

FAQ

Studying in the U.S.



What is EducationUSA?

We are a U.S. Department of State network with international student advising centers in more than 170 countries. We offer accurate, unbiased, comprehensive information and advising about opportunities for post-secondary (*eftergymnasiala*) studies in the US.

Which universities do you partner with?

We don't partner with any specific universities. This helps us ensure that our advising is completely unbiased! Instead, we can help students explore their options at any of the 4,000+ accredited colleges and universities in the United States.

What's the difference between a university, college, and community college?

The words **university** and **college** are used interchangeably in a U.S. context. Both refer to educational institutions where you can study after high school (*gymnasiet*) to pursue an undergraduate/bachelor's degree (*kandidatutbildning*) or graduate degree (*master-/doktorsutbildning*). In the United States, **a typical bachelor's degree takes 4 years to complete**, so you may also hear the term "4-year university." Sometimes, "college" means that the institution only offers undergraduate education, and not graduate programs, but this is not always the case. In general, the two words are used to mean the same thing in conversational U.S. English.

A **community college** is often a more affordable option for those who want to attain either a 2-year or 4-year degree. Community colleges generally offer 2-year associate's degree programs, individual courses, and certificate programs, and sometimes even full 4-year bachelor's degrees. An associate's degree is like a half-*kandidatutbildning*. Some students choose to follow a 2+2 path, where they study for up to 2 years at a community college to finish their general requirements and then transfer to a 4-year university to complete a bachelor's degree and take more specialized courses within their desired major. This can save money and offer more flexibility if you are not totally sure where or what you want to study for your bachelor's degree.

How much does it cost to study in the United States?

It varies A LOT and will depend on factors including the type of university (private or public), location, and any scholarships and financial aid you receive. Remember that **you can use CSN for university studies abroad**, including in the United States! Check CSN's website for more information on this, and our website for links to external scholarship databases and tips for financing your studies.

Although international students usually don't qualify for federal financial aid, other sources of funding can be attained, including **merit-based** (based on your academic or extracurricular achievement) or **need-based** (based on your family's economic situation) university funding, external grants and scholarships, sports scholarships, assistantships, and fellowships. A student visa also allows you to work in an on-campus job for up to 20 hours per week. If you're considering taking out a student loan, we recommend exploring your options in Sweden rather than in the U.S. Contact an education adviser to learn more about different funding options!

How early do I need to apply?

It's good to start exploring your options as early as possible, roughly **18 months prior** to starting your education, or even earlier. The first step in the process is researching your options, which can take some time.

You should also start researching and studying for standardized tests like the **SAT** or the **TOEFL**. About **12 months prior** to the start of your planned studies, you should start preparing your application materials (essays, requesting recommendation letters, etc.) Admission deadlines are generally in **early January for regular decision and November for early decision**—8-10 months before the start of your first fall semester!

What do early decision and early action/notification mean?

In both cases, students will apply by an earlier deadline and will get their admission decision earlier than with regular decision. But there is an important difference between the two:

- **Early decision plans are binding:** A student who is accepted as an ED applicant *must* attend the college.
- **Early action/early notification plans are nonbinding:** Students receive an early response to their application but do not have to commit to the college until the typical reply date of May 1.

How do I know what my GPA (grade point average) is?

There are online tools to help you estimate what the U.S. equivalent of your Swedish grades would be, including resources on Skolverket's website. These can help you get an idea, but you should **never try to convert your Swedish grades to a U.S. grading scale or GPA on a college application**. Each U.S. university will have their own tools and methods for making this calculation. If you are asked for your GPA on an application, you should indicate that GPA is not calculated by Swedish schools.

How do I submit my grades with my application?

The official records of your grades are called your **transcripts**. Since high school in the U.S. is typically 4 years, colleges will want to see your Year 9 grades as well as your grades from *gymnasiet*. Usually, your school counselor/SYV from your current *gymnasium* will be the one to send in these grades, not you. You may need to have your transcripts translated into English, unless your school can issue them directly in English.

What activities can I list in my application under “extracurricular activities”?

Any activity that you do outside of the regular school day! This could be sports, music, volunteering, work, any involvement you have with school clubs such as an *elevkår*, or any other activities. When choosing which activities to include (usually up to 10), think about which you spend the most time on each week, which have given you opportunities to practice leadership, and which you are the most interested in or passionate about.

What does it mean to choose a major?

Your **major** is your primary area of study that you choose either at the beginning of your studies or one or two years into your studies. A **minor** is a smaller specialization that you can add on to a major that is a separate subject from your major. You can also sometimes choose a **concentration**, which is a more focused specialization within your major, or a **double major**, if you would like to have two main areas of study.

Can I get help with applying to college in the U.S.?

Yes! You can contact our advising center with questions about the application process, to borrow our available test prep materials, or to book a one-to-one session (in person or on Zoom) with an education adviser. Our advising services are always free and open to all!

Find our contact info and links to resources at <https://www.fulbright.se/advising/>.