U.S. Embassy Baghdad
Student Advising – Fact Sheet

For students around the world, studying in the United States provides a lifetime of benefits and rewards:

- Quality facilities, resources and faculty;
- Opportunity for students to become highly skilled and competitive in their fields and leaders within their communities;
- Choice of different types of institutions, programs, academic and social environments, and subjects;
- Value for the money invested in higher education;
- Knowledge of American customs, culture, and history.

Preparing to study in the United States can be challenging and feel overwhelming. Here are some important ideas that Iraqi students need to know before they apply to study in the U.S.

The Application Process: Each American college and university has its own requirements for admission. Generally, they require an application, standardized tests, transcripts from your previous academic institution, letters of reference, and essays.

Finding a School: There are more than 4,000 accredited higher education institutions in the United States. Turn to Page 5 for descriptions about different types of institutions and the degrees they offer. Iraqi students should start their research at the EducationUSA website. This website provides accurate, objective, and comprehensive information about U.S. educational institutions and guidance on how to access those opportunities. The EducationUSA website provides information about applying to a U.S. university, selecting universities that match a student's study goals, and applying for financial aid. http://EducationUSA.state.gov/

Iraqi Student Advisers: The U.S. Embassy has trained more than 100 university professors and staff, high school teachers, and business leaders across Iraq as Student Advisers. These Student Advisers are familiar with the U.S. university system and are trained to help students research and apply to universities and colleges. Working as volunteers, Iraqi Student Advisers are committed to helping students pursue educational opportunities in the United States and Iraq. U.S. Embassy Baghdad supports the Student Advisers and also works directly with Iraqi students to answer questions, find resources and provide support. For information or help, email to: BaghdadEducationAdv@state.gov

English Language Proficiency Testing: As part of the application process, Iraqi students need to demonstrate strong English language skills. To study in the United States, students take standardized tests to demonstrate their English language proficiency. Currently, testing is available through Education Testing Services (ETS) at locations across Iraq.

Remember: To learn more about studying in the United States, go to: http://www.Facebook.com/StudyUSAIraq For information about U.S. universities, go to http://EducationUSA.state.gov/ If you have any questions or need help, email to: BaghdadEducationAdv@state.gov; ErbilEducationUSA@state.gov

TOEFL® Test – Test of English as a Foreign Language: The TOEFL Test measures the ability of non-native speakers of English to communicate in English in the university classroom. Both paper-based and internet-based TOEFL tests are given regularly in Iraq. Students can pay to attend TOEFL study courses or they can study on their own. Students also pay a fee to take the TOEFL Test. U.S. universities accept the TOEFL test as part of the application process. http://www.ets.org/

TOEFL® ITP – Institutional Testing Program: The TOEFL ITP test measures English-language proficiency and is used for academic placement, progress evaluation, and exit testing. U.S. universities DO NOT accept TOEFL ITP as part of the application process.

Academic Testing: Students must check the requirements for the universities they are interested in attending, but many universities require an academic test for admission.

Students applying for undergraduate programs may need to take the *Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Reasoning Test and/or Subject Tests.* http://sat.collegeboard.com/home
Others may need to take the *ACT Test*. The ACT is not offered in Iraq at this time. If the university you apply to requires this test, ask if you can submit the SAT instead.
http://www.actstudent.org/regist/outside.html

Students applying for graduate programs may need to submit test scores for:
Graduate Record Exam (GRE): http://www.ets.org/gre/
Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT): http://www.gmac.com/gmac/thegmat/
Medical College Admission Test (MCAT): http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/
Optometry Admission Test (OAT): https://www.ada.org/oat/index.html
Dental Admissions Test (DAT): http://www.ada.org/dat.aspx
Law School Admission Test (LSAT): http://www.lsac.org/LSAT/about-the-lsat.asp

Funding your studies in America: Foreign students studying in the U.S. fund their studies in four ways:

- ***They fund their studies themselves.*** This is the way most foreign students fund their studies. All American colleges and universities welcome foreign students and can provide information on the cost of attending.
- ***They obtain funding from their government.*** Visit these websites for more information about scholarships that may be available for undergraduate and graduate studies:
  Government of Iraq Ministry of Higher Education – www.mohesr.gov.iq
  The Higher Committee for Education Development in Iraq (HCED) – www.hcediraq.org
  Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Higher Education – www.mhe-krg.org
- ***They obtain financial aid from an American university.*** This financial aid can be grants or scholarships, loans, or campus work programs. Students should complete a Financial Aid Application as part of their application package. Use the EducationUSA website to find other funding options. http://www.educationusa.state.gov

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- ***They obtain funding from the U.S. government*** through programs such as the Fulbright Foreign Student Program. Each year, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad selects Iraqis for graduate level study in the United States. Look for information on the U.S. Embassy Baghdad website for a list of programs that fund studying at U.S. universities. http://iraq.usembassy.gov

How to Apply: Students should follow these steps to apply to a U.S. university:

- Start the research and application process at least 18 months before they wish to attend a U.S. university;
- Be aware of the time schedule. Most universities accept new students for the Fall Semester, starting in August or September. Some universities will accept new students for the Winter Semester, starting in January.
- Select 5 - 10 universities that match their interests and needs;
- Applications are usually submitted online. Follow the application process step by step as outlined on the university website. Completing the application can take quite a bit of time; students should make sure they have enough time to do a good job!
- Fill out the application for Financial Aid and submit with the application;
- Provide official copies of transcripts for all courses attended; be prepared to submit the original version (in Arabic) and an official translated version (in English);
- Many universities require foreign students to have their transcripts evaluated by an independent reviewer. Follow the directions on the Application.
- Submit official copies of all English language and academic testing; students can request that the testing organization (for example, ETS) send the official scores to the universities directly;
- Provide personal and academic references; students should choose teachers, professors, or community leaders who know them well and can give strong references with specific examples and details;
- Write a personal essay (or essays) as part of the application. Follow the instructions carefully. U.S. universities take these essays very seriously because they provide personal information about students that may not come through in the regular application. Students should answer the questions directly, give specific examples and help the university get to know them as individuals;
- Submit an application fee in U.S. dollars; usually this must be paid online with a credit card; most universities WILL NOT accept an application without the application fee;
- Submit the completed application, including all other documents such as transcripts, test scores, etc.

Visa Application Process: The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad accepts applications for student visas for Iraqis to study in the United States. Obtaining your visa is the final part of the process of applying to study in the United States. You should apply after you have been accepted for admission at an American college or university and have accepted the admission offer. Information about applying for a student visa is available on the U.S. Embassy Baghdad webpage. http://iraq.usembassy.gov

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Time Schedule: There are many steps from when students start to research suitable programs until the time they begin studies at a U.S. university. Here is a general timeline for an application, but remember that the exact dates could change depending on the individual:

January - August	Research U.S. universities online; find deadlines for applications Study for TOEFL Test and other standardized tests (SAT, GRE) Take TOEFL Test and other tests
August - November	Select U.S. universities to apply to Complete Applications online Order official transcripts from previous schools Request letters of reference from past instructors Write personal essays Start Financial Aid Application
December	Complete Applications Submit Applications online with payment Submit Financial Aid Application Submit all transcripts, test scores, etc.
January	Deadline to submit applications Universities review applications
March-June	Students receive letters of acceptance or rejection from U.S. universities and information on the Financial Aid assistance package
April-June	Students must accept offer from one university Students must send a deposit (money) to hold their place Student prepares a Visa Application (Most universities will not send visa information (Form I-20) UNTIL a student has accepted the offer and made a deposit)
June	University sends visa information, etc. for student Student submits a Visa Application (Form I-20) to the U.S. Embassy
August	Student receives visa to travel to the U.S. to study Student makes travel arrangements Student departs Iraq for U.S.
August/September	Student begins first semester at a U.S. university!

See the EducationUSA website for a detailed Application Process Timeline
http://www.educationusa.state.gov

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Types of Higher Education Institutions: There are several different types of higher education institutions in the United States.

Colleges, Universities and Institutes: Degree-granting institutions in the United States can be called universities, colleges or institutes. Colleges tend to be small and offer only undergraduate degrees, while universities also offer graduate degrees. An institute usually specializes in degree programs in a group of closely related subject areas such as institutes of technology and institutes of fashion.

Public (or State) Universities are founded and subsidized by U.S. state governments (for example, California, Michigan, or Texas) to provide low-cost education to residents of that state. Public universities tend to be large and tuition costs are generally lower than those of private universities. Also, in-state residents (those who live and pay taxes in that particular state) pay lower tuition than out-of-state residents. International students are considered to be out-of-state residents, and they may have to fulfill higher admission requirements than in-state residents.

Private Universities are funded by a combination of endowments, tuition fees, research grants, and gifts from their alumni. Tuition fees tend to be higher than at public universities, but there is no distinction made between state and non-state residents. Colleges with a religious affiliation and single-sex colleges are private.

Community colleges provide two-year associate degree programs, as well as technical and vocational programs. Community colleges can be public or private institutions and are sometimes called junior colleges or two-year colleges. An increasing number of international students are choosing to study at community colleges. Tuition costs are often lower compared to four-year institutions, and many have agreements that allow students on transfer programs to move easily into the third year of a bachelor's degree at the local state university. Use the American Association of Community Colleges website to search amongst the more than 1700 community colleges in the United States. http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx

Short-Term University Study includes programs such as Intensive English Language instruction, summer session studies, and student exchange programs. These programs are short, ranging from a few weeks to a few months, and they do not lead to a degree.

Types of Degrees:

The associate degree usually takes two years to complete and is awarded by two-year colleges. Associate degree programs may be "terminal" programs, which lead to specific careers upon graduation or "transfer" programs, which allow the student to transfer into a four-year bachelor’s degree program as a third year student.

The bachelor's degree typically takes four years to complete and is awarded by four-year colleges and universities. The most common are a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.).

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The master's degree provides additional education or training in the student's specialized branch of knowledge beyond the level of baccalaureate study. Master's degrees are offered in many different fields, and are either a one-year or a two-year program.

The doctoral degree trains research scholars and future college and university faculty members. The doctoral degree certifies that the student has demonstrated capacity as a trained research scholar in a specific discipline.
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Exchange and Cultural Programs:
One way Iraqi students can study in the United States is by applying directly to U.S. universities. However, there are many other opportunities for Iraqi students to study in the United States through programs funded by the U.S. Government, including some programs that are highlighted below. Visit our website to see a complete listing of all the exchange and scholarship programs that are offered at: http://iraq.usembassy.gov

The Fulbright Student Scholarship Program in Iraq selects candidates from a variety of academic disciplines to study for a two-year master's degree in the United States. The program funds all costs related to tuition, travel, accommodations, living stipends and health insurance. This is a competitive program and 35 candidates will be selected for 2011.

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program is a nine-month, non-degree program for young teachers of English to develop their skills in the United States. The teachers assist or teach Arabic language courses to American students, while taking coursework in English language teaching and U.S. studies.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program is a one-year full scholarship program offered to mid-career professionals to pursue graduate-level academic course work and professional development activities. It does not lead to an advanced degree, but participants benefit from challenging studies and activities.

Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP) is a one-month scholarship program for high school and university students to participate in leadership development and civic education in the United States.

Middle Eastern Peace Initiative (MEPI) is a five-week long program for university students from 18 countries in the Middle East. Students study leadership at one of five U.S. universities.