ACADEMICS

Do not be surprised if the academic structure at UT is completely different from what you are used to. The academic calendar for 2017-2018 (http://registrar.tennessee.edu/academic_calendar/) is as follows:

2017-2018 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Fall 2017 Semester
Required Arrival: August 16
Orientation: August 17-18
Classes Begin: August 23
Labor Day (holiday): September 4
Fall Break (holiday): October 5-6
Thanksgiving (holiday): November 23-24
Classes End: December 5
Study Day: December 6
Exams: December 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14
Last Day of Benefits (All exchange students must move out of on campus accommodation on/by this date.): December 15

Spring 2018 Semester
Required Arrival: January 3
Orientation: January 4-5
Classes Begin: January 10
MLK Holiday: January 15
Spring Break (holiday): March 12-16
Spring Recess (holiday): March 30
Classes End: April 27
Study Day: April 30
Exams: May 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8
Last Day of Benefits (All exchange students must move out of on campus accommodation on/by this date.): May 9

Academic record/transcript
You may find that it is very helpful when signing up for classes to have a copy of your academic record or transcript from your home university. Some classes have prerequisites, and you may have to show proof that you have taken the necessary prerequisites before being allowed to take the course at UT.

Classes
As a student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, you are required by the U.S. Immigration Service to take a full course load which is defined for undergraduates as a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester. Twelve credit hours typically equates to four courses.

Lectures are one form of undergraduate instruction. There may be as many as 300 students or as few as 20 in a lecture class.
You must attend the first day of class. Professors usually discuss their attendance policies and other expectations in the first meeting of each course. If you are not there, you will probably be dropped from the class, and it will be very difficult to convince the professor to re-add you to the roster. Regular attendance throughout the semester is often counted as part of your grade, and in some cases, you will be dropped from the class if you have more than three unexcused absences.

The typical undergraduate class, depending on subject, may involve three hours of lectures per week, an additional lab or discussion section, reading assignments, quizzes and tests, a mid-term exam, a final exam and one or more research papers or projects. Be prepared for continuous testing throughout the semester and homework assignments for each class.

In discussion-based classes, the material presented in a lecture is reviewed and discussed. Discussion is often an important element of American education and may be factored into your grade, so you will be expected to speak up in class and may be called on to share your views. Do not be shy about speaking out. Your instructor and classmates will be very excited to hear an international perspective. If you are worried or shy about your language skills, please speak to your instructors after class so they can give you advice on how to make contributions in class.

Most UT instructors will not accept handwritten assignments except for in-class exams and tests. You will be expected to complete all other assignments on a computer. If you have a laptop or computer, you should bring it with you. More and more departments are requiring laptop use in class.

UT professors do have office hours that are posted and provided on the first day of classes. UT instructors are very approachable and are more than happy to offer advice on how you can achieve success in their course.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas without acknowledging the source. Americans take plagiarism very seriously, so do not even think about doing it. If you are having difficulty or are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, see your instructor and/or read about other resources available on campus at http://www.lib.utk.edu/instruction/plagiarism/.

Students typically must make a C or better for courses to count towards the major or minor at UTK. Your official academic transcript will have letter grades. If you receive percentage grades in class and are not sure what your letter grade will be, make sure to talk with your professor before leaving campus. More information about the grading scale can be found on the Registrar’s website: http://registrar.tennessee.edu/records/grades/gpa.shtml. You must discuss credit and grade transfer with your home institution.

You will be required to purchase textbooks for your classes. With a student body of 26,000, the University cannot provide all of the books that UT students need, so you are expected to buy them yourself. This, unfortunately, can be a very expensive endeavor.

The estimate the university uses for textbooks is about $500 per semester. The best way to save as much money as possible is to buy used books from the campus bookstore or other shops as this will be considerably cheaper than buying new books. At the end of the semester, you may be able to sell your books back but only for a fraction of the price that you paid for them; the bookstore only purchases books they know will be used for a course again.

Another option is to check out a textbook for free at the Black Cultural Center on Melrose Avenue. Inquire about the proper date to check out books because their supplies are limited.