

# Studying in the USA

Given the rise in English fees to a near uniform £9,000, (plus living costs) study in the USA has become a much more viable alternative. The system is different to the UK, with most people taking four year liberal arts degrees which allow specialisation within them. Various subjects such as law and medicine are only available as post graduate options (called grad school). I have set out below a summary of the US system and details on the Fulbright Commission, who are the main advice & information source on everything to do with the US system.

There are over 4,000 colleges offering four-year bachelor's and two-year associates degrees, including a wide variety of large public universities, smaller private colleges, liberal arts colleges and specialist institutions in fields such as the arts. US degrees follow the liberal arts philosophy, whereby students have the freedom to explore their academic interests before specialising. It is very common for students to totally change their major or even transfer between institutions. Students who know what they want to study from the start have the ability to add a double major or minors (five modules in the same subject). Unlike the UK you cannot do a degree in medicine or law, as they are for postgraduate entry only (commonly called grad school).

You apply to the university rather than to the academic department. There is no equivalent of UCAS. However, approximately 400 universities subscribe to the 'Common Application', a form that can be downloaded, and sent to a number of different institutions. All other applications follow a similar format allowing you to reuse and adapt them between universities.

Like the UK, competitiveness of admission and requirements vary between universities. Admission tutors will look at GCSEs, AS-levels, predicted or actual A levels. Personal qualities are given a higher priority than in the UK and tutors are keen to have a spread of backgrounds and beliefs on a course. In addition to a transcript outlining your academic work for the final four years before university, most universities will also require admissions test scores: the SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject Tests (required for the competitive colleges) or ACT. These tests are offered several times per year throughout the UK. Additionally, universities will ask you to answer 2-3 essay questions, provide 2-3 reference letters and for some universities, conduct an interview. The interview is more about finding out about you as a person and less about academic rigueur. Interviews can be arranged in the UK or over the phone.

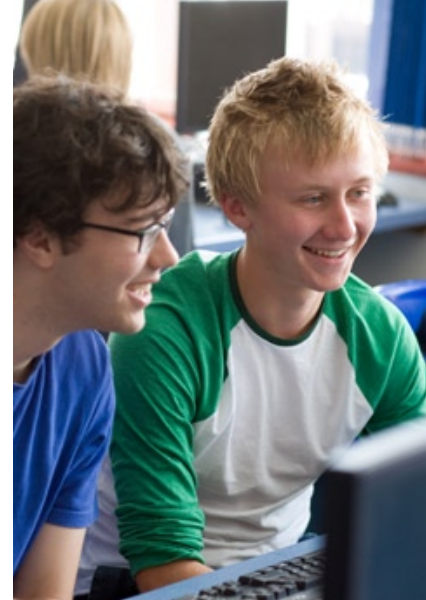
Rankings for the top US liberal arts colleges can be found at [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com) or [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com), but please remember the number of universities in the US (40 times the number in the UK) make lists more problematic. You are best advised to choose 4-6 universities to apply to. If you are considering the top tier universities, bear in mind the success rate is low, with around a 1/10 rate of success for UK applications for the Ivy League institutions. Students are recommended to get coaching from an expert if they intend to apply for the more competitive institutions.

Given that the cost of a UK degree is likely to be around £9,000 in fees alone and the cost of living in most parts of the US (the US is huge and generalities are hard to make) is normally lower, the price differential between the US and UK is not so large anymore. In addition you normally have much more teaching hours and resources are generally better. However the elite colleges will be much more expensive and it will be cheaper to attend Imperial, Oxbridge or LSE than their US equivalents. If you are only interested in the 'elite' academic institutions I feel that the high additional cost of the US system makes it a poor investment unless: you can obtain some form of bursary or if you are an overseas student and have to pay full UK fees.



Sources of funding may be available, based on sporting/artistic excellence, family income or academic merit (at the elite universities everyone is very bright) but they are harder to obtain in a recession. There is more funding in the private institutions but fees are likely to be higher. It is very important that you apply for the various sources of finance early, and this should be done jointly with your college applications. Additionally, students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week on campus and up to 40 hours per week during vacations.

For more information, start with the Fulbright Commission website: [www.fulbright.co.uk](http://www.fulbright.co.uk). You can find the SAT/ACT dates, register for the tests and get practice papers at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) (for the SAT) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Search for universities on websites like [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) and [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), and look for funding at [www.fundingstudy.org](http://www.fundingstudy.org).



## FULBRIGHT EVENTS

### 1. Advisor Training Sessions:

Fulbright will be speaking at training sessions on the following dates:

**London:** Wednesday, 11 May (11:30 am - 3:30 pm)

**Edinburgh:** Monday, 16 May (11:30 am - 3:30 pm)

**Leeds:** Tuesday, 17 May (1 pm - 3:30 pm)

**Bristol:** Tuesday, 7 June (11:30 am - 3:30 pm)

**Birmingham:** Tuesday, 21 June (11:30 am - 3:30 pm)

For locations and a registration form: visit: [www.fulbright.co.uk/advisor-training](http://www.fulbright.co.uk/advisor-training)

### 2. Study in the USA Events:

- **Webinar Series** for those unable to come to our London-based events. Registration is available on the website.

- **Getting Started on Your US Applications:**

Friday, 20 May (1 pm), Monday, 23 May (6 pm)

- **Sports Scholarships:** Thursday, 26 May (6:30 pm)

- **USA College Day London (1 October 2011)** - the UK's only US university fair. Registration will open on the website this summer.

- **Undergraduate Study Seminars (March - October)** - Evening seminars providing students and parents a comprehensive guide to applying for US universities. Advisors unable to attend the training dates above are of course welcome to attend. The next seminar is 10 May 2011.

- **Advising Website: Visit website ([www.fulbright.co.uk](http://www.fulbright.co.uk))** for a step-by-step guide to applying to US universities. It has a section with resources for advisors and teachers, including a new guide to completing the Common Application.

### 3. Monthly E-Newsletter:

Sign-up to receive information about Fulbright events, as well as helpful advising tips, information on scholarships and new resources. Register on the website ([www.fulbright.co.uk](http://www.fulbright.co.uk)) or email [advising@fulbright.co.uk](mailto:advising@fulbright.co.uk)

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