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## Information on Undergraduate Studies in USA

### 1. Types of Courses

Liberal arts (liberal arts and sciences)

- Broad-based education. Students to read a variety of courses (humanities, arts, languages, the social and physical sciences) within first two years before choosing a “major”, i.e. the subject or area of studies in which a student concentrates.

Science and Engineering

- Unlike a liberal arts college, institutes of technology provide students with an education that is focused in their major. These schools are usually best known for their graduate programs.

Others: Medicine or Law is offered at post-graduate degree level only. A Pre-Med or Pre-Law course as an undergraduate degree or a related topic can be offered before specialising on a Masters programme.

### 2. Duration

Bachelor's degrees in the United States are typically designed to be completed in four years of full-time study, although some programs (such as engineering or architecture) usually take five years.

### 3. Cost

Average cost of one year's undergraduate tuition and fees (not including living expenses) :

- \$2,713 at a two-year public college (offering primarily associate degrees)
- \$19,595 (out-of-state resident) at a four-year public college / university (offering bachelor and advanced degrees)
- \$27,293 at a four-year private college / university (offering bachelor and advanced degrees)

(Source: [www.usjournal.com](http://www.usjournal.com))

#### 4. Entry Requirements

- GCE 'O' Level
- GCE 'A' Level / International Baccalaureate
- Polytechnic Diploma
- Foundation course or equivalent

#### 5. Factors to consider for choice of course:

Entrance Requirements

Subject interest

Duration of study

Reference books and Friends

#### 6. Factors to consider for choice of institution

- a. Location: city vs rural
- b. Academic facilities
- c. International Office – US Education Information Center <http://www.useic.org/>
- d. Accommodation
- e. Fee, payment schemes
- f. Scholarships

#### 7. How to apply

- **Apply through *The Common Applications* website.**  
**There are more than 450 universities who are members of the Common Applications.**  
**<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/default.aspx>**

*Note: Some universities like Princeton and Harvard have supplements to the Common Application.*

- **For universities that are not members of the Common Applications, for e.g. Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of California, apply directly through the university's website.**

#### 8. When to apply

**Both Early Decision (ED) and Early Action (EA) involve an earlier application deadline than the Regular Decision admissions process, and as their names imply, earlier notification of the admissions decisions.**

## **Early Decision(ED)**

### **Apply between 1 August – 1 November**

Early Decision is an application option for freshman students who have decided on a definite first-choice US university. Early Decision is a contract between a student and the university. The student agrees that if the university accepts him, he will withdraw all other university applications and attend the early decision university. Because of this commitment, a student can apply to only one college under ED. As it is unethical to not attend the college if accepted, a student should therefore ***consider carefully and research thoroughly*** before making this binding decision.

Students can submit applications to other schools under Regular Decision application procedures, but agree that they will withdraw all those applications if they are accepted by the Early Decision school.

The usual deadline for Early Decision is November 1 or 15, and students will be notified of their admission decision by December.

## **Early Action (EA)**

### **Apply between 1 August – 1 November**

Under an Early Action program, a student does not have to commit to attending the college. The student just sends his application earlier, and the college sends him its decision usually by mid December. Some universities have restrictions on their Early Action programs though, so do read the instructions from each university carefully.

## **Regular Decision**

### **Apply between 1 August – 1 January\***

This is the standard method of applying to US universities. Most universities set a college application deadline on or around January 1, and you would probably receive a college acceptance letter around the middle of April. Regular Decision is the recommended way to apply to most US universities you are considering.

\*Deadlines vary from university to university and some like the University of Michigan, are due on 1 February. Do check and keep track of the various deadlines.

You can read more about it here: <http://www.collegeboard.com/parents/apply/college-applications/21342.html>

## **9. School Counselor / Teacher Referees**

A US university application generally requires a School Counselor and 2 teacher referees (some may ask for 3).

**School Counselor:** Year 6 CT or PCT. It can also be someone within the school who knows you best (an example could be the hall-master for boarders)

**Teacher Referees:** You are strongly advised to choose your teacher referees carefully and with due consideration. The teacher referral letter plays an equally important role in your application process; thus it should be someone who has a good impression of you and knows your academic ability in the subject well. In order to help your teacher write an effective recommendation letter for you, complete the Student Self-Assessment Form before passing it to him/her.

## 10. Recognition

**For US accredited universities**

**<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx>**

### **Engineering**

**Professional Engineers Board [www.peb.gov.sg/peb/html/pen.html](http://www.peb.gov.sg/peb/html/pen.html)**

### **Law**

Columbia, Harvard, Michigan and New York University.

### **Medicine**

- Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (New York)
- Cornell University Medical College (New York)
- Harvard Medical School
- University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
- Yale University Medical School

**For a complete listing, log on to Singapore Medical Council website <http://www.smc.gov.sg/>**

## 11. Tests

### **a. SATs**

The SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject tests are required for admissions to most US schools and can register for these at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

SAT international test dates: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-international-dates>

### **SAT 1: Reasoning Test tests candidates on 3 areas**

- The **critical reading** section includes reading passages and sentence completions.
- The **writing** section includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage.
- The **mathematics** section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics and probability

## **SAT 2: Subject Tests**

Some universities such as Harvard and Princeton require 3 different subjects while most universities require 2 subjects.

### ***Subjects currently offered by College Board***

English – Literature

Science – Physics, Chemistry and Biology E/M ecology ("E") or molecular ("M") biology oriented test.

History – U.S History or World History

Language - French, German and a few others

Language with Listening – Chinese with Listening. French with Listening, German with Listening, Japanese with Listening and a few others.

## **b. ACT**

The ACT<sup>®</sup> test assesses high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work.

The multiple-choice tests cover four skill areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science.

The Writing Test, which is optional, measures skill in planning and writing a short essay.

## **SATS vs ACT**

The SAT was designed as an aptitude test -- it tests your reasoning and verbal *abilities*, not what you've learned in school. In fact, the SAT was supposed to be a test that one could not study for -- studying does not change one's aptitude.

The ACT, on the other hand, is an achievement test. It is meant to test what you have learned in school.

**Note: For more information regarding the differences, please log on to <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/standardizedtests/tp/sat-act.htm> <http://satteststudy.com/act-vs-sat/>**

## **12. Scholarships and Financial Aid**

There is very little financial aid available for international students. International undergraduate student grants and scholarships are very hard to secure.

Need-based grants : depending on your financial situation

Merit-based grants : if you have exceptional talent in certain areas (eg : academic, athletic, leadership, etc)

Post-graduate students are more likely to secure financial assistance from their school, often in the form of assistantships, research grants, etc.

Nevertheless, some US universities do admit students *regardless of their financial situation*, and will give scholarships and various forms of aid to students who can't afford it. US universities that offer **need-blind admissions to international students** are

- Amherst College
- Dartmouth College
- Harvard University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Princeton University
- Williams College
- Yale University

### **13. College Application Fee Waiver**

Please refer to this website (go to the table) for reference to see if you 'qualify' for application fee waiver: <http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx>

The general rule for a family of household size one, the family's annual income should not exceed about US\$11000 to US\$14000 per annum. Also, you can apply to no more than 4 universities.

If you decide to apply for application fee waiver, please email Ms Sng ([sngsokhwee@acsindep.edu.sg](mailto:sngsokhwee@acsindep.edu.sg)) your supporting documents such as tax receipts and family income.

### **14. Scholarships**

This site provides a searchable database that contains various sources of aid available to international students.

US Journal of Academics <http://www.usjournal.com/en/students/info/finaid.html>

### **15. Useful Websites**

- ***For official information in Singapore on US Education***  
US Education Information Center <http://www.useic.org/index.htm>  
Address: USEIC, 12 Prince Edward Rd. #01-03 Bestway Building S 079212
- ***Information on SAT***  
College Board <http://www.collegeboard.com>
- ***Information on US universities, tuition fees, admission, etc***  
[www.collegesintheusa.com](http://www.collegesintheusa.com)  
[www.studyusa.com](http://www.studyusa.com)
- Information on US education for international students  
USA Study Guide <http://www.usastudyguide.com/>