

APPLYING TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

Overview of the US Education System

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

- **Public** institutions are supported by federal, state or local taxes; generally, less expensive for students
 - Land Grant (federal land; one per state or territory)
 - State Colleges or State Universities
 - Community Colleges
- **Private** institutions are supported by an individual, religious organizations and/or endowment; generally, the student pays for the full cost of instruction.
- **Propriety** institutions are "for-profit" entities operated by owners or investors. Their long-term sustainability is dependent on the educational value provided.

LEVELS OF STUDY

There are several levels of study possible within these institutions:

- Associate degree: received after two years of study at a community college; can be a terminal degree or applied toward a four-year bachelor degree; can be in arts or science; AA or AS
- Bachelor degree: received after four years of study at a college/university, can be in arts or science; BA or BS
- Master degree: received after one to two years of study after a bachelor degree at a college or university, can be in arts, science or business; MA, MS, MBA
- Law degree: received after three years of study after a bachelor degree at a law school, LL.M.
- Doctorate degree: received after five to six years of study; most require a master degree; some can be professional degrees; PhD, EdD, MD, DDS, JD, etc
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GENERAL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- **Community College:** age 17 or 18, secondary school recommended; pathway to transfer to four-year institution; transfer option is first two years of university education and very common in United States; transfer normally requires a minimum number of units/credits + general education courses (breadth requirements) + major courses prerequisite courses outlined by the institution
- **Undergraduate University/College:** age 17 or 18, secondary school graduation required; SAT or ACT exam, SAT 2, TOEFL or IELTS exam, good grades/marks, activities, leadership, sports, community service; ability to enter university in home country; some universities require a student to indicate major area of study intended to study, others do not; many universities/colleges require a personal statement or essay, some do not; letters of recommendation are required by some institutions
- **Graduate University/College/School:** no age requirement; BA/BS required but does not always have to be in the same subject area as intended master program; TOEFL/IELTS exam; GMAT for MBA or business school, MCAT for medical school, LSAT for law school, GRE for most other programs; high grades from undergraduate programs, letters of recommendation, statements of purpose; proof of previous projects if applicable; students must research programs to find "match" of interest of professors and departments with their own aspirations
- **PhD candidates:** GRE, TOEFL/IELTS required; MS/MA/MBA in same field is usually required; few programs allow you to advance directly from BA/BS to PhD level; letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, previous experience

APPLICATION PROCESS

With the diversity of institutions, each one has its own application process, procedures, and requirements. It is imperative that advisers and students do their own investigation for each school to which they wish to apply. Since each institution is independent, no application deadline date or process is the same - make sure to do your homework. The above are general guidelines only.

Source: NAFSA (www.nafsa.org/)

For more information, see the NAFSA publication, *Cooperating with a University in the United States*.