



# A GUIDE TO US, UK AND CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES



A CRIMSON EDUCATION PUBLICATION

# About Crimson Education

Crimson Education was founded in New Zealand in 2013 with one core goal in mind - to help people achieve their potential.

Since our humble beginnings, we have connected thousands of students, entrepreneurs and young professionals with some of the world's brightest young minds.

Crimson is also a proud member of the International Association of College Admissions Counseling (IACAC).

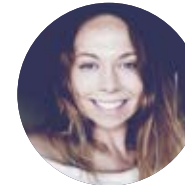
For further research about overseas study, talk to your Career Advisor or visit [crimsoneducation.org](http://crimsoneducation.org).

# About the authors



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## Special thanks to



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR  
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Special thanks to the team at the Australian Centre for Career Education for working with us in the creation of this booklet.



# The university you attend will change the course of your life. How high are you aiming?

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The fact that you're reading this guide means you're looking beyond the universities at your doorstep.



This guide will take you through the basics of how to apply to universities in the US, UK and Canada as well as how to apply for sport scholarships in the US.

Needless to say, the process can be challenging. Navigating application portals, writing essays, sitting extra exams and keeping your nerve during interviews all takes preparation, and at the end of it all, gaining admission is far from guaranteed. Yet, more Australian students are realising that the opportunities abroad are a springboard for success and an experience worth chasing.

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Let's first take a look at what commonly motivates Australian students to put in the work to make the dream of studying overseas a reality.

# Common Motivations



## 01 World class universities

Students who are reaching high levels of academic, leadership or sporting achievement within their school can feel like a big fish in a small pond which inspires students to set the ambitious goal of gaining admission into top ranked and competitive universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Cambridge and Oxford.



## 02 Location advantages

The idea of studying in the heart of New York at Columbia University or King's College in the middle of London appeals to many students. Others are more strategic and might choose to study near Silicon Valley if they are entrepreneurial and passionate about technology, near Washington DC if they follow international politics, or Los Angeles if media, music and film is more their go.



## 03 Global experience

This is especially the case for students who have lived in one city for most of their life. They want to see the world but also want to get straight into studying. Living on campus overseas and mixing with a very international student body is a great way to experience what the world has to offer.



## 04 Networks and employability

Students who attend top ranked universities may not have to search for **employment** after graduation as the jobs often come to them. World leading companies such as Goldman Sachs, Bain and McKinsey & Co actively recruit on campus at top universities.



## 05 Unique education systems

The liberal arts degrees in the US are popular with students who want flexibility and are unsure of what they want to study, while the vocational and in-depth learning in the UK suits students who are passionate about a particular field of study.



## 06 Achieve independence

Straight after school, some students will be itching to move out of home. Studying overseas provides that perfect balance of getting out of your comfort zone while being in a safe and supportive environment. Many students say that their experience of living away from home gives them an advantage once they enter the workforce.



## 07 Leading professors

Top ranked universities attract the best minds. Professors at the best universities are leaders in their field and often world renowned. Stanford, for example, has 19 Nobel laureates on staff! If you have a passion for a particular subject, research the top professors in that field and apply for universities they teach at. In some cases, it may be a university you had never even heard of.



## 08 University lifestyle

In the US, there are hundreds of extracurricular clubs on campus, fraternities and sororities, and the UK has its collegiate life and a sense of history.

Whatever your motivations, be sure to discuss them carefully with your family, Careers Advisor and teachers. If you're half-hearted about studying overseas, we recommend giving yourself more time to research and consider all your options.

## Essentials

If after reading this guide you are even more committed to studying overseas, it's best to keep these three key tips in mind:

### 01

#### Start researching early

Year 10 or 11 is ideal

### 02

#### Establish a timeline (and stick to it!)

There's no substitute for being organised and disciplined

### 03

#### Gather support and ignore the haters

There will be people who will applaud your ambition and support your goals and others who won't be so encouraging. Choose your company carefully.





# 01 THE U.S.

There are more than 3,700 colleges to choose from in the US! But don't let that fact overwhelm you. If you love 'school spirit', American food and culture or you want to graduate and have some of the most famous alumni networks at your fingertips, then read on!



College in the US refers to the tertiary institution you are attending which are similar to universities here. There are six categories US Colleges fall under:

- 01** Private Colleges  
e.g. Stanford, MIT, UChicago, Duke
- 02** [Ivy League](#)  
e.g. Harvard, Princeton, Yale
- 03** Single-Sex (women)  
e.g. Wellesley, Barnard
- 04** Liberal Arts Colleges  
e.g. Amherst, Swarthmore, Williams
- 05** Public Colleges  
e.g. UC Berkeley, UCLA, Georgia Tech
- 06** And lastly, there are Community Colleges which are similar to TAFE institutions here in Australia.

With such a wide choice of colleges, it's important that you do thorough research to help you look beyond the "brand names" such as Harvard and Stanford and consider other universities that may be the best fit for you depending on your interests and the kind of lifestyle you want.

As of 2016/17, the most popular states for international students to study in are Texas, New York and California. With the pace of entrepreneurship and growth of technology sectors in the US, the most popular degrees include engineering, business and management, mathematics, and computer science. Remember, the vast majority of undergraduate courses in the US are four years long.

In terms of education, the **liberal arts** degree in the US is one of the main reasons Australian students apply there, especially if you are unsure about what you want to do after high school. You can apply "undecided", allowing you to explore a wide variety of subjects across the humanities, social sciences and the sciences in order to gain a broader understanding of the world and to discover your interests. Regardless of whether you apply undecided or have a specific major in mind, you will be required to take courses across various disciplines before declaring your major by the end of your sophomore (second) year. Often, you can choose to add a minor (or two!) or even double major in a completely unrelated field. If you are a mathematics major, you could be taking classes with a peer who is double majoring in mathematics and classical studies while taking classes with somebody else who is majoring in computer science and double minoring in mathematics and linguistics.

Keep in mind that majors such as engineering and business are not commonly offered at liberal arts colleges as they are not considered to be traditional liberal arts disciplines.

Smaller liberal arts colleges don't often appear on rankings lists as they only offer undergraduate courses. Some of the most well known and competitive entry liberal arts colleges include Williams (ranked second in America by US News, 2017), Swarthmore and Amherst.



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*For the first two years of a liberal arts degree, you are able to explore different fields before deciding what you want to specialise in. For example, I've taken classes in Chinese, art history, computer science, biology, maths and writing. I'm intending to major in economics but now I've also decided to pick up a second major in computer science. If I stayed at The University of Auckland (I attended for one semester initially), I may not have had the opportunity to pursue a career in tech.”*

**JEFFREY**

*Duke University*

## Application Platforms

The vast majority of colleges use the Common App, with which you can apply to up to 20 colleges, each costing between \$30 and \$100. A typical strategy is to apply to eight colleges - two "dream" colleges, two to three colleges that you're likely to get into, and two to three colleges you feel assured of securing an offer to.

**A few exceptions to the Common App are:**

- + MIT
- + The California public institutions such as UC Berkeley and UCLA
- + Florida, Maryland and Washington public universities who only use the Coalition App



# Applying Rounds and Application Strategy

The US college year starts late August/early September. We recommend students apply to local universities and start first semester here in Australia while waiting to hear from universities overseas. You can then defer your local university course to take up your offer overseas.

Keep an eye out for college open days, student ambassador webinars, and information sessions, as it's not only a great chance to learn more about prospective colleges but it's a good way to demonstrate your interest to admissions officers who take record of attendance.

Knowing when to apply can be confusing in the US as there are three different rounds: early action, early decision and regular decision.

## Early Action Round

Applying for the early action round is looked upon favourably by colleges so it's a good idea to apply in this round if you have the time. If you get accepted, the decision is not final. Application deadlines are in early to mid-November depending on the college you apply to and you'll hear back in mid-December. If you get an offer, you have until May 1 to accept. Check each college for specific deadlines. Please note: depending on the college, applying early action may restrict you from applying to other "early" programs.

## Early Decision Round

This round is different because if the college accepts you, it is binding. This means you have committed to going to this college, so be careful when considering where you apply to via early decision. Again, application deadlines are in early to mid-November depending on the college you apply to and you'll hear back in mid-December. Check each college for specific deadlines.

## Regular Decision Round

The majority of students will apply through the regular decision round which makes it more competitive. Applications are submitted between late December and early January (depending on the college) and decisions are released between March and April. You will either get an offer of acceptance, be waitlisted or rejected. If you get an offer, you have until May 1 to accept. If you get waitlisted by a college you wish to attend, it's a good idea to send a letter to admissions officers to say that you still want to be considered in case other students don't accept their offer.



# The U.S. Application Process

The US application process is notoriously difficult. So it's no surprise then that students who get accepted into multiple top ranked universities make national news headlines!

**Generally speaking, there are five components:**

- 01** Personal statement and supplementary essay
- 02** Extracurricular and leadership profile
- 03** Taking standardised exams
- 04** References
- 05** Interview with an alumni

**The comprehensive application process (in both the US and UK) helps admissions officers to:**


- +** Sort through thousands of applicants
- +** Judge your potential for success in the world rather than your ability to ace an exam
- +** Create a diverse student body
- +** Assess your "cultural fit" for the university
- +** See that you care enough about the university to go through the process in the first place



## Personal Statement and Supplementary Essays

The personal statement is your opportunity to convey your individual voice. Keep in mind that admissions officers are not only looking for academic students but students who will make a positive contribution to campus life and go on to be leaders of the future. You are required to write one personal statement of approximately 600 words which is submitted through the Common App. It is sent to all the universities you apply to.

Australian students are more accustomed to writing analytical essays than writing about themselves so do your research on what makes a good personal statement.

In addition, many universities will require two to three supplementary essays to be written, for which they provide prompts. This is where the unique character of each university starts to show. For example, University of Chicago is known for its quirky approach so they're looking for similarly alternative students. Some of their past essay prompts include 'Find X' and 'What's odd about odd numbers?'.  


## Extracurricular Activities and Leadership

In the Common App, there are 10 spaces for you to show admissions officers your involvement in [extracurricular activities](#) and leadership initiatives, and extra spaces for awards and honours. This is an opportunity to differentiate yourself from the crowd and to give your application a strong narrative. For example, if you are passionate about environmental science, you would ideally be involved in extracurricular and leadership activities related to this, such as planting trees and volunteering for environmental charities or clubs.

Most universities will be looking to see your involvement in activities or initiatives that you have created yourself in addition to existing institutional activities such as school sport and music. Keep in

mind that admissions officers are looking to see the impact you have made in your community. This could be your local school community or could be as big as your city or even your country.

## Exams

To attend a US college, you must take either the [SAT or ACT](#). The majority of the content on these tests is based on material you would have already covered in high school, and because you live in an English speaking country, you have a distinct advantage for the writing and reading sections.

Please note: If English is not your first language but you have studied in Australia for four years or more, you will generally have your TOEFL/IELTS requirement waived. However, some schools will require non-native English speakers to take the TOEFL or IELTS regardless. The validity of TOEFL/IELTS is two years.

Some advantages of the SAT and ACT include the fact that you can take the test multiple times and many colleges (but not all) accept a "super score" which combines your highest scoring sections across multiple tests. Results are also valid for five years.

Both exams have reading, writing and maths sections. The ACT also has a science section. There are multiple testing dates throughout the year and there are test centres located around Australia. It costs approximately \$80 AUD to register and take the SAT or ACT.

We generally recommend students interested in studying in the US take the SAT or ACT once in year 11 and again in year 12 to maximise the chance of getting a high score.

Top universities will also require you to sit two (and for some colleges, three) SAT Subject Tests. The tests you take are chosen by you although some courses may ask you to take specific tests that align with that course, e.g. a maths subject test is a prerequisite for most engineering courses.

Colleges will also take into account your final high school exam marks (ATAR or IB grade) but there are no cut-off scores. If you are applying in the early rounds, you can ask your school to provide a predicted ATAR which will usually suffice.

## References and Academic Transcripts

The majority of universities will ask you to provide two to three written references. Most will request one from your school's careers counsellor and one or two from your teachers. It's generally a good idea to ask teachers that have taught you in contrasting subjects (i.e. one science/maths and one English/history). It is your responsibility to make sure you ask for these references well in advance and provide your referees with all the necessary information about your achievements and interests.

Colleges also commonly ask to see your academic transcripts from year 9 through to year 12. You can request official transcripts from your school.

## Interview

Many universities will require an interview, which is usually quite informal. This is with an alum of the university (or occasionally an admissions officer) and can be conducted face-to-face, over the phone or via Skype. This interview is the final step to determine whether you are a good fit for the university from a social and cultural standpoint.

## Weighting

As a general guide, US applications are weighted as follows:  
50% academics (SAT/ACT and SAT Subject Tests as well as high school marks and academic transcripts)  
30% extracurricular and leadership activities  
20% application essays and interview

## Admissions Rates

Top ranked universities are notoriously competitive

to gain admission into. The top 20 universities in the US all have admissions rates under 10%.

# Financial Considerations



In Australia, many students acquire a HECS debt at university, whereas in the US, approximately two-thirds of full-time college students are on some kind of [financial aid](#) (2014-15 College Board).

For international students, financial aid comes in the form of loans and/or grants. Grants can be a significant part of the financial aid package which you don't have to pay back.

Financial aid is awarded to students on a "needs basis" after reviewing the financial details of families who apply.

As a case study, in 2016 at Harvard, the average family received approximately \$50,000 USD a year in aid and contributed \$12,000 USD which is inclusive of living expenses. Universities are able to afford financial aid due to the generosity of alumni donors. For more information on costs, Google "net price calculator" along with the name of the university you're interested in to get rough estimates of the cost per year based on your family's financial situation.

Should you get accepted, you would apply for financial aid every year, and depending on your financial situation at that time, the institution would take all information into account and alter your financial aid scholarship based on your family's need.

If you have dual citizenship between Australia and the US, you will apply as a domestic (American) candidate and are eligible for federal as well as institutional financial aid.

# U.S. Athletic Scholarships

## Approved NCAA Sports

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has a range of approved sports among three divisions. These sports include volleyball, baseball, rowing, swimming, fencing, soccer, field hockey, water polo, basketball, etc.

Keep in mind that you do not have to be a national champion athlete to receive funding to play sports at college. There are three divisions of ability, and you may find that a division II or III university suits your sporting ability better than a division I program. For Australian student-athletes, there is no opportunity to play netball, AFL or rugby league in the US.

## Create a CV

Create a resume that includes notable sporting achievements and accolades from year 8 onwards, including representative teams made, results, tournaments attended, as well as awards and any championships won.

## Footage

Source as much recent video footage as possible as well as notable footage from previous seasons. This material will enable coaches to view your sporting performances during the recruitment process.



## ACADEMICS

**You are required to take either the SAT or the ACT standardised test in order to study in the USA. See the 'US Application Process' for more information.**

## High School Transcripts

You will need to get an official transcript or copy of reports from year 9 onwards. Make sure these reports are on a school letterhead, and have been stamped and signed by a principal. Get two copies of each sealed in separate envelopes and have them stamp the seal so that it is obvious that it hasn't been opened. One sealed copy is to keep for when you apply to your chosen school, the other needs to be sent to the NCAA at the below address after you have registered with them.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

### Register

with the **NCAA Eligibility Center** at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). This is where the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) certifies your academic and amateur credentials. It will ask you to create a profile and provide extensive information about your family, sport, schooling, etc. You don't have to finish this in one sitting.

### Questions

You may be asked questions such as, "Have you ever given permission to anyone other than a parent, legal guardian or coach to market your skills in field hockey?" or "Was any part of your payment based on whether you received an athletics scholarship, the value of your scholarship or admittance to a institution?" Make sure to answer correctly and get advice from professionals as the NCAA takes scholarships and amateurism very seriously.

### Sending Documents

You will also need to request that the curriculum centre in your territory sends the necessary documents directly to the NCAA (once you are registered). The address is:

**NCAA Eligibility Center  
Certification Processing  
RE: (Insert your NCAA ID  
number)**  
P.O. Box 7136  
Indianapolis,  
Indiana 46207-7136  
USA

## NCAA ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

**International college-bound student-athletes must submit the following academic documents:**

- + Your academic records for year 9 and up, in English or in your native language and translated to English
- + SAT or ACT scores
- + Proof of graduation, including certificates, diplomas or final leaving exams

## NOTICE

Many Australian students select a course or track of studies in year 10 and may not be required to continue the study of a specific subject such as social science, natural/physical science or mathematics. This fact does not excuse the student-athlete from meeting initial eligibility requirements.

## EXTRA INFORMATION

### Social media

Keep your Facebook/Twitter/Instagram accounts private if possible, and be conscious of your online activity. All universities have departments that search for your online presence so it's best practice to ensure it's clean and respectable.

# Review of the U.S. Athletic Recruiting Process

- + Think about what your academic and sporting goals are.
- + Create a list of priorities for the university you wish to attend; location, academic reputation, climate, social scene.
- + Register with the NCAA eligibility center.
- + Create an Athletic Portfolio that includes all leadership, extracurricular and sporting accolades.
- + Research all possible universities that suit the list of priorities that you created.
- + **Initiate email contact** with coaches/universities of interest; send them all necessary information such as times, videos, awards, as well as your updated Athletic Portfolio.
- + Keep in regular contact with coaches of interest; fortnightly/monthly updates.
- + Make sure to sit the SAT or ACT exam, multiple times if necessary to get a score that is satisfactory to you.
- + Once you have made significant progress with a particular university/coach, begin to introduce the idea of official/unofficial visits.
- + From this point on, the coach/university you have committed to may want you to proceed with applications in their own unique way.
- + Apply to the university with support from the coach through the Common Application.
- + Depending on the institution, you will hear about your academic acceptance decision within three months of applying.



“

*I never thought Harvard University would be an option for me. It seemed like it was too far out of reach; I did not think I would financially or academically be able to attend. Two years on, I have just finished my first year at Harvard studying neurobiology. The networking, cultural immersion and overall independence I have gained from this top institution is world class. I wouldn't be where I am today without the knowledge around international students studying in the US and how to make dreams become reality.”*

**MADISON E**

*Harvard Field Hockey, Class of 2020.*



# 02

## The U.K.

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If you think the near 400 year history of places like Harvard is impressive, than you're sure to love the UK! Oxford University lays claims to being the oldest university in the English-speaking world with records dating back to 1096 so you can trust the UK knows a thing or two about creating inspiring places to learn.



The UK is regarded by many as "the place to be" if you are passionate about a subject given its more vocational degree structure and in-depth learning time with professors.

As a result, the application process is heavily weighted to academics and showing your passion for a particular field of study.

The majority of undergraduate courses in the UK are three years long, except for Scotland where courses are four years long.



# Application Platform

The majority of universities in the UK use the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) platform. You can apply to a maximum of five colleges with UCAS.

## Applying Rounds and Application Strategy

The application deadlines are simpler for the UK. Students applying to [Oxford or Cambridge](#) (collectively known as Oxbridge) and any other vet science course, med school or law school have a deadline of October 15. For most other colleges and programs, there is a January 15 deadline. Some arts and design courses are as late as mid-March but it's recommended to apply earlier so you have time to process visa documents, etc.

For students applying to Oxbridge wanting to interview in Singapore, Malaysia or China, you must submit your application by September 20.

A typical strategy is to apply to either Oxford or Cambridge (you can't apply to both), one or two "match" colleges, most likely from the group of 24 universities called the Russell Group, and one or two "safety" colleges.

## The UK Application Process

With less emphasis on extracurriculars and leadership, some consider the UK application process to be easier but there are still multiple components and it is still very competitive. The four components are:

- 01 Personal statement
- 02 Exams
- 03 Interview with professors
- 04 A reference

## Personal Statement

The personal statement for the UK is similar to the US in that it's a great chance to make yourself stand out from other high achieving students and tell your unique story. It's important to address three key areas in your personal statement to UK universities:

- + **Why you are drawn to the particular course/university:** Show passion and evidence e.g. previous related studies, articles read/documentaries viewed, projects, work experience, volunteering, activities/hobbies.
- + **Why the university should choose you:** Show skills e.g. communication, essay writing, leadership, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and whatever else is needed to succeed in the course.
- + **Personal insights:** Reinforce your commitment, enthusiasm and life skills for uni. This is where you discuss why you want to be an international student in the UK instead of studying in your home country.

The UK personal statement has a maximum of 4,000 characters and it's good to show your passion for whatever course or subject area you're applying for by working in information on relevant extracurricular activities, leadership initiatives and awards. For this reason, we advise against applying to different courses across different universities or even starkly different courses within the same university.

## Exams

Unlike the US and Australia, you are required to take specific exams in the UK depending on the course you are applying for. For example, to apply for economics courses, you need to take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA); for law, you need to take the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT); for med, you need to take the Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT), and so on. There are approximately 50 different tests altogether.

You can only take the exams once and they are held near the end of the year.

The UK also pays close attention to your final high school marks. For example, to have your application reviewed by Oxford or Cambridge, you will have to score an ATAR of 98.5 or above.

## Interview

The UK interview process is considerably more difficult than the US interview as it is usually conducted by a team of professors rather than an alumnus. Expect tough questions such as 'How many pianos are in Vienna?' which was given to a student who was applying for a land economy course. The answer is not that important; what is important is for the professors to be able to see your thinking process and logic. They're looking for people who can think "outside of the box".

It is advantageous to attend the interview in person but if you are unable to do so, interviews are also conducted over video calls. These video calls can be more challenging to gain admission through as it's easier to build rapport and show commitment if you attend the interview in person.

## References and Academic Transcripts

The majority of universities will ask you to provide one written reference which is

commonly sourced from a school teacher, sports coach or community leader. It is your responsibility to make sure you ask for these references well in advance and provide your referees with all the necessary information about your achievements and interests.

Universities also commonly ask to see your academic transcripts from year 9 through to year 12. You can request official transcripts from your school.

## Weighting

As a general guide, UK applications are weighted as follows:

- 01 80% academics (required tests, high school marks and academic transcripts)
- 02 15% application essays, interview and reference
- 03 5% extracurricular and leadership activities

# Financial Considerations

The **costs of studying in the UK** as an international student can be higher than the US due to the exchange rate and the absence of a financial aid process. Costs vary considerably based on different universities and course selection. Search university websites to give you an indication of any available scholarships.

# 03

## Canada

The number of international students applying to Canadian universities is on the rise and it's not difficult to understand why. With an admirable safety record, friendly people and scenic beauty, Canada also has some outstanding universities including the University of Toronto, McGill University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta - all ranked in the top 100 in the 2018 QS World University Rankings.

## Application Process

Applying to Canadian universities is generally more straightforward. However, you need to apply directly to each institution as there is no centralised application platform as there is in the US and UK.

The application requirements vary slightly between universities, so be sure to check with each institution in advance.

**As a guide, most universities will ask for:**

- + The completion of high school and, in some provinces, the completion of 40 hours of community service
- + International students may be asked for proof of language proficiency in either English or French
- + Almost all international students will be required to provide an essay, a statement of intent or a personal statement of experience
- + Other documents may include letters of reference, evidence of extracurricular involvement, athletic participation, awards won, etc.

## Financial Considerations

According to *Statistics Canada*, the average annual tuition fees for international undergraduate students in the 2016/17 academic year was \$23,589 CAD which is similar to Australian universities. As is the case worldwide, degrees such as veterinary medicine are generally the most expensive. As part of your application, you'll also need to prove you have enough money to support yourself while studying in Canada. This is currently deemed to be \$10,000 CAD per year in addition to your tuition fees in every province except Quebec, where you need \$11,000 CAD.

Exceptional international students may be able to obtain funding via the range of government and non-government scholarships available, such as the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program.

### NOTICE

It is compulsory to purchase health insurance while studying in Canada. This will cost approximately \$600 CAD per year. It's also worth noting that visa application costs usually range from \$200-\$500 AUD depending on which country you're applying to.

# 04

## Important Information

If you're as excited as we are about the prospect of studying overseas, then slow down for a minute and take the time to learn about visa requirements and the common mistakes Australian students make before rushing off to submit an application.

## Admissions Rates

The admissions rates of top universities in the UK range between 18% and 25%. While this may seem easier to get into than US universities, this is due to the UK's tough academic requirements to have your application even considered. Canada's admissions rates are not as competitive as the US or UK.

## Visas

### The US

Once you've been accepted to study at a US university, you will be ready to apply for your F-1 non-immigrant visa. In order to obtain this, you need to arrange an interview at your local US embassy.

### The UK

Your university may be willing to help you apply for a UK student visa once you have been offered a place on a course; ask to find out if this is the case. You can apply for the visa up to three months prior to the start date of your course. Check the average visa processing times for your country and be sure to allow plenty of time.

### Canada

In order to study in Canada, you will need to obtain a Canadian study permit, which serves as a Canadian student visa for the duration of your stay. You do not need a Canadian study permit if your course or program lasts six months or less.

## Australian Common Mistakes

Below are a number of [common mistakes](#) that students make when applying to international universities.

### Leaving the application to the last minute

Procrastination is dangerous when writing an application that will be seen by admissions officers, as they will be able to pick up on the lack of thought and rushed tone to your statements.

Make sure to start writing statements and essays at least two months before they are due, so that you are able to get feedback from current teachers and family members.

### Not taking enough time to research all potential universities

Research is key to choosing the right university for you, whether it be the courses, faculty, location or climate, taking time to research will pay off.

### Choosing a university purely based on world rankings

Harvard, Stanford and MIT might be the top three universities in the world, but they might not be the right three for your interests or passions.

### Pretending to be someone that you are not

The personal statement is crucial for the admissions officer to get to know who you really are, how you think and what you can bring to the institution.

### Missing early program deadlines

Some institutions have deadlines for certain courses that are earlier than the general admission deadline.

### Forgetting to proofread personal statements and essays

This includes missing the opportunity to explain extracurricular and leadership activities in full.

Explain why these activities were important and how they benefitted someone else in the community; they want to see how your actions have had a positive effect on the world.

### Asking for teacher recommendations at the last minute

Almost every application into university will ask for a minimum of one teacher recommendation, so it is useful to have these on hand before applying to university.

Make sure to ask your teacher a few months in advance if they would be willing to write a recommendation for you. Give them a deadline which could be two weeks before the application deadline.

### Read the fine print

When applying to university there can be a lot of forms to sign; be sure to make copies of every form that you sign and submit.

Always make sure to read all information, and if you are not sure about something, ask someone who knows or do some research.



# How to choose universities to apply to

With so many options out there, it can be daunting to know where to start. As funny as it sounds, the best place to start sifting through the thousands of options is with you! When choosing to apply to a university in the US, UK or Canada (or anywhere for that matter) it is important to ask yourself “what are my priorities?”. Here’s a good list to start with:

#### + Location

#### + Professors

Location can play a big role in your enjoyment of university life. Be sure to check what kind of weather they have throughout the year, where the major cities and airports are, and where you might go during your term breaks.

You should also look at the university professors who are currently teaching. If you are passionate about the intersection of biology and computer science, there may be one professor who specialises in that area and teaches at a particular school. Add that one to the list of places you apply to.

#### + University ranking

#### + University size

Don’t limit yourself to one type of university or even one country when applying. You might fall in love with the London School of Economics (LSE) in London and a small liberal arts school in the US. That’s okay! Apply to both but try not to go overboard (yes, applying to 30 schools is way too many).

Most colleges will have every extracurricular activity you can dream of and many colleges will have a large number of majors for you to choose from. However, if you are looking to play a certain sport, make sure you check which universities offer that sport and at what level.

#### + Courses

#### + Sport teams

Of course, the best way to pick a school is to visit. However, if you are limited by geography, there are lots of resources online that help you understand what all aspects of a school are like. Don’t forget to look at the pictures!

Another handy resource is Crimson Education’s YouTube channel which has videos from campuses around the world. Search ‘Crimson Education’ on YouTube.



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## Curriculums and Studying Overseas

US, UK and Canadian universities recognise a wide variety of high school diplomas. As an example, Oxford University accepts scores from the HSC / VCE / NTCE / SACE / TCE / WACE, the ACT Year 12 Certificate and the Senior Certificate from Queensland with an OP in band 1.

## The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program

If you are considering taking the [IB Diploma Program](#) or already do so, it can give you an advantage when it comes to applying to the US where it's unofficially accepted as a "college standard" curriculum.

In fact, universities tend to admit IB students at a higher rate than their non-IB counterparts. An IBO survey showed that the acceptance rate of IB students into Ivy League universities is up to 18% higher than the total population acceptance rate.

Most of the top US colleges will even give you credits for your Diploma Program subjects if you get over a certain score.

For example, at University of Pennsylvania (an Ivy League), a score of six in most "higher level" (HL) IB subjects will earn you some credits towards your degree. This means that you can graduate earlier and pay less tuition. You can also skip introductory classes, paving the way for advanced study from the moment you set foot on campus.

At least for the Ivy League and more selective colleges, you're going to need a healthy mix of sixes and sevens (no less than six) in your subjects for a shot at admission. A score in the 40s is going to make you a more competitive candidate academically (note: a lot of non-academic factors are at play), but a 38 is still considered a good grade.

While the IB is also highly regarded by UK universities, it's not valued in quite the same way as the UK values in-depth knowledge rather than breadth of knowledge seen in the IB. As an example, IB score requirements at University of Oxford will vary between 38 and 40 (always with a minimum of six in each HL subject).



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## Further Research

This information was provided to you by Crimson Education, a global mentoring company specialising in the US & UK admissions process, US sport scholarships, local med school entry and tutoring for high school curriculums. In Australia, Crimson Education has offices in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Visit [crimsoneducation.org](https://crimsoneducation.org) for more information.

## Glossary of Terms

### + Freshman

a first year college or high school student

### + Sophomore

a second year college or high school student

### + Junior

a third year college or high school student

### + Senior

a fourth year college or high school student

### + ACT

American College Testing. A college entrance test used widely in America.

### + SAT

Formerly an acronym for Scholastic Assessment Test but now simply known as SAT. A college entrance test used widely in America.

### + TOEFL

Test of English as a Foreign Language

### + IELTS

International English Language Test System

### + Major and Minor

Used to describe a student's primary and secondary areas of study. E.g. a student who majors in physics may minor in maths. This terminology is common in the US but not in the UK.

There are SAT 'Questions of the Day', practice questions, and practice exams available online for free on the [College Board website](https://collegeboard.org).

For free ACT resources, visit the [ACT website](https://act.org).

Connect with students and experts from top universities for free and ask your own questions or read past answers at the [Ask Crimson website](https://askcrimson.com).

Read comprehensive blog articles that are relevant to Australian students, covering topics such as exam prep, top colleges, campus life, financing your education and more at the [Crimson Education blog](https://crimsoneducation.com/blog).

You can see universities ranked by subject and data on student numbers, teacher/student ratio etc. In no particular order, we recommend searching for:

### + QS World Rankings

### + Times Higher Education Rankings

### + US News - US colleges only



[www.crimsoneducation.org](http://www.crimsoneducation.org)