



# Guide for IB students applying to US institutions

*This guide provides a brief introduction to the US higher education system and its application process, as well as information specifically relevant to IB students applying to US institutions from outside of the US.*

## The US context

More than 4,500 accredited institutions make up higher education in the US. Unlike in many countries, US higher education institutions are not centrally organized or managed, but are autonomous and accredited by independent regional bodies.

### Bachelor's degrees

The bachelor's degree is the main undergraduate degree type at US universities and colleges. It is usually completed in four years of full-time study and is awarded after completing a specified number of credits in a major field. Students typically earn credits for courses they take, and these credits count towards the completion of a programme. Every course earns a certain number of credits, and each institution has its own requirement for the number of credits needed to graduate.

**State colleges and universities**, also called public institutions, were founded and subsidized by US state governments to provide a low-cost education to residents of that state. Public universities generally offer access to re-

search opportunities and classes in a wide variety of fields of study. Because of the high number of faculty research grants, public institutions tend to have large departments offering a variety of degrees. These institutions tend to be very large and, because of government subsidies, are typically less expensive to attend than private institutions.

**Private institutions** receive the majority or entirety of their funding from alumni donations, faculty research grants and tuition fees. This typically makes them more expensive to attend, but allows for more resources available to students.

**Liberal arts institutions** offer courses in the arts, humanities, languages, mathematics and social and physical sciences. The majority of liberal arts institutions are private

### Associate degrees

**Community and technical colleges** are another option that provides two-year associate degree programmes to prepare students to continue studies for an undergraduate degree or help them gain occupational skills

for immediate employment. These institutions generally accept most students who apply, regardless of previous academic performance.

Most community colleges have articulation agreements with the public universities in the same state; students can complete their general studies at a community college and, if they meet minimum performance standards, transfer to a four-year institution to complete the remaining two years of their bachelor's degree. Community colleges are an excellent choice for students who did not earn the IB diploma but wish to study in the US.

## Groups and leagues

Many universities are included within popular groups of other institutions. Often these groupings form out of similarities in academic reputation, selectivity or athletic conference.

Ivy League institutions, for example, are eight institutions in the northeast region of the US that compete in the same athletic conference; academically, they typically all rank in the top 15 universities in the US. The Ivy League has connotations of academic excellence, selectivity in admissions and social elitism.

The University of California (UC) is an example of a public state system. Comprised of 10 university campuses throughout the state, UC refers to California's public research universities that offer doctoral degrees. Although each campus is considered selective, the relative selectivity varies between them. The UC has some system-wide admissions requirements and recognition benefits for IB students, but individual campuses may have additional policies.

## University rankings

No official ranking system exists for colleges and universities in the US, although there are independent bodies that conduct subjective rankings annually. US universities are commonly ranked among the highest globally, and in most international university rankings the US is the country with the largest number of highly ranked institutions.

# Applying to US universities

## Who to contact

US institutions are autonomous, and students must apply to each institution directly. In addition, application procedures and requirements may vary considerably from one institution to another.

The [Common Application](#) is a not-for-profit member organization that allows students to apply to more than 600 institutions through a single application process, although some institutions might still have additional requirements beyond the Common Application. Popularity is growing, but there are still many universities and colleges that do not use the Common Application.

## Choosing an area of study

At liberal arts institutions, unless a student chooses a very specific area of study (such as pre-medicine or engineering) a major is typically not required until partway through the undergraduate degree. Thus, students usually do not need to indicate their preferred area of study when applying. The first one to two years of the degree will have general education requirements, allowing students to gain broader exposure to a range of faculties before choosing a major to focus the remainder of their courses on.

## The application

Admissions offices at US institutions tend to look at student performance holistically, taking a variety of factors into consideration in addition to academic performance. Each institution has its own admissions standards and evaluation process.

There is no national university entrance exam, but many institutions will require SAT or ACT exam scores. Many applications can be completed online, and most applications will require biographical information and education background (including school transcripts and IB predicted grades). It is also common for institutions to request letters of recommendation, personal essays, test scores or proof of English proficiency. Students should find out what an application requires well in advance of the application deadline.

## Timeline

It is important to check the application deadline for each institution, as deadlines may vary, but many are in December or January. Because the US admissions cycle happens prior to the May IB exam session, US institutions base their admissions decisions on anticipated IB scores reported by the student's school in conjunction with the other factors listed above. Generally, after an offer is made, students are required to verify that the predicted results used for admissions decisions were accurate by requesting the IB send their exam results to the institution. Many institutions will accept the IB transcript as a school-leaving credential, but some may require a separate high school diploma as well.

## Information for IB students

Nearly all higher education institutions in the US will consider performance in the IB Diploma Programme (DP) for the purpose of admissions or other factors including granting course credit, advanced standing, scholarships or financial aid.

### Admissions requirements

Most institutions do not set minimum required scores for IB students. They prefer to take into account a combination of course selection and performance, extended essay and creativity, activity, service activities, interviews or personal statements, letters of recommendation, and often performance on other standardized exams. Additionally, many US institutions look at performance in individual IB courses rather than the collective point total.

It is important to keep in mind that selectivity varies greatly between institutions. While most will consider the IB as a pathway, some institutions will expect exemplary performance in their applicants. Other institutions will admit IB applicants with a wide range of scores.

Admissions requirements are often not spelled out clearly in IB terms on university websites and vary from institution to institution. It is recommended to speak directly with a university representative to gain a clearer understanding of what level of performance will be likely to gain entry.

### Benefits

Many US higher education institutions offer benefits to IB students. Benefits are determined by each institution individually, but might include credit for certain IB scores, scholarships or tuition assistance. Some universities

allow IB students to enter their institution as second-year students, meaning the undergraduate education will be three years instead of four.

### DP Course students

Students taking DP courses but not the full diploma might be able to receive credit from institutions for individual courses, but policy is also determined by each institution, and sometimes each individual programme or faculty within the institution. Some institutions indicate their IB recognition policy on their website.

### Anticipated grades

It is important to note that the admissions cycle in the US takes place before IB students even sit exams. Thus, admissions decisions are often based in part on the student's anticipated grades submitted by the school. If a student's final IB scores are significantly below the anticipated grades submitted by the school, it is possible for the university to withdraw its offer. As such, it is vital that teachers and schools report students' anticipated grades as accurately as possible. This is not only important for students' futures, but if a school consistently inflates anticipated grades, it may tarnish that school's reputation with the university.

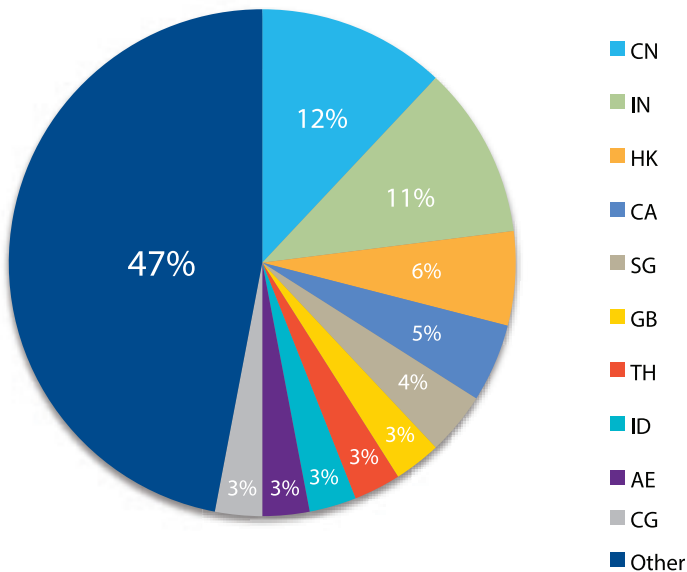


## Who sends IB transcripts to the US?

In 2014, 759 U.S. institutions received 9,016<sup>1</sup> transcripts from 8,163 overseas students (although around a quarter of these students hold American passports). This averages 1.1 transcripts per student, suggesting that most students send transcripts to only one institution. It can be assumed that students who sent transcripts to US institutions were admitted to those institutions, as by the time IB results are released, students generally know which university they plan to attend.

Transcripts were sent from a variety of countries. Even the most common countries of origin, China and India, only account for 12% and 11%, respectively, of the total number of transcripts sent to US institutions from abroad. Six of the 10 most common origin countries are from the Asia-Pacific region, with places such as Thailand and Indonesia sending numbers comparable with those of the UK.

### Most common source of transcripts coming into the US



## Where do IB students send transcripts?

Students send transcripts to a very wide variety of institutions. Even the 50 most popular institutions received just over half (4,939) of transcripts sent to the US. Of these 50, 19 are public institutions, with University of California campuses accounting for 6. From these 50 institutions:

- eight are in California
- seven are in Massachusetts
- five are in New York
- nine are in the mid-west: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- seven are in the northeast: Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island
- six are in the southeast: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina
- five are in the mid-east: Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia
- three are in the west: Colorado, Texas, Washington.

The 10 institutions<sup>2</sup> that received the largest number of transcripts account for 25% of all transcripts sent to the US. Half are public and half are private. Seven of the 10 are ranked as top 100 universities by the QS World University Rankings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In total there were 10245 transcripts sent, but for this analysis, MYP, CP and Anticipated transcripts were removed.

<sup>2</sup>These figures do not include transcripts that were sent to particular colleges within NYU or other campuses at Purdue or PSU.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>



## Information on the 10 US institutions that receive the most transcripts from international IB students<sup>4</sup>

BOSTON UNIVERSITY		
<b>General admissions information<sup>5</sup></b>		
When reviewing your high school/secondary school transcript, Boston University looks at a variety of factors, including overall level of achievement; enrollment in honours, AP or IB-level courses; and your individual academic strengths.	<b>Total undergraduate enrollment<sup>6</sup></b>	17k
	<b>Overall acceptance rate<sup>7</sup></b>	46%
	<b>Global ranking<sup>8</sup></b>	91
	<b>Average DP score<sup>9</sup></b>	34
<b>Credit and advanced standing</b>		
Higher level (HL) courses passed with a grade of 5 or higher may receive 8 credits. Credit for additional DP exams subject to approval.		

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY		
<b>General admissions information</b>		
To be eligible for admission, applicants are expected to submit results from one of the following testing options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SAT Reasoning Test</li> <li>• The ACT with Writing Test</li> <li>• Three SAT Subject Test scores</li> <li>• Three AP exam scores</li> <li>• The IB diploma</li> <li>• Three IB HL exam scores (if you are not an IB diploma candidate)</li> </ul>	<b>Total undergraduate enrollment</b>	24k
	<b>Overall acceptance rate</b>	26%
	<b>Global ranking</b>	53
	<b>Average DP score</b>	36
<b>Credit and advanced standing</b>		
HL examinations passed with grades of 6 or 7 may be considered for credit and/or placement depending on the area of study and/or programme requirements. Typically, eight semester hours of credit (equivalent to two terms or one academic year of a specific subject) will be awarded for each HL examination meeting the requirements of New York University.		
<b>Additional considerations</b>		
SAT/ACT exams are optional.		

<sup>4</sup>These institutions are listed in alphabetical order, and inclusion here does not necessarily indicate that these institutions have the most generous or appropriate offerings for IB students.

<sup>5</sup>Whenever possible, language is taken directly from the university website.

<sup>6</sup><http://www.topuniversities.com/universities>

<sup>7</sup>Whenever possible, taken directly from the university website. This rate is for the institution overall and is not specific to IB students.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>

<sup>9</sup>Based on all overseas full diploma transcripts sent directly to the institution by the IB in 2014. Not all students who send transcripts necessarily go on to enroll at the institution. Does not include retakes.

## NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

### General admissions information

For students applying from schools outside of the US, the SAT and ACT are not required. However, for applicants interested in presenting the most competitive application, Northeastern strongly encourages applicants to submit one of the following: AP exam results, a full IB diploma, three HL IB exam scores, or the results from nationally or regionally accredited exams that signify completion of secondary education.

Total undergraduate enrollment	14k
Overall acceptance rate	32%
Global ranking	365
Average DP score	32

### Credit and advanced standing

Northeastern accepts scores of 5, 6, or 7 on most HL exams for credit.

## PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY–UNIVERSITY PARK\*

### General admissions information

In reviewing an application, we look for students who have successfully completed courses or examinations in the core subjects of mathematics, physical science, social science and language in all years of high school. Penn State requires first-year international students to submit an official score from the SAT or ACT examination.

Total undergraduate enrollment	39k
Overall acceptance rate	54%
Global ranking	101
Average DP score	32

### Credit and advanced standing

Penn State will award transfer credit for exams taken at HL in which students have received a 5 or above.

### Additional considerations

International students whose native language is not English must submit proof of English language proficiency. A score of 5 or higher on the English A: Language and literature (SL/HL) exam fulfills this requirement.

## PURDUE UNIVERSITY–WEST LAFAYETTE\*

### General admissions information

Those who pursue the strongest-possible college preparatory programme and take advantage of any available HL International Baccalaureate (IB) or honours courses generally are more competitive candidates for admission and more qualified to succeed in college.

Total undergraduate enrollment	29k
Overall acceptance rate	60%
Global ranking	89
Average DP score	34

### Credit and advanced standing

Credit will normally be awarded for scores of 5–7 in HL subjects only, but there are a few exceptions. Students with lower grades might be able to test out of those subjects.

### Additional considerations

Students interested in applying for technical programmes (engineering, science, health-related majors, technology and agriculture, etc) should take as much advanced coursework as possible in math and science (IB calculus [sic], IB biology, IB chemistry and IB physics).

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - BERKELEY

### General admissions information

Admission to UC Berkeley is a two-step process: satisfying college and major requirements and selection. All achievement—both academic and non-academic/personal—is considered in the context of your educational circumstances, with an emphasis on the opportunities or challenges presented to you and your response to them. No single attribute or characteristic guarantees the admission of any applicant to Berkeley.

Total undergraduate enrollment	27k
Overall acceptance rate	18%
Global ranking	26
Average DP score	38

### Credit and advanced standing

Students who complete the IB diploma with a score of 30 or above will receive 30 quarter (20 semester) units toward their UC degree. Students who receive IB certificates with scores of 5, 6 or 7 on HL exams will receive 8 quarter (5.3 semester) units.

### Additional considerations

Designated examinations are awarded elective units that may be applied to UC graduation requirements for specific subjects and/or for general education/breadth requirements, as determined by each campus.

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA—LOS ANGELES

### General admissions information

UCLA receives the most applications of any university in the US. All applications are read twice. All academic and non-academic/personal achievement is considered in the context of your educational circumstances, with an emphasis on the opportunities or challenges presented to you and your response to them. No single attribute or characteristic guarantees the admission of any applicant. Students enrolled in IB World Schools are expected to earn scores of 5 or higher on HL exams, and most admitted students typically score 38+ points on the IB diploma.

Total undergraduate enrollment	28k
Overall acceptance rate	22%
Global ranking	27
Average DP score	38

### Credit and advanced standing

UCLA awards college credit for most HL exams with scores of 5 or higher. (We do not award college credit for standard level exams.) The specific credit you receive depends on the college/school your major belongs to.

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA—SAN DIEGO

### General admissions information

International students must have completed secondary school with a superior average in academic subjects and have earned a certificate of completion that enables the student to be admitted to a university in the home country. If you are completing your IB diploma or taking some IB courses, make sure to report your IB status in your application.

Total undergraduate enrollment	23k
Overall acceptance rate	38%
Global ranking	44
Average DP score	35

### Credit and advanced standing

UCSD grants exemptions or credit for scores of 5–7 in many HL courses. Only HL exams are accepted for credit. Scores of 6 or 7 on standard level English exam meets UC Entry Level Writing requirement but no unit credit is granted. IB students can earn a maximum of 30 credits for their scores.

### Additional considerations

Please request that internal marks and intermediate results/certificates from your school or appropriate authority are sent to UC San Diego by July 1. Please have your school authority provide predicted results if possible along with an explanation of when your final marks and certificate will be available.

## UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

### General admissions information

Applicants are asked to choose one of the four undergraduate schools to serve as a home base throughout their academic journey. All students gain a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and have the ability to take classes in all four schools. Therefore, we encourage applicants to consistently take classes in the core academic disciplines (English, social studies, mathematics, science and foreign language). We review the school report along with any provided school profile to best understand your high school context, types of courses available, the school's grading scale, and extracurricular or post-secondary opportunities. Students are only expected to challenge themselves academically within the offerings available to them.

Total undergraduate enrollment	10k
Overall acceptance rate	12%
Global ranking	18
Average DP score	38

### Credit and advanced standing

The University of Pennsylvania may award credit or advanced course standing to students who have taken IB examinations. Scores warranting credit vary by department. Scores of 6 or 7 in many HL courses will earn credits.

## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

### General admissions information

The most fundamental expectation entering students at USC is that they will have completed a rigorous high school curriculum in English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language and the arts. USC expects that prospective students will take advantage of the highest level of classes offered to them in their secondary school. USC believes that students who undertake an IB curriculum are well-prepared for the rigours of university academic life. IB courses are factored into the admission evaluation process because USC recognizes the extreme rigour of such a curriculum.

Total undergraduate enrollment	18k
Overall acceptance rate	20%
Global ranking	130
Average DP score	35

### Credit and advanced standing

Six (6) elective units apiece are earned for scores of five (5) or above on HL exams; or twenty (20) elective units if students earn the IB diploma with a score of 30 or higher. General education credit is available for some history and science exams.



International Baccalaureate®  
Baccalauréat International  
Bachillerato Internacional