

Frequently
Asked
Questions



Study
in the
USA.



Frequently Asked Questions Study in the United States



Applying to college or university in the US can be a bewildering and frustrating experience. This FAQ, created by the cultural section at the US Embassy and EducationUSA in Turkey, aims to answer Turkish students' most common questions about applying to and successfully entering a US college or university.

Entrance Requirements & Study Options

1. Who is eligible to apply to an American college or university?

High school graduates are eligible to apply for undergraduate study. This means either a two-year Associate of Arts degree (AA), or a four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA)/ Bachelor of Science (BS) degree.

Those students who already have an undergraduate degree from a reputable Turkish university are eligible to apply for a graduate degree. This means either an academic program, such as Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS) or doctorate (PhD), or a professional program, such as Master of Business Administration (MBA), law degree (LLM/JD), or medical degree (MD).

US universities also offer a variety of non-degree programs, including certificate programs and intensive English courses.

It is also possible to transfer from an undergraduate program in Turkey to one in the US.

2. I'm confused, why are you talking about college? I have already finished high school in Turkey.

In the US, the terms “college” and “university” both refer to schools that offer an undergraduate education. Universities are usually larger and can contain multiple “colleges” within them.

A four-year college not attached to a university may not offer graduate (MS, MA, PhD) degrees.

College in the US should not be confused with the term “kolej” in Turkish.

3. Do I need to speak English well before I go? Do I need to take an English proficiency test?

Yes on both counts. All courses of study cited in the answer to the question above, except for the intensive English course, require a strong command of written and spoken English. Your listening and reading comprehension must be excellent. The coursework will be challenging enough for you do not need without the extra burden of struggling with English.

Competitive American colleges and universities require a high score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams. Furthermore, most colleges and universities require students applying for undergraduate study to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the ACT.

There are similar tests for those applying to graduate school. The most common tests the Turkish students take are the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).

If a US college or university is worried that your TOEFL score is too low, it may offer you conditional admission. In this case you will be required to attend an intensive English course and your progress will be evaluated closely.

4. I want to take the TOEFL. How do I start?

As of December 2010, the internet-based TOEFL exam (IBT TOEFL) costs 185 US dollars. There are testing centers in 12 cities in Turkey. They offer the exam regularly. You can find a list of these centers, register for the test and find sample questions at www.toefl.org

Many US colleges and universities also accept the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam, offered by a UK-based testing service.

5. I am a high school student and want to register for the SAT or ACT. Where do I go?

The SAT I and II exams are offered seven times a year in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, and Tarsus. For information and registration for the SAT, visit www.sat.org. The ACT (www.act.org) is offered five times a year in Ankara and Istanbul.

6. What do you mean, SAT I and II? Isn't one set of tests enough?

The SAT II, or SAT Subject Tests, measure students' knowledge in particular academic fields, such as history, biology, physics, literature and foreign languages.

7. I have finished my undergraduate study and want to study at the graduate level in the US. What tests do I need to take?

You will need to take the TOEFL if English is not your native language.

If you are applying for a master's or PhD degree, you need to take the GRE.

If you are applying to business school, you must take the GMAT.

If you are applying to LLM programs, you are only required to take the TOEFL. Those applying for a Doctor of Jurisprudence, or JD degree, should take the Law School Admission Test, or LSAT.

8. Do I need relevant work experience to get into an MBA program?

Generally, yes. Only in extraordinary cases will reputable MBA programs admit students who have no full-time work experience.



Financial Matters

9. Is it expensive? How much money do I need?

Yes, higher education in the US is generally expensive.

For the 2010/2011 academic year, the College Board and the Center for Global Advancement of Community Colleges (CGACC) reported the following average *annual* tuition costs for international students:

Four-year private universities (BA or BS): \$27,200

Four-year public university (BA or BS): \$19,600

Two-year community college (AA degree): \$6,500

Living expenses vary, of course. Just as in Turkey, where rent, food and utilities cost far more in Istanbul than in Erzurum, the cost of living will be higher in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City than in Texas or Minnesota. For students, national average living expenses per year are:

Room and Board: \$7,400

Books and Supplies: \$1,100

Transportation: \$1,000

Personal Expenses: \$2,000

Health Insurance: \$700

This means the *total* average cost will run:

Four-year private universities: \$40,500

Four-year public university: \$32,300

Two-year community college: \$14,600

10. That's exorbitant! How can I get financial aid to study in the United States?

It is. Many American students go into great debt in order to pay for their studies. That said, some colleges and universities offer generous financial aid, often in packages that include scholarships, loans and work/study programs.

Undergraduate study: It is almost impossible for foreign students applying to undergraduate programs to get financial aid from a public university. Private universities, however, are more generous, and sometimes award scholarships to students of exceptional academic ability.

You should explore school costs at the beginning of your research, in order to avoid applying to a school it will be impossible for you to afford. EducationUSA centers in Turkey (addresses at the end of this FAQ) can provide information about the 900 US universities that provide scholarships between \$10,000 and \$50,000 to international students.

Graduate study: The situation is better for graduate students. Generous fellowships, research and teaching assistantships, and other financial aid packages, especially in engineering and natural sciences, enable many foreign students to complete a master's or doctoral degree at a US university without incurring serious debt.

11. Can I get a loan from in an American bank to pay my tuition fees?

Banks in the US give student loans to citizens of other countries only if they have a co-signer. This must be a US citizen who is responsible for repaying the loan if you do not. An alternative is for you to take a loan in Turkey and use that money to pay your tuition fees and living expenses.

12. Can I work in the US while studying on a student visa?

According to current US immigration regulations, international students can work part time – up to 20 hours per week – on campus while school is in session during the academic year, and up to 40 hours per week during school vacations. Students working 10-15 hours a week can earn enough to pay for books, clothing and personal expenses, but are unlikely to make enough to meet major expenses, such as tuition or room and board.

13. Can I stay in the United States and work after finishing my degree?

In some cases yes. Students who have completed at least nine months of degree study in the US may be eligible to participate in “Optional Practical Training”, which allows foreign students to work in their field for up to a year.

Students in fields of science, technology, engineering, and medicine may be eligible to work in the US for up to 29 months.

14. What foundations in Turkey support students who need help paying for university in the US?

The Turkish Fulbright Commission, TÜBİTAK, the Eczacıbaşı, Suna-İnan Kıraç Foundation, Rotary, the Turkish Oil Foundation, and the Türk Eğitim Vakfı provide support to Turkish students wishing to study overseas. You should contact them directly to apply. The Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) may also be able to provide support.





Picking Your School

15. I am about to receive, or have already received, a bachelor's degree from a university here in Turkey. Should I apply for an undergraduate or graduate course?

Those staying in the same academic field should apply to a graduate program.

Students who want to pursue a different but related course of study – for example a student with an engineering degree who wants to study business - should have little problem applying to such graduate programs, particularly if the applicants have relevant work experience.

Graduate schools will require considerable information about your undergraduate coursework. They always ask for official transcripts and may ask for course syllabi to learn more about what you studied. This material, translated into English, helps them decide whether your undergraduate record is strong enough to enable you to do graduate level work.

16. How do I choose a college or a university?

Before you choose a college or a university, you should have a clear idea of the following:

- **Your field of interest/study**
- **How you will pay**
- **Your career plan**

Your answers should lead you to decide what type of degree you will seek, and in what field.

(Remember that undergraduate students at US colleges and universities usually declare their major during their sophomore year.)

Then take the following factors into consideration when considering what colleges or universities to apply to:

- **Accreditation status**
- **Competitiveness/ranking**
- **Cost/availability of financial aid**
- **Types of courses offered**
- **Facilities**
- **Tests required**
- **Location**
- **Size**

17. How do I find out the accreditation of a US university?

Unlike Turkey and many European countries, the US does not have a central government office that approves educational institutions. Instead the US relies on a system of voluntary accreditation carried out by non-governmental accrediting bodies to evaluate schools.

To check accreditation, go to:

<http://www.chea.org/search/default.asp>

<http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation>

Before accepting an offer of admission from a US college or university, it is also a good idea to find out if the university is recognized by the Council of Higher Education/Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu (YÖK).

18. Which schools are ranked best for my field of study?

Many books and magazines rank US colleges and universities based on perceptions of academic caliber. Each rater uses its own set of criteria which may or may not be yours, to “grade” schools.

The US News & World Report rankings are one of the most recognized annual surveys. For undergraduate schools go to:

<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>

For graduate and professional schools go to:

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools>

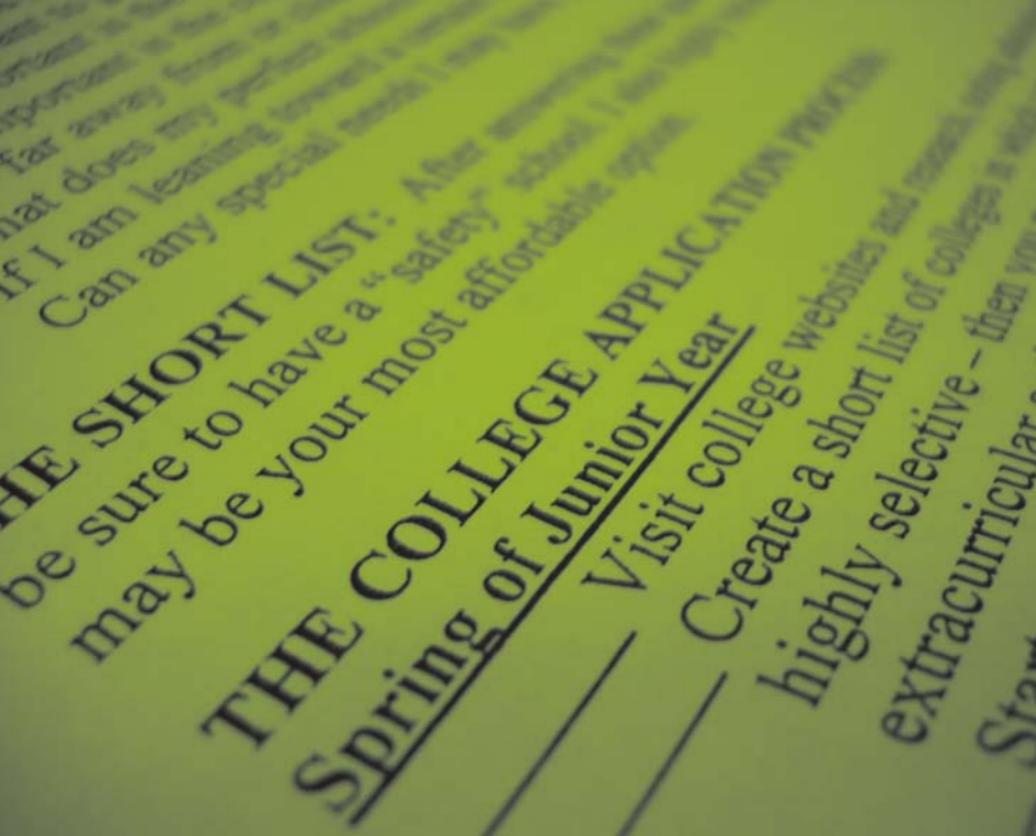
19. What books do you recommend for researching schools?

The major guides to US universities are the Fiske Guide, the Princeton Review Guide, the College Board guides, the Insider's Guide, and Peterson's Graduate Guides. All are available for purchase online or can be used free of charge at the offices of the Fulbright Commission in Turkey.

20. I don't think I'm ready for a four year school. What about a community college?

Community colleges offer an associate's degree. These schools are less expensive - and generally less prestigious than schools that offer the four-year bachelor degree.

However, community colleges often have strong ties with their state's universities, a connection that makes it easier for students to transfer to one of these universities for the last two years of a bachelor's degree. Many American and international students attend a community college for the first two years, taking advantage of lower costs and easier admission policies, and then transfer to a regular college or university for their last two years. Community colleges are also a good option for students with low English language proficiency.



Application

21. When should I start the application process?

Early! Plan for delays, emails that disappear in space, and snail mail that never arrives. You should begin the application process ***at least 14 months before you plan to attend school.***

For most students, this means you start the process in the summer of the year before you wish to begin. So in June or July of the year before you want to enroll you should do serious research into what school is right for you.

By November, a student should have taken the TOEFL and other required exams (SAT, GRE etc.). She should have prepared a rough draft of her personal essays. In these short essays, the student writes about her academic and personal background and explains why she wants to study at the specific institution.

By this point, the student also should have secured the necessary letters of recommendation from teachers or professors.

Application deadlines can be confusing. Some selective colleges and universities offer “Early Action” or “Early Decision” admissions for those applying for undergraduate study. These colleges and universities have specific rules and require students to have submitted their applications by late October. The usual deadlines for standard undergraduate and graduate admissions are between November and January.

That said, some schools offer “rolling admissions,” which mean the school reviews applications as they arrive throughout the academic year.

Admissions officers at colleges and universities deliberate over the applications and reach a decision in late March or early April of the following year. At that point you will be informed, and must decide by early May which school you will attend that fall.

22. Does the application process cost money?

Yes. By the time a student is through with filing applications, mailing them and securing a student visa, he may have spent around \$800-\$1000.

Every year, the US State Department-supported EducationUSA centers in Turkey provide EducationUSA Opportunity grants to talented students who cannot afford these fees. In 2009, 58 Turkish students received money to defray application costs. For more information about this program, please contact an EducationUSA adviser via www.educationusa.info/turkey

23. What happens after I have accepted admission to a school?

The college or university sends an “I-20” form to the student who has accepted admission. The student must then pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee of \$200. For more information on the SEVIS fee and to pay it, visit www.fmjfee.com

After that the student must apply for a visa at the US Embassy in Ankara or Consulate in Istanbul.

24. What type of visa will I be eligible for?

Most non-US citizens needed for school in the US apply for an F-1 (non-immigrant) student visa. In rare cases, such as a special non-degree vocational program, the student will receive another kind of visa, but the process described here remains the same.

All those applying for the F-1 visa must appear in person for an interview with a consular officer.

25. If I receive a scholarship to a prestigious university, am I guaranteed a visa?

No. All students must prove that their social, financial and/or professional ties to Turkey are strong enough that they will return home after receiving a degree in the US

26. What else should I know about the visa application process?

Be aware that you cannot apply for the visa more than 90 days before you will leave Turkey, nor can you enter the US more than a month before your classes begin.

The public affairs section of the US Embassy does not handle visas. Visa forms are available online at <http://evisaforms.state.gov>. After filling in the application you will call the consular section to make an appointment.

The Consulate will ask you to submit your documents a week before the interview, (I-20, valid passport in good condition, financial documents and your visa application forms). You are informed of the consul's decision after the interview.



Services Available

27. Where can I get more information on study in the US?

The advising centers at the Fulbright Commission offices in Ankara and Istanbul offer counseling to students looking to study in the US.

Contact the center to:

- make an appointment with a professional education advisor to learn how to apply to US universities, choose a university, and write an application essay
- authenticate copies of your academic certificates and transcripts
- attend a presentation on the application and admissions process
- consult books on the US admissions process and test preparation
- attend a meeting with a US university admissions officer
- participate in a webchat with a professional education advisor
- learn about US government scholarship programs

More information is available at www.educationusa.info/turkey

28. I also see signs for “foreign education advisors” around Turkey. Are these good places to get information?

In some cases they are, but you should be careful. Some unscrupulous advisors accept “finder’s fees,” which means the staff receive money from universities overseas seeking to enroll Turkish students and get their tuition fees. In such a case the advisor will be most interested in getting you to apply to the school which is paying him, and not in finding the right fit for you.

Views From Turkish Students at US Universities

“Education in the US offers endless opportunities in research on latest technologies. No matter what your degree is in, the school helps you fulfill your potential. The multicultural experience has enriched my academic and social life”.

-Arman Uygur, Aerospace Engineering & Mechanical Engineering, BA, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts

“The best things about studying in the US are the scholarship opportunities. With the scholarship I receive from my school I can concentrate on my research project. Also, I have access to libraries all around the world, so I can find any book I need.”

-Haydar Darıcı, Anthropology and History, PhD, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

“In the 10 weeks that I have been here in Ames, Iowa, I have worked more than I did during my entire master’s program in Turkey. I cannot begin to explain how much I have learned and how much I have developed. My school is absolutely fantastic in terms of technology. My friends and I are apparently the first Turkish students the doctoral program has ever had. Our relations with our professors are wonderful.”

-Aysel Sariçağoğlu, English Language Teaching, PhD, Iowa State University, Iowa

“My program includes both theory and practice. There is a constant production process going on and I am always learning about topics that I hadn’t known about before. The program is very intense, but despite my hectic schedule, I feel very privileged to be here.”

-Oylum Boran Serin, Master’s degree in Interior Design, Parsons School of Design, New York City

“During my stay in the US, I not only received a quality education, but also learned about a new country and its cultures. This led me to look at my country, Turkey, in a different light. Most importantly, I believe that I had access to a global and rich point of view. I’m so glad that I had such a rewarding experience.”

-Ceren Yartan, Comparative Literature, PhD, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

“I have been at Carnegie Mellon for four months so far. Every day I feel better informed about my field. America is the place where you can learn in depth about science.”

-Musab Kurnaz, Economics, PhD, Tepper School of Business, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

“Life is very organized here. Everything is on time. When you ask something to anybody, they just love to help you. In the education system, everything encourages you to be successful. Teachers are very helpful and use many different and effective techniques to help you to learn English. One of the best experiences I have had here is making friends from all over the world. I strongly recommend studying in the USA. It is such a wonderful experience.”

-Kenan Top, AA, Northern Virginia Community College

“The professors go out of their way to guide and assist you, I am thrilled to have the research opportunities and resources I have at my university.”

-Hande Özergin, Neuroscience, Bowdoin College, Maine



Contact us at the Turkish Fulbright Commission!

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