



UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESS

Glossary of Terms

The university application process is filled specific terms, forms, deadlines, requirements, standardized tests, “searches,” visits—and more. It can be difficult for students who are not used to the process.

Here is a list of terms and definitions for students and parents. The terms have been grouped alphabetically in the following categories:

- (1) applying;
- (2) college entrance exams;
- (3) types of institutions;
- (4) college acceptance terms
- (5) some college lingo;
- (6) types of post-secondary degrees;
- (7) financial aid process.

First **it is important** to note that the words college and university are often used interchangeably throughout the application process even though they mean slightly different things.

College: An institution of higher learning, often referred to as a “four-year” institution, which grants the bachelor’s degree in liberal arts or science or both. These tend to be smaller institutions.

University: A “post-secondary institution” that consists of a liberal arts college, a diverse graduate program, and usually two or more professional schools or faculties, and that is empowered to confer degrees in various fields of study. These tend to be larger institutions.



APPLYING

Applicant: A student who has completed the college application process at any institution.

Application: Admissions departments usually require students to complete an application for admission that generally consists of academic records, personal essays, letters of recommendation, and a list of extracurricular activities. Most schools require the SAT or ACT. Deadlines for admission applications vary per university.

Application Deadline: The date, set by college admissions offices, after which applications for admission will not be accepted. ****THIS IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERY UNIVERSITY***

Advanced Placement (AP): AP courses are college-level classes taught in the high school following guidelines and covering material that will instruct students in AP subject areas and should prepare them to take Advanced Placement tests offered by The College Board.

“Best Fit”: The college search is not about getting into the best college. There is no school that is best for all students. Some students do best at large public universities and others excel in small liberal arts colleges. Don't just apply to the famous schools or the ones your friends are applying. Do your own research to find schools that are the best fit for you.

Campus Interview: This is a face-to-face interaction between an admissions applicant and an institutional representative.

Campus Visit/Tour: A service by the college admissions office for prospective students, allowing them to visit various campus buildings and get a firsthand look at campus life.

Class Rank: A measurement of how your academic achievement compares with that of other students in your grade. This number is usually determined by using a weighted GPA that takes into account both your grades and the difficulty of the courses you've taken.

Coalition Application: A standard application form accepted by members of the Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success. You can use this application to apply to any of the more than 90 colleges and universities that are members of the Coalition.

College Essay/Personal Statement: A brief composition on a single subject, required by many colleges as part of the application process for admission.



College Fair: An event at which colleges, universities, and other higher education institutes presents themselves in an exposition atmosphere to identify potential applicants.

College Rep Visit: This is when a college or university admissions representative visits a high school or community for the purpose of recruiting students for admission to the institution.

College Search: These are the steps you take in the early phases of college planning in order to identify, locate, and investigate college-level programs that meet your individual interests, abilities, and needs as a student.

College Credit: What you get when you successfully complete a college-level course. You need a certain number of credits to graduate with a degree. Colleges may also grant credit for scores on exams, such as those offered by the College Board's AP Program® and CLEP.

Common Application: The Common Application (Common App) makes it possible for students to use one admissions application to apply to any of 456 member colleges and universities. There is a Common Application for First-Year Admission and a Common Application for Transfer Admission. Both versions allow the application to be filled out once online and submitted to all schools with some of the same information going to each.

Demonstrated Interest: This includes a student's expression of his or her desire to attend a particular college through campus visits, contact with admissions officers, and other actions that attract the attention of college admissions personnel. Some schools do consider demonstrated interest in their admissions decisions.

Extracurriculars: Extracurricular activities are simply anything you do that is not a high school course and can include paid employment. You should define your extracurricular activities in broad terms. Most community and family activities are also "extracurricular."

GPA (Grade Point Average): Quantitative measure of a student's grades. The GPA is figured by averaging the numerical value of a student's grade starting freshman year (9) through senior year (12). A poor GPA one year lower the overall average, despite, good grades another year.

Honors Classes: The difference between a regular class (such as English 1) and the honors class (English 1 Honors) is not necessarily the amount of work. Honors courses offer the same material in greater depth and with a faster pace.



Instate (Resident) Student: A student whose permanent residence is in the same state as the college or university he or she hopes to attend. In-state students pay lower tuition than out-of-state students.

Prospective Student: Any student who is a potential applicant for admission, particularly those who have shown interest in attending the institution or the institution wants to attend.

Out-of-State (Non-Resident) Student: Student whose permanent residence is in a different state than that of the college or university which he or she hopes to attend. Out-of-state students generally pay higher tuition than do instate students. Students from another country are automatically considered out-of-state students.

“Reach School”: A college or university that you have a chance of getting into, but your test scores, GPA and/or class rank are a bit on the low side when you look at the school's profile. The top U.S. colleges and top universities should always be considered “reach schools.”

Recommendations: Statements or letters of endorsement written on a student’s behalf during the college application process.

“Safety School”: A college or university where you clearly meet the admission requirements: minimum GPA, test scores, etc. It’s important that the school also be one that you would want to attend. Don’t apply to schools you don’t want to go to. It is a waste of time and money.

School Profile: This is an overview of your high school’s program, grading system, course offerings, and other features that your school is submits to admissions offices along with your transcript. Ask your WorldEd Guidance Counselor for yours!

Selectivity: Selectivity is the degree to which a college or university admits or denies admission based on the individual student’s record of academic achievement. In general, a highly selective school admits 25% of applicants, a very selective school admits 26% to 49% of applicants, a selective school admits 50% to 75% of applicants and a school with open admission admits applicants based on space availability.

Transcript: This is the official document containing the record of a student’s academic performance and testing history from 9th-12th grade. The school at which a student is or has been officially enrolled must issue the transcript, certified by the signature of an authorized school administrator.



Virtual Tour: This is an online feature offered by some colleges and universities to allow prospective students to view various aspects of campus life without visiting the institutions.



COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

ACT: A two-hour-and-55-minute examination that measures a student's knowledge and achievement in four subject areas -- English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning -- to determine the student's readiness for college-level instruction. There is also an optional writing test that assesses students' skills in writing an essay. The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36 for each of the four areas. The four subject area scores are averaged to create a Composite Score.

SAT: This is a widely used college entrance examination program. This includes the SAT Reasoning Test, which assesses students' critical thinking skills as they relate to the ability to manage college-level instruction. It is a 3-hour exam measuring verbal and mathematical skills, as well as grammar/conventions and the ability to write a brief essay. Students may earn a total of up to 1600 points on the three-hour exam (up to 800 points in each of the exam's content areas: verbal, math, and writing).

SAT Subject Test: SAT subject tests (also known as SAT II tests) are offered in many areas of study including English, mathematics, many sciences, history, and foreign languages. Some colleges require students to take one or more SAT subject tests when they apply for admission.



TYPES OF POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Art School (Arts College, Art Institute, Conservatory): An institution specializing in the visual, performing, and/or creative arts.

College: An institution of higher learning, often referred to as a “four-year” institution, which grants the bachelor's degree in liberal arts or science or both.

Community College: Community colleges, sometimes called junior colleges, technical colleges, or city colleges, are primarily two-year public institutions providing higher education and lower-level courses, granting certificates, diplomas, and associate's degrees. After graduating from a community college, some students transfer to a four-year liberal arts college or university for two to three years to complete a bachelor's degree.

Graduate School: Usually within universities, these schools offer degree programs beyond the bachelor's degree.

Historically Black College: Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community. There are 105 HBCUs today, including public and private, two-year and four-year institutions, medical schools and community colleges.

Liberal Arts College: A degree-granting institution where the academic focus is on developing the intellect and instruction in the humanities and sciences, rather than on training for a particular vocational, technical, or professional pursuit.

Private Institution: This is a college or university funded by private sources without any control by a government agency. The cost of attending a private institution is generally higher than the cost at a public institution.

Proprietary Institution: This is a term used to describe postsecondary schools that are private and are legally permitted to make a profit.

Public Institution: A college or university that receives public funding, primarily from a local, state, or national government that oversees and regulates the school's operations.



University: A "post-secondary institution" that consists of a liberal arts college, a diverse graduate program, and usually two or more professional schools or faculties, and that is empowered to confer degrees in various fields of study.

Vocational or Technical School: This type of institution is similar to a community college in that it offers specific career-oriented programs that last from a few months to a couple of years. Most are specialized and offer intense training in one specific skill area.

Religion-Based Institution: These are colleges and universities established by and currently operating under the sponsorship of a church, synagogue, or mosque; or a particular religion.

Single-Sex (or Single-Gender) College: This is a college that accepts only women or men.



COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE TERMS

Acceptance: The decision by an admissions officer or committee to offer the opportunity for enrollment as a student at a particular institution.

Articulation Agreement: An agreement between two-year and four-year colleges that makes it easier to transfer credits between them. It spells out which courses count for degree credit and the grades you need to earn to get credit.

Candidate's Reply Date Agreement (CRDA): Any college subscribing to this agreement will not require you to notify the school of your decision to accept admittance (or to accept an offer of financial aid) before May 1st of the year the applicant applies. The purpose of the agreement is to give you time to hear from all of the colleges you applied to before having to make a commitment.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP): This is for students who want to get college credit by taking proficiency tests in selected courses. If you score high enough on the test, college credit can be awarded. There is a charge for each test taken. Information concerning an individual institution's policies toward CLEP tests can be found in the college's catalog.

College Selection: The act of choosing and making the decision to enroll in and attend a particular higher-education program.

Cost of Attendance: What it costs to attend a specific college, including tuition & fees, room & board, books, transportation, personal expenses, and all other necessary expenses associated with going to that college.

Deferred Admission: A category of admission used in conjunction with early (action, decision, notification, or acceptance) plans to indicate that a student has not been admitted early but will remain in the applicant pool for reconsideration during the review of applications for regular Admissions.

Deferred Enrollment: This is a category of admission available at some institutions for fully accepted students who wish—for a justifiable reason—to take a semester or year off before enrolling in college.

Denial: The decision by an admissions officer or committee to not offer a student admission.



Early Action: Early action is when a prospective student applies for admission by early deadline (before the regular admission deadline) and receives notice of acceptance, denial, or deferment with no obligation to the university to enroll, if accepted for admission.

Early Admission: Through this program, qualifying high school juniors with outstanding academic records may forego their senior year in high school and enroll in a college or university.

Early decision: Through this program offered by many post-secondary schools, students willing to commit to a school if accepted submit their application by a date well before the general admission deadline. If accepted, the student must enroll in that school, so students should only apply for an early decision to their first choice school.

Gap-Year Programs: Year-long programs designed for high school graduates who wish to defer enrollment in college while engaging in meaningful activities, such as academic programs, structured travel, community service, etc.

Legacy Applicant: A college applicant with a relative (usually a parent or grandparent) who graduated from that college. Some colleges give preference to legacy applicants (“legacies”).

Need-Blind Admission: A policy of making admission decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student’s full need.

Notification Date: The date by which applicants who are accepted for admission are expected to notify the institutions of their intent to enroll and make enrollment deposits. Often around May 1st.

Open Admissions: The college admissions policy that admits high school graduates and other adults generally without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as high school grades, admissions test scores, and high school subjects taken. Virtually all applicants with high school diplomas or their equivalent are accepted.

Priority Date or Deadline: The date by which your application, whether it’s for college admission, student housing or financial aid, must be received to be given the strongest consideration.

Registrar: The college official who registers students. The registrar may also be responsible for keeping permanent records and maintaining your student file.



Rolling Admissions: This is a practice used by some institutions to review and complete applications as they arrive, rather than according to a set deadline.

Room & Board: The fees charged by a college for a dorm room (or other living facility) and meals during the school year.

Special Entry Applicant: A person who does not meet the minimum entry requirements of a particular academic program and is admitted to that academic program through special entry provisions.

Student Amenities Fee: All students are required to pay an annual amenities fee. The funds are used to support college student organizations.

Tuition: How much your college courses cost. Tuition is the amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, or room and board. Tuition charges vary from college to college.

Transcript: The official record of your course work at a school or college. Your high school transcript is usually required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

Waitlist: An applicant is put on the waitlist when an admissions officer or committee decides to offer the applicant the opportunity to enroll in the institution only if there is space available in the incoming class after fully admitted students have responded to their offers to enroll.

Weighted Grade Point Average (GPA): A grade point average that's calculated using a system that assigns a higher point value to grades in more-difficult classes.

Withdrawal: You may withdraw from courses during a semester, which means you will no longer be registered in that course and will be exempt from coursework and credits without penalties or a failing mark. There are deadlines for withdrawal and you must follow the established procedures, which are specified in the college catalog and class schedule. Written approval from a university official must be secured, and some fees must be paid.



SOME COLLEGE LINGO

Alumni: This is a group of people who have graduated from a college or university.

Audit: To attend a class without receiving credit for the class.

Course Numbers: Numbers assigned to specific classes.

Credit (or Semester) Hour: Credit given for attending one lecture hour of class each week for 15 weeks or equivalent. Most college classes are three credit hours meaning their total meeting time for a week is three hours.

Developmental Education: Instructional and support activities designed to keep unprepared students in college and help them improve their basic skills so that they can successfully complete a program and achieve their educational goals.

Enrollment: The action of enrolling or being enrolled. The number of people enrolled.

First-Generation Student: A student whose parents have no college experience.

First-Year Student: A college freshman.

Matriculation: The payment of deposits, tuition, fees, and other charges to enroll in a program of studies at an educational institution.

Major: A student's concentrated field of study.

Minor: A student's secondary field of study.

Placement Tests: Colleges and universities use these examinations to place students in courses like mathematics and foreign languages. In some cases, a student's level of competency on the test may exempt them from having to take a course required for graduation.

Prerequisite: A course that must be taken prior to enrollment in another course.

Registration: Enrollment in classes.



Residence Halls: Dormitories, apartments, houses, and other living quarters provided for students by the college or university in which they are enrolled.

Student Persistence: This is the act of working, progressing, and earning credits toward graduation in an academic environment.

Student Retention: This is the degree to which students remain enrolled as members of the college or university community and persist toward graduation.

Transfer Student: A student who enrolls in a college after having attended another college.

Undergraduate: A student enrolled in a 4- or 5-year bachelor's degree program, an associate's degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate.



TYPES OF POST-SECONDARY DEGREES

A.A.: This stands for an "associate of arts" degree, which can be earned at most two-year colleges.

A.A.S.: This refers to an "associate of applied science" degree, which can be earned at some two-year colleges.

B.A. or B.S.: B.A. stands for "bachelor of arts," and B.S. stands for "bachelor of science." Both degrees can be earned at four-year colleges.

Graduate Degrees: These degrees are earned beyond the bachelor's degree when the student completes graduate school curriculum requirements like the MA (master's degree), PhD (doctoral degree) MBA (master's degree in business administration), MD (medical doctor).

Certificates: In an economy that increasingly rewards specialization, more and more institutions are offering certification programs, typically a package of five or six courses, for credit or not, taken over three to 18 months. Some cost a few thousand dollars, others much more.



FINANCIAL AID TERMS

Award Letter: An award letter from a school states the type and amount of financial aid the school is willing to provide the student, if s/he accepts admission and registers.

Cost of Attending College: This is the total cost of going to college, including tuition, room and board, books, transportation, fees, and personal expenses.

Demonstrated Need: This is the difference between the cost of attending a college and your expected family contribution.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): The EFC is the amount of money you and your family could be expected to pay for one year of college costs, based on the data gathered from the FAFSA and determined by a federal formula applied to that data. This figure often differs from the actual amount you will be required to pay.

FAFSA: This is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a federal form required as the application from all students who wish to apply for need-based financial aid, including grants, loans and work-study awards.

Fees: These are charges that cover costs not associated with the student's course load, such as costs of some athletic activities, clubs, and special events.

Financial Aid Package: The total amount of financial aid a student receives. Federal and nonfederal aid—such as grants, loans, or work-study—are combined in a "package" to help meet the student's need. Using available resources to give each student the best possible package of aid is one of the major responsibilities of a school's financial aid administrator.

Need-Blind Admission: Full consideration of an applicant and his or her application without regard to the individual's need for financial aid.

Tuition: This is the amount of money that colleges charge for classroom and other instruction and use of some facilities such as libraries.

SCHOLARSHIPS

A scholarship is a sum of money given to a student for the purposes of paying at least part of the



cost of college. Scholarships can be awarded to students based on students' academic achievements or on many other factors. Scholarships do not need to be repaid.

Academic Scholarships: Academic scholarships are based upon academic achievement as reflected in your college application.

Athletic Scholarships: These scholarships are based upon athletic ability. Division I, II, and III college athletic scholarships are very difficult to receive because of fierce competition.

Corporate Scholarships: These scholarships are awarded to help employees and their families, show community support and to encourage future job seekers toward a career in the company's area of business. Corporate scholarships are much less competitive than other types of scholarships because of geography, employment and the relatively low number of applicants.

Private Organization Scholarships: These scholarship opportunities number in the millions. Places of worship, labor unions, school districts, chambers of commerce and philanthropic organizations are all excellent sources for college scholarships.

LOANS

A loan is a type of financial aid that is available to students and to the parents of students. An education loan must be repaid. In many cases, however, payments do not begin until the student finishes school.

Federal Perkins Loans: These loans are similar to Stafford loans in that no interest accrues while you are in college. The interest rate is lower, and the repayment grace period is longer than that of a Stafford subsidized loan.

Institutional Loan: Any student loan administered by the college or university using the institution's funds as the source of funding.

PLUS Loan: The Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) allows parents, regardless of income, to borrow up to the total cost of education minus the amount of any other financial aid awarded by the institution or the government.

Stafford Loan: This is a federal student loan for college students used to supplement personal and family resources, scholarships, grants, and work-study.



Subsidized Loans: These loans are need-based loans with interest paid by the government and payments deferred as long as the student is enrolled in a post-secondary program of studies.

GRANTS

Grants, like loans and most scholarships, are based on financial need. A grant may be provided by federal or state governments, an institution, a foundation, or some other nonprofit funding source and does not have to be repaid.

Federal Pell Grant: This grant is a form of financial aid provided by the Federal government to students whose FAFSA indicates a high level of financial need.

Institutional Grant: This is a need-based grant provided by an institution and offered to students whose families are unable to pay the full cost of college. Institutional grants do not have to be repaid.

Merit-Based Grant: A form of gift aid (does not require repayment) based upon your grade point average, academic excellence and extracurricular involvement with some attention to your financial need.

Need-Based Grant: This grant is offered, as a part of the financial aid package, when a student and his or her family are unable to pay the full cost of attending an institution. The grant does not need to be repaid.

WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS

Most colleges offer work-study programs. They allow students to work part time during the school year as part of their financial aid package. The jobs are usually on campus and the money earned is used to pay for tuition or other college charges.