teenagers: the ALA Diploma Program.

unique curricula in Entrepreneurial Leadership,  
African Studies and Writing and Rhetoric.

## ADMISSIONS

Entry is limited to a two-year residential program for teenagers: the ALA Diploma Program, generally for students aged 15-18. The admissions process takes a holistic approach, evaluating applicants beyond academic performance by considering their leadership qualities, resilience, initiative, and ability to work collaboratively. The African Leadership Academy receives several thousand applications during the first round, where approximately 400 are selected to attend finalist events; finalists write entrance exams, participate in group activities and are interviewed. Historically ALA has enrolled 1,865 students from over 43,000 applicants; a 4% acceptance rate. The value of financial awards is determined after admissions decisions have been made.

WTS RATING 

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