

## How to get started finding a university

Applying to study in the US can be much more in-depth than in the UK. We typically advise you begin 1-1.5 years before enrolment to complete the process. So where should you begin?

### Choose a university

With thousands of academic programmes, world-class institutions and unmatched flexibility, the USA offers a breadth of higher education opportunities you won't find anywhere else in the world. Narrowing these institutions down can be an exciting and surprising process. Many students find their perfect match at a university or location they'd not previously thought of.

Follow our three-step process for choosing the best university for you!

#### Step 1: Think before you search

Speak to those closest to you and prioritise the most important factors for your US university experience. The below list is not exclusive but lays out some things you might consider. Visit our website for more information on each of these factors.

- Type of degree and university
- Finances
- Academics (entry requirements, majors on offer, etc)
- Personal fit (campus life, size, setting, clubs, etc)

You should also speak to:

- Your school or college higher education adviser
- Anyone you know who has studied in the USA

#### Step 2: Do your research

Once you know what's important to you, it's time to do some research and put together a list of 10-20 universities that meet most or all of your criteria.

We have a list of resources available on our undergraduate guide to help you filter down your search for universities using the factors that are important to you, such as our USA College Day university search, Big Future College Search, and Peterson's.

Some of these resources include university rankings, but rankings in the USA are not the same as in the UK. With the diversity of institutions, it is also very difficult to compare universities on a fair ranking scale. For this reason, we advise you take rankings with a large grain of salt, and not use this as the only method you use to choose a university. Use these search functions to look for universities that meet the factors that are important to you.

### Step 3: Narrow your choices

Once you have 10-20 universities that meet your criteria, you should narrow this list down to the ones to which you will apply. Think strategically, and spread your chances of admission.

For time and financial purposes, we recommend you apply to 6-10 US universities. In order to maximise your competitiveness select:

- Two to three highly competitive universities to reach for
- Two to three that match your academic profile
- One to two where your academic profile is safely higher than their average

If you require university funding, consider applying to more safety and match schools than reach institutions. Wherever your academic profile is higher than a university's average, you will be a very competitive applicant and will stand a greater chance of gaining merit-based scholarships if they are available. The profile of the average admitted applicant will be posted on the university website.

### Campus visits

You do not need to visit a US university before you apply.

Campuses are usually open for self-guided tours throughout the year, except federal holidays and winter closures. Please contact each university to find out their specific arrangements, and when guided tours are available.

If you can't visit a university, consider the following:

- Meet the university at USA College Day in London
- Check if virtual tours are available
- Ask the admissions office to put you in touch with a British student or alumnus
- Follow the university on social media