

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is my first step when I'm thinking of applying to U.S. universities?

A: Call or email the EducationUSA Advisor to request an appointment for a group advising session. This general rule applies to students who wish to pursue their higher studies in the United States, be it at the undergraduate or graduate level. In some special cases, depending on the need of prospective graduate students only, they can request an individual appointment with the EducationUSA Advisor without attending a group advising session.

Q: When is the right time for me to apply to U.S. universities?

A: It takes approximately one year to complete the application and admission process. It is always best practice to start early to allow sufficient time to prepare a successful and complete application packet.

Q: In general, what application materials are needed to successfully apply to U.S. universities?

A: Application materials will include a university online application, scores of standardized entrance exams, recommendation letters, writing a personal statement. The EducationUSA Advisor discusses and covers each one of these application components in detail in group advising sessions and specialized workshops at the U.S. Embassy.

Q: What is the academic calendar of U.S. universities?

A: Generally, the academic year runs from August/September through May/June. Most U.S. universities use either the semester system (two terms), the quarter system (students attend three out of four total terms), or the trimester system (three terms).

Q: Is it important for me to start my university studies with the academic year, or can I start anytime during the academic year?

A: In general, the majority of U.S. universities will require students to start with the academic year. A few of them run on a rolling system of admission, which means that they can accept students in the spring semester/quarter/trimester in addition to the autumn intake. In the case of graduate study, especially in the case of PhD students, universities are more flexible in admitting them on a rolling system of admission. Please visit the institution's website for more accurate information on intakes.

Q: What is the difference between undergraduate and graduate degrees?

A: Undergraduate programs follow high school and lead to an associate (two-year) degree or a bachelor (four-year) degree. Graduate programs follow a bachelor's degree and lead to a master's or doctoral degree. In some special cases, completion of an undergraduate degree can lead to a Doctoral degree, provided that an overall GPA of 3.8 or higher over a 4.0 scale has been achieved at the undergraduate level. Other conditions may apply.

Q: How should I, as a prospective undergraduate student, apply to U.S. universities?

A: All U.S. universities require local and international students submit an online application. As of now, there are around 600 U.S. universities which are members of the Common Application (informally known as the Common App), which is an undergraduate college admission application that students use to apply to the 600 or so member universities in 47 different states and the District of Columbia. For more information, please visit <https://www.commonapp.org/>. As an important note, the Common App opens August 1st and closes January 1st. Please note that only students applying to undergraduate degrees can use the Common App. Graduate students must submit a separate online application for each university from their respective websites (For more information, please refer to the Graduate Fact Sheet).

Q: As an international student, am I eligible to apply for financial aid or scholarships in a U.S. university?

A: Yes, undergraduate international students can apply for financial aid by creating a Financial aid/CSS profile on College Board. The deadline for completing and submitting a PROFILE application is specified by the university or scholarship programs. Please visit <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile> for more information.

Q: As an international student, can I work in the United States while studying?

A: Yes, international students are allowed to work on campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session, and can work up to a maximum of 40 hours per week during school breaks. International students can work off campus only if they get authorization from the International Student Office of the university.

Q: Are there any entrance exams I need to take when applying to U.S. universities?

A: Yes. As a prospective undergraduate student, most American institutions will require the SAT exams. As a prospective graduate student, the GRE or GMAT exams will be required, depending on the field of study.

Q: What are the English language proficiency requirements for international students residing in a country where English is not their first language?

A: U.S. universities will require an English language proficiency test before admission to ensure the student can read, write, and speak fluently. Most U.S. universities will require students to submit scores of TOEFL test. Some of them accept IELTS scores as well, but only one test is required. In some cases, some U.S. universities may waive the English language proficiency requirement. For more information, please contact the university you are applying to.

Q: What is the credit system in U.S. universities?

A: A credit is a value assigned to each course which reflects the number of hours the class will meet with the professor each week.

Q: What is a GPA?

A: Grade Point Average (GPA) is a numeric indicator for a student's academic performance, calculated on a scale of 4.0.

Q: What is the U.S. grading system?

A: Letter grades indicate a student's academic performance. Each letter grade has a numeric value which is used to calculate a GPA, on a scale of 4.0.

Q: How are grades determined in U.S. universities?

A: Grades are typically determined by quizzes, midterms, final exams, papers, projects, class attendance, presentations, and class participation and discussion.

Q: What is the best general advice for a departing student?

A: Attend the EducationUSA advising center's pre departure orientation. Then, when s/he arrives on campus, attend all orientation meetings scheduled at his/her university.