If you’re an international student thinking about applying to the U.S. for the 2025 intake but aren’t sure where to start, don’t worry—you’ve come to the right place! Before you directly dive into the application process, it’s really important to understand the deadlines and timelines involved. You’ll need to start preparing your application about a year in advance. Most U.S. university applications open in August, though some might get a head start as early as June or July.

**But first, what does “intake” mean?**

In the college application process, "intake" refers to the specific period during which a university admits students to begin their studies. Different universities have different intakes, and these define when students will start their classes. In the U.S., the most common intakes are **Fall** and **Spring**, but some universities also offer Summer and Winter intakes for certain programs. Knowing which intake you’re aiming for is crucial, as the application timelines and deadlines will depend on it.

Here’s a quick breakdown of the most common intakes:

* **Fall intake**: This is the most popular and widely available intake. It means you’ll start your classes in August of the following year. For example, if you apply for Fall 2025, you’ll begin your application process around August 2024, and classes will start in August 2025.
* **Spring intake**: This intake starts classes between January and March of the next year. So, if you’re applying for Spring 2025, you’ll be working on your applications between June and August 2024, and your classes will begin in January 2025.

Some universities may also have **Summer** or **Winter intakes**, but these are less common and tend to be available for specific courses only. Be sure to check the specific intake options when researching your universities, as not every program will offer more than one intake.

Now that you understand intakes, let’s talk about deadlines. For Spring intake, most universities have deadlines between September and November. For Fall intake, early application deadlines are usually around November, while regular deadlines are typically in January.

We’ve also written more about admissions plans like Early Decision and Early Action in another blog, so make sure to check that out if you want more details on how to strategize your application.