

Why USA Education:

As a prospective student planning to study in the United States, it is but natural to have many doubts.

- Should I study in the USA or any other country?
- Why have so many of my seniors went to US and not other countries?
- What and where should I study?
- Will it be more expensive than studying elsewhere?
- Will I get employment after studies?
- Can I stay back permanently in USA?

We will clarify all your doubts in this section. First, US is the best destination in the whole world, for higher education in the fields of science, technology and management. No other country extends its arms as widely as the US, to welcome international students. This is reflected in the fact that US hosts more international students than any other country in the world. A total of 6, 71,616 students went to the US to study there in 2008-09, which is an increase of 8% over the previous year. And USA attracts 23% of all International students, whereas Australia is attracts approx. 5.44 lakhs and UK next with 3.42 lakh international students. Germany and France are the other countries that attract 11% and 10% international students.

These international students from every continent in the world choose to study in the US because they believe that a US education would afford them the best preparation for their future. They leave homes, families and friends in order to pursue their dreams of an education in the US. In fact, International students who study in the US contribute more than \$17.8 billion to the US economy!

US universities, US colleges and US schools consistently rank very high in world rankings, just one of the reasons to study in the US. Schools such as Harvard University, Stanford University, MIT, etc are all world famous and welcome international students. The US offers international students the most exciting, rewarding and comprehensive array of study options in the world. International students who choose to study in the US have almost unlimited study choices.

Furthermore, international students who successfully complete their US study are highly sought-after by employers worldwide. While the reasons international students choose to study in the US vary from student to student, some of the main reasons why students choose USA education are summed up below .

Academic Excellence – Best Universities:

The United States has one of the world's finest university systems, with outstanding programs in virtually all fields. At the undergraduate level, excellent programs exist in traditional disciplines, as well as in professional fields. At the graduate level, students have the opportunity to work directly with some of the finest minds in their field of study, with the chance to become involved with exclusive research and educational opportunities. U.S. degrees are recognized throughout the world for their excellence. Around 80% of the research all over the world is being conducted & funded in USA by various universities & companies in USA. The no of noble laureates from USA is a testimony to it.

Variety of Educational Opportunities

USA has several thousand colleges and universities, boasting at least ten times as many campuses as in any other country. As a result, the higher education system in the U.S. has something for everyone. Some U.S. colleges and universities stress broad educational principles; others emphasize practical, employment-related skills; and still others specialize in the arts, social sciences or technical fields. As a result, students have a variety of options and educational opportunities if they are looking for a particular field.

Cutting-Edge Technology

Universities in the U.S. pride themselves on being at the forefront of technology, research and techniques, and in making the best possible equipment and resources available to their students. Even in other fields apart from science or engineering, students have opportunities to become skilled in using the latest technology to conduct research, as well as obtain and process information. Students get an opportunity to be connected with researchers, teachers and experts in their fields from all over the world.

Opportunity for Research

Students have an opportunity to gain valuable experience through teaching and/or research while pursuing their education in the U.S., especially for students pursuing their masters. Many graduate programs offer training and teaching opportunities that enable students to become teaching assistants to undergraduates and/or research assistants on special projects exploring different aspects of your field of study.

International students are some of the most valued teachers and researchers in U.S. universities because they bring new skills and ideas to the classroom and library or laboratory. This practical component of USA education proves very useful for students for future career, and gives insights into areas or spheres of their field that would not be possible through course study alone.

Flexibility

Although most programs are highly structured in that specific coursework requirements must be met, students will generally be able to find a wide variety of course choices to meet those requirements. For example, liberal arts coursework for an undergraduate program will include (among others) classes in languages and mathematics, but you will often have several options from which to choose insofar as which language class you take, or which area of mathematics appeals most to your interests and skills.

At the advanced stages of a degree, or if you are pursuing a graduate degree, you will be able to tailor your coursework to fit your specific academic goals, needs and interests. When you choose topics for independent study for a graduate thesis or dissertation, you can emphasize ideas that are important to you, your field and your country.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is normally available for international students, because pursuing higher education in the U.S. is expensive. Most of the universities financially support the international students either in the form of providing teaching or research assistantships. These assistantships are based on academic merit, rather than financial need. Awarded students will receive stipends, or either partial or complete tuition waivers. U.S. education could turn out to be completely free if the student exhibits exceptional skills in his or her field of study.

Support Services for International Students

Studying in the United States is a rewarding experience and international student office is a great help in helping students adapt to a culturally and academically different environment. The mission of the international student office is to assist students, and there is often a wide range of student services that they provide an orientation program upon arrival is just the start of the many programs and benefits of the university international student office. They help answer questions students have regarding visa status, financial situation, housing, employment possibilities, health concerns and more. It provides resume and employment assistance as graduation nears.

Global Education and Long-Term Prospects

Experience in an international setting is a marketable commodity. Many employers seek the wide range of knowledge, adaptability and experience that international students acquire by studying in the United States. Companies in the U.S. are increasingly seeking to become a strong presence in the global marketplace. They often look to hire employees who not only have multi-cultural language skills, but those who can also help communicate, negotiate and conduct business across different cultures.

In recent years, international companies have become much more proactive in recruiting from the pool of strong international student graduates. Long-term career prospects can be enhanced by experiences gained which results in development of self-confidence, independence and cross-cultural skills - attributes which are in high demand with employers worldwide.

Campus Life Experience

Study in USA not only broadens student's educational experience, but Cultural opportunities as well. Whether it's a small, private college in a small town or a university situated in the middle of a large urban area, most universities offer a variety of student clubs and organizations to match the wide array of student interests. Student's have the opportunity to experience American culture, meeting new people and making new friends, through different organizations and associations.

Education System:

The United States facilitates top notch resources and qualitative education for wide variety of curriculums that enable students to pursue world-class education at the most renowned location. For every student aspiring education in USA it is essential to be aware of the structure of educational system in USA. The system comprises of 12 years of primary and high school education, which is mandatory for getting admission in any graduate college, university, or for any professional and technical schools. It is not compulsory to accomplish these 12 years of elementary education within United States. Therefore students from overseas are also welcomed for higher education in United States.

Primary/Elementary School

Usually the education for Americans starts at around 5 years of age. The tenure of primary schooling will be about five to six years. In this level students will be completing five grades of their education. Students have choice to select their education held either in public schools, or private schools, or home school.

High/Secondary School

Upon completion of five grades of education in primary school, students will enter high/secondary school. The tenure of secondary school will be about six to seven years, by which students will be completing their 12 grades. After completion of their secondary education, successful students will be obtaining a **high school diploma** which gives eligibility to get admission in any college or university. International students applying for graduation in U.S should have an equivalent grade of this diploma.

Undergraduate School

After achieving high school diploma, students will join colleges or universities to pursue their undergraduate course of study. They offer two types of degrees:

- **Associate Degree:**

This is a two-year program offered, as the name suggests, as an 'Associate degree, which is of two years duration. The program is mostly offered by Community, Vocational and Junior Colleges. Completion of this program enables the students to seek a transfer into the third year of the four-year Bachelor's degree either in 4-year colleges or universities. Taking this route to study the first two years is very inexpensive for both American and International students, since the tuition and fees are very low when compared to other types of colleges.

Most colleges require good score in **TOEFL** (for establishing English proficiency) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (**SAT Reasoning** scores for admission in their **Associate Degree** programs. In some colleges, admission is also possible with just a TOEFL score and good academics in 12th class. Note: For some top universities (like in Mathematics, Languages, Biology etc.), a good score in the relevant SAT Subject Test is required in addition to the SAT Reasoning Test score.

- **Bachelors Degree:**

This is a four-year program at the undergraduate level. Most international students from wealthy countries such as Japan and China prefer to start their education in USA from this level. Statistics from India indicate that less than 10% of students join at this level. This is the first degree with which most students plan their career or profession. Hundreds of 'majors' (or specializations) in all the fields are offered at the Bachelor's level, which makes education an attractive proposition for students all over the world.

In the U.S, the first year of Bachelor's degree is called the Freshman Year, the second one, the Sophomore Year, the third, Junior Year and the fourth, the Senior Year.

Professional School

For professional programs like Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy etc., US universities offer professional programs leading to degrees such as MD (for Medicine), Pharm D (for Pharmacy) Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT – for Physiotherapy) etc. These are known as the first professional degrees, completion of which entitles the students to practice as professionals in their respective fields (after meeting other requirements). Admission into most of these professional programs are based on good performance in entrance tests such as MCAT (for Medicine), PCAT (Pharmacy), LSAT (for Law) etc., after completion of a Bachelor's degree in related subjects. In near future, US universities are considering to convert the Business Administration program into a professional degree, by offering a DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) as the first professional degree.

The main difference between Indian and American systems for study of professional programs is that, while Indians can take up professional degree programs after completion of their secondary (+2) education, students have to first complete their Bachelor's (a four-year degree) and then take up professional degree programs.

Graduate School

Graduate Schools and specialized colleges (Eg. College of Engineering, College of Management etc.) offer various degree programs such as Engineering, Arts and Sciences at the post-graduate level, leading to Master's and Doctoral level degrees. These degrees are called the 'Master of Arts (M.A), Master of Sciences (M.S), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Duration of these programs range from one to five years, depending upon the course and level of study. Most of the Master's level programs are of two years and Doctoral level are of four years duration.

Admission into Master's level program is possible with a four-year degree from India. It is also possible to seek admission into the same, with a three-year degree from India. Some universities may ask to take additional pre-requisite courses to compensate for the fourth year requirement. Others ask applicants to complete a 'Bridge' program comprising a few additional courses, while simultaneously doing the Master's program. Such 'Bridge' programs are mainly offered in the fields of Computer Science, Information Systems, IT and Business Administration. Also, some universities do directly accept the three-year degrees as equivalent to their Bachelor's degree and enroll students from India into their Master's programs, especially in MBA. Pre-requisite tests that are required for admission at the Master's are,

For MS and MA programs – TOEFL and GRE General Test

For MBA and other Management related programs – TOEFL and GMAT

Note: For some programs at top universities (like in CS, Chemistry etc.), a good score in the relevant GRE Subject Test is required in addition to the GRE General Test score.

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is becoming popular even in the US too and is being accepted by many universities now.

Admission into Doctoral level programs is possible normally after completion of Master's. However, US universities are flexible in admitting even those with a Bachelor's degree. But, the length of program might be longer than for those with a Master's degree. Typically, the duration of Doctoral level programs is between 3 and 6 years, depending on the field of research and university.

Academic Year

Education in the US universities is on a semester system, the main one being the Fall semester, which starts in August/September. Almost all universities offer admission during Fall semester invariably. Many universities offer admission during the Spring semester, which starts in January. A few universities offer intakes during Winter semester, starting in November and also during Summer semester (in April). Colleges offering admission during three terms are known to be operating on a trimester system and those offering during all the four terms, on a Quarter system.

Most programs offer admission (especially in very good universities) during Fall semester only and many others during both Fall and Spring. While Summer intake is possible in a few universities, Winter is rare. Top universities offer only one intake during Fall, especially for MBA programs. And, some universities start their professional programs during Summer! It is best to verify which program is offered for what semesters in the universities you plan to apply for.

It is best to prefer admission during Fall intake, since that is the most popular semester and possibility of financial aid is more during this semester. Also, due to lesser/non-availability of faculty members, admission may be difficult and you cannot obtain credits during Summer and Winter semesters. More importantly, Visa could be a problem if one seeks admission during these two off-beat semesters as very rarely applicants prefer to go during these terms.

Transfers

Education system in US allows students to seek a 'transfer' from one program to another (within the same university) and one university to another. During such transfers, whatever 'credits' the student obtain during their previous study will be transferred to the new course/university depending upon the policies of the new university.

Also, transfer is possible for international students from one level to another. For example, if a student who has completed a three year degree and wants to enroll in a Bachelor's program in US, he/she could take a transfer into the third year of the Bachelor's degree. While this may entail a loss of one year that helps students to choose a specialization during the last two years at the Bachelor's level and continue with their professional or career-oriented education.

Credit System

Students are evaluated for their performance, based on the number of credits they obtain during their academic performance. These credits are calculated depending upon the performance in semester-end examinations, class room preparation, seminar participation, laboratory hours etc. In certain cases, 'units' or 'semester hours' are used instead of credits. For every course of study students will earn a particular number of credits per semester. Professors and advisers assist the students in organizing their course schedule for their academic year.

To complete a Bachelor's degree, students are usually have to complete 112 to 120 credits (24/30 per year) for four years. At the Master's level, students have to complete at least 36 credits (18 per year) for a two-year program. Please note that in order to maintain the legal status as a 'student', USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services) specifies that a particular number of credits have to be enrolled for, by international students. For example, a minimum of nine credits per semester have to be enrolled for, at the Master's level.

Grades

Sometimes, a student would be given 'Grades' based on his academic performance. After completion of a particular course successfully, he professors would award a letter 'Grade' for each course.

For every course/unit, the university will pre-determine the number of credit hours. For example, for most courses the no. of hours to be completed are THREE Credit hours. For some, however, even FIVE may be assigned. These letter grades will be assigned with a numerical value, as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| • A = 4 | which is equivalent between | 90 - 100% |
| • B = 3 | do | 80 - 90% |
| • C = 2 | do | 80 - 70% |
| • D = 1 | do | 70 - 60% |
| • F = 0 (Fail) | do | < 60% |

A Grade Point Average (GPA) will be computed based on the number of courses, number of credits (for each course) and the numerical value of a grade. The numerical grade for each course will be multiplied with the number of credits taken by the student and the total points thus obtained will be divided by the total number of credit hours.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the average of Grade Points obtained over all the semesters.

Since this is not the practice followed in India, it is neither advisable nor possible to convert the percentages or grades (given in India) into the GPA under the US System.

It is best to indicate the percentage or grade as given by your institution in your qualifying examination. However, if universities insist on conversion or equivalence, one option is to get the credentials evaluated.

Credentials Evaluation

If a student has completed his education outside of the U.S., he must have his credentials evaluated in order to have them understood and recognized by educational institutions, employers, licensing and certification boards in the U.S, such as Worldwide Credentials Evaluation Service (WES), Foreign Academic Credential Services (FCAS) etc. A WES evaluation, which is very popular, will provide you with the U.S. academic equivalents for your credentials and allow you to pursue further education or seek employment in the U.S. There is no U.S. government agency that evaluates credentials. Credentials are evaluated by universities and by private organizations such as WES.

A number of academic institutions have employees who evaluate international credentials. Many other colleges and universities require that international credentials be evaluated by an expert service such as WES. A WES evaluation compares your credentials with their U.S. educational equivalents by providing a document by document evaluation and/or course by Course evaluation.