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How to apply to
UNIVERSITY ABROAD



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A growing number of students are choosing to study abroad, benefiting from a high-quality education while immersing themselves in a new culture (and often a new language), as well as gaining a global mindset and expanding their future employment prospects.

If you're thinking of studying abroad, you may not know where to start, or how to apply to universities in different countries. The application process will vary depending on the country, and finding out what steps to follow isn't always straightforward.

But don't worry! In this guide, we'll cover all the information you need to apply to university abroad – including admission tests, interviews and visa requirements. Before you know it, you'll be all set to jet off to your study destination of choice.



Getting started

Choosing where to study abroad is not always easy. As well as your own personal inclinations, you should consider the costs of studying in that country (both tuition fees and living costs), your graduate career prospects (is there a good job market?), the selection of higher education institutions on offer, the local language, and your overall safety and welfare.

Make sure your chosen destination is a good match for your interests and personality, to really give yourself the best chance of loving your study abroad experience.

You should also think about the kind of lifestyle you want during your studies. Make sure your chosen destination is a good match for your interests and personality, to really give yourself the best chance of loving your study abroad experience.

Once you've got some ideas about where you want to study, it's time to focus on choosing a program and a university. You can get an overview of the top universities in each country using the **QS World University Rankings®**, and identify the leading institutions in your chosen subject with the **QS World University Rankings by Subject**. You may also want to consult national or regional rankings, for universities in your chosen location/s.

The next step is to look closely at the courses offered by the institutions you're considering, to make sure they match your own interests and aims. You'll also need to check the admission requirements and costs, and try to find out about the local area and student life.



Making an application

Once you've decided on a shortlist of programs and institutions to apply to, you should start to plan your applications. Application processes differ depending on the university, country and study level, but generally each institution will provide full details of how to submit your application on the official website.

In some cases there is a "two-step application process" for international students. This means you must submit two applications: one for a place at the university and one for a place on the course itself. This should be clearly stated on the university's website. If you still have questions about the process, you should contact your chosen university directly.

Application processes differ depending on the university, country and study level, but generally each institution will provide full details of how to submit your application on the official website.

You can read general information on how to apply to some of the most popular study destinations on page 14.

Entry requirements

Entry requirements vary significantly between universities, so be sure to check the guidelines provided by your chosen institution university before submitting anything.

Speaking generally, if you are applying for an undergraduate degree you will be asked to show that you have completed your secondary education to a standard that is in line with the required grades (e.g. your GPA, A-level grades or equivalent) for the program you're applying to. For master's degrees, you will usually need to show you've completed an undergraduate degree to a good standard.

Depending on the course, you may be required to have studied a specific set of subjects, which are deemed necessary preparation. If you are unsure about whether your qualification is accepted, contact the admissions department of the university.

You may also be required to complete additional exams. These could include language proficiency exams (if you are studying in a second language), standardized tests (such as the SAT or GRE), national exams, or university-specific exams.



Admissions tests

Depending on the country, university and study level, you may need to take an admissions test. This is likely if your chosen program or institution is especially prestigious, meaning there is a lot of competition for places. In France, for example, you'll need to take admissions tests if applying for a place at one of the *grandes écoles* and *grands établissements* (great schools and establishments).

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Some of the most common admissions tests include:

GRE (Graduate Record Examination)

If you study at postgraduate level in the US, you'll need to take the GRE (Graduate Record Examination). GRE scores are used to assess the suitability of applicants for graduate-level study across many different subject areas. Some departments may ask applicants to take one of the GRE Subject Tests, while others require the General Test. The Subject Tests assess knowledge in a particular field, while the General Test assesses verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning and analytical writing.

You cannot pass or fail the GRE, but universities and departments may require applicants to achieve a specific score. If you are unhappy with your score you can re-sit the test (a maximum of five times over a 12 month period).





GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test)

Business school applicants may need to take the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test). Again there is no pass or fail score, so the score you need will depend entirely on the school to which you are applying.

SAT and ACT

The SAT and ACT are standardized tests used for undergraduate admission at universities and colleges in the US, for both domestic and international students. They are both designed to test critical thinking and reasoning skills, and both are widely accepted by US universities. A new version of the SAT will be available from May 2016, focusing equally on mathematics and vocabulary. The main difference between the two is that the ACT includes a science section, as well as sections on English and mathematics. While the SAT has typically been more widely taken outside of the US, the ACT is a growing option among international students.

LSAT (Law School Admission Test)

The LSAT is aimed at students who wish to study at law school at Juris Doctor (JD) level. It is required by law schools in the US and Canada, as well a growing number of law schools elsewhere in the world. It is designed to measure the skills necessary for success at law school and can be taken at test centers around the world on up to four dates during the year.

MCAT (Medical College Admission Test)

The MCAT is for prospective medical students in the US, Canada and Australia. It is offered 28 times per year, via computer at test locations in these countries and abroad. It tests critical reasoning and problem-solving skills, as well as knowledge of scientific concepts and principles. Since medical schools generally won't review applications until they receive MCAT scores, it's a good idea to take this test before deciding where to apply.

Language tests

If English is not your first language and you'd like to study abroad in English, you'll need to prove your proficiency with a test such as the **TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language), **IELTS** (International English Language Testing System) or **PTE Academic**. Your university should provide guidelines about the test and score they require as part of the entry requirements for your chosen course.

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Likewise, if you'd like to study abroad in another language in a non-English speaking country, you'll need to prove your proficiency in that language. For example, in Germany most teaching is in German, and you can prove your proficiency with a test such as the TestDaF (formerly *Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, meaning "Test of German as a foreign language").

Even if you study in English in a non-English speaking country, it's still recommended to learn as much of the local language as you can. This will make settling in and communicating much easier, and is also a great opportunity to add to your language skills.



Admissions interviews

As a prospective international student, it is relatively unlikely that you'll be expected to travel to another country to attend an admissions interview in person. However, this is not unheard of, especially for the most competitive programs.

Some universities hold international interviews in various locations around the world, so you may be expected to attend one of these. There is also a growing trend of using video interviewing. This is like any other interview, with a prearranged time and date, but will take place online, via an application such as Skype.

If you need to attend an admissions interview, here are some dos and don'ts!

DO: Show your passion for your subject

Showing enthusiasm helps you stand out and will leave a lasting (positive) impression on the admissions tutors who interviewed you.

DO: Be ready to think on the spot

Some admissions interviewers may test your ability to think on your feet by asking unusual questions. They will be interested in seeing your thought processes and how you explain your views.

DON'T: Assume your previous achievements will do the talking

Awards are good, but you shouldn't rely on them. The admissions officers want to gain more insights into your personality, strengths and ambitions. Use this opportunity to show who you really are, and what motivates you.

DO: Research the course in depth

Perhaps it goes without saying, but you should make sure you know what you're applying for, having read the prospectus and full course details. Demonstrate this by mentioning specific parts of the course that appealed to you.

And finally DON'T: Assume you've failed

Interviews can be tough, but remember that this is just one part of the admissions process. And if you found it difficult, that's often a good sign – it means you've challenged yourself to think, rather than just giving stock responses.



Application essays

Also known as a personal statement or statement of purpose, the application essay is your opportunity to sell yourself and show what makes you unique. Use it to explain why you want to study this course at this particular university, and how it will help you achieve your ambitions.

In some cases you will need to answer a particular question or write about a given topic, but generally application essays focus on why you're applying.

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To write a good application essay, you should:

1. Show off your strengths.

You should write about your experiences, knowledge and future plans, all with a positive outlook which shows your passion for your chosen subject.

2. Explain why you chose the program/institution.

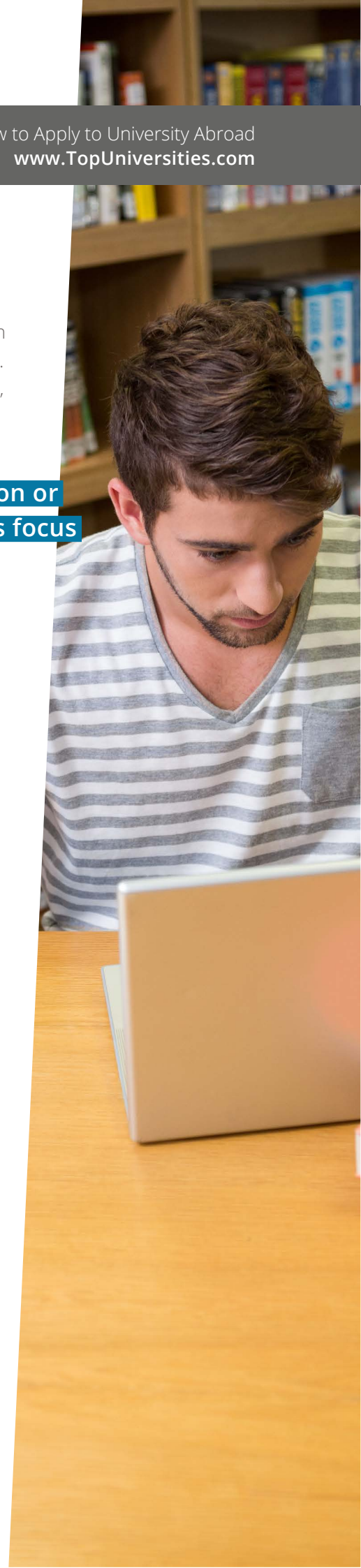
To make a good job of this, you must research the program, faculty and facilities, so you can talk in detail about specific aspects that attracted you. Try to avoid general statements that could apply to any university.

3. Be honest.

Don't say you can do something if you actually can't. The admissions officers want to read about the real you, and the truth always comes out sooner or later!

4. Ask someone to proofread it.

Once you've written your application essay, ask a friend, family member or teacher to proofread it. They should check for errors, make sure it reads well, and suggest additional points to mention.

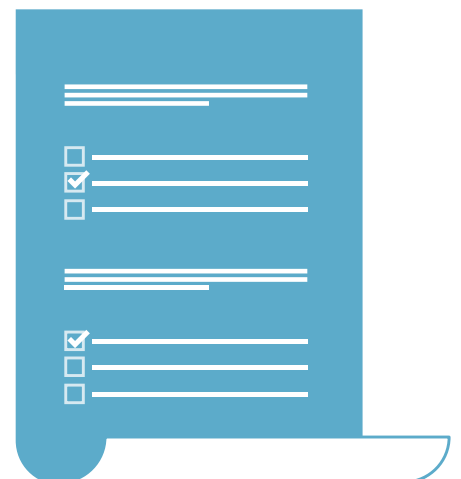




Other requirements

You may be asked to provide some supporting documentation as part of your application. Once again, requirements will vary depending on the country and university, but international students are often asked to provide the following:

- Passport photos for identification
- A statement of purpose
- CV/résumé
- Academic references/ letters of recommendation
- Certificate and transcripts of completed qualifications
- Proof of language proficiency
- Admissions test results (e.g. GMAT/GRE results, for graduate programs)



What next?

Congratulations, you're in! Now all that's left to do is to prepare for your studies, pack up your life into a single (large) suitcase, get your travel documents in order, apply for your student visa, research your accommodation options, and look for funding... don't panic, it'll all be worth it!

Ensure you have a valid passport and travel insurance, as well as a student visa if you need one.

In fact, as soon as you gain acceptance from a university, the first thing you should start to consider is your travel documentation. Ensure you have a valid passport and travel insurance, as well as a student visa if you need one. You will usually need to show your official acceptance letter from the university as part of your visa application, so keep this safe.

Take a look at our [study abroad checklist](#) to make sure you haven't forgotten anything!



Student visas

Not all international students will need a student visa. If you're an EU citizen planning to study in another EU country, for instance, you do not need to a visa. However, as a rule of thumb, if you come from outside of your chosen country's geographical region/continent, you will probably need to apply for a student visa. This usually only applies to longer periods of international study; if you're participating in a shorter exchange, lasting up to three months, a tourist or visitor visa may suffice.

Often, admissions departments will help you to prepare for your travels, and in some countries, they even apply for the student visa on your behalf.

For more information on what documentation you need, visit the government website of your chosen country to find information for travelers, visitors and international students (e.g. *gov.uk* for UK travel information). All the travel information you need should be listed on these official sites, including whether or not you need a student visa.

You can also ask your university for guidance. Often, admissions departments will help you to prepare for your travels, and in some countries, they even apply for the student visa on your behalf. Make sure you check with your university, however – don't assume someone else is going to sort everything out!

Read more about [how to get a student visa](#).



Information about specific countries

Below are a few examples of the guidelines you should follow to get started with studying abroad in some of the world's most popular destinations. For more information about studying in any of these countries (or an alternative country) take a look at our complete [country guides](#).

Applying to study in the United States

To start your application to study in the US, you will need to apply directly to each of the universities you're interested in. You need to start deciding where to apply early (1-1 ½ years before enrolment) to avoid missing out.

Entry requirements for each university are different, but most involve completing an admissions test or essay, the SAT or ACT admissions tests, and providing recommendation letters from teachers. Most universities will also ask for a transcript of your grades and a personal statement.

If you are accepted, you'll be entered into an international student database called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), and sent a copy of the information stored on this, which you will need to check for accuracy.

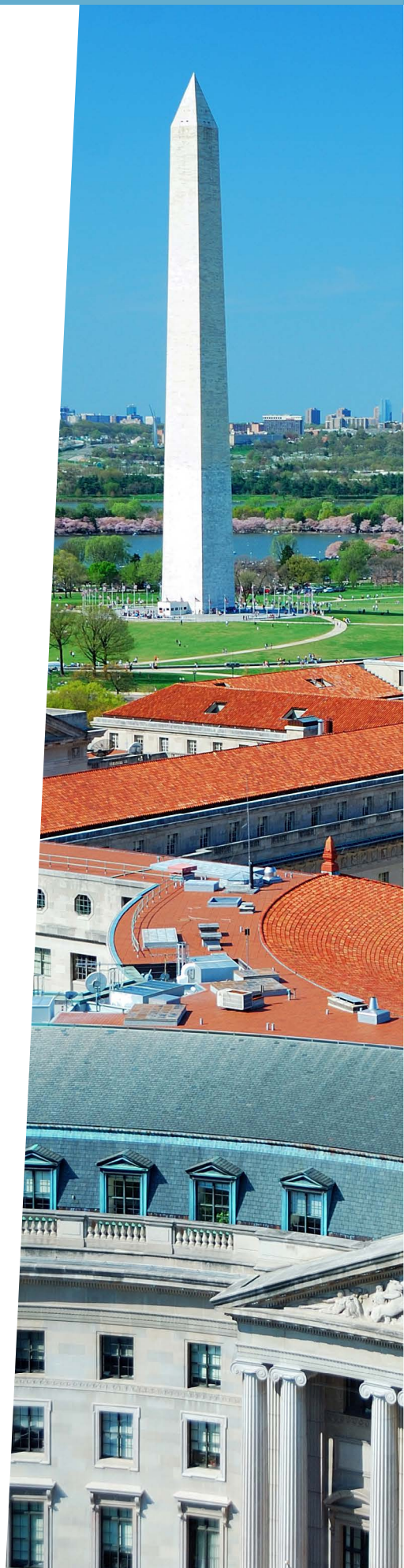
It's also important to ensure that you pay the application fee (the SEVIS I-901 fee) for this database service, which is US\$200. A few universities also allow international students to apply for free online. The university will then provide you with a Form I-20 to present to the US embassy when you attend your visa interview.

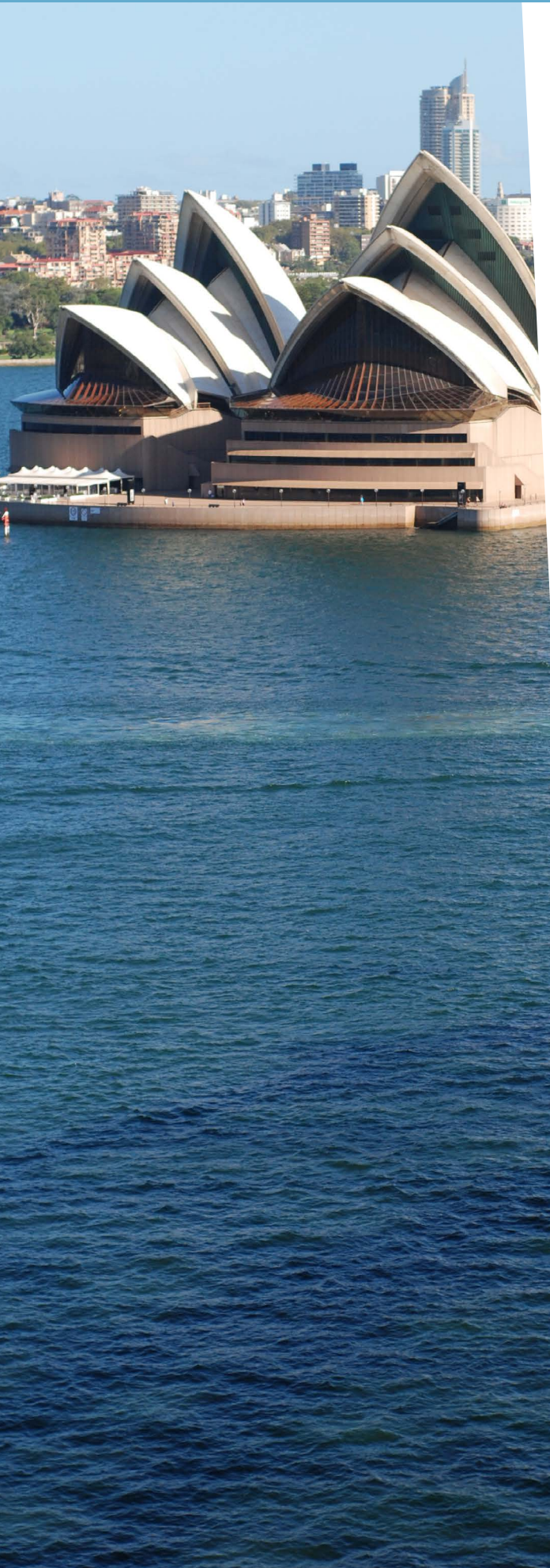


[Find out how to get a US student visa.](#)

Applying to study in the United Kingdom

The UK has a centralized university admissions service which handles all undergraduate applications – the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS). This is used by both domestic and international students to apply for undergraduate courses at universities in the UK. You'll need to register on the UCAS website before completing and submitting your application. The website has full details on how to apply, what to include, how to track your application and how to respond to your chosen universities.





Once you've completed the application, UCAS will send it to your chosen institutions (you can choose up to five options), and then email or mail you their responses. If you're accepted by an institution, you'll get an 'offer'. This can take the form of a 'conditional offer' which means you still need to fulfil certain criteria (usually academic grades), or an 'unconditional offer' which means you already meet the admission criteria.

If you receive a 'withdrawn application' response, this means either you have withdrawn your application, or the university has withdrawn the course. An 'unsuccessful application' means the university has decided not to offer you a place.

UCAS also offers the UKPASS application service for postgraduate-level applications. However, for many postgraduate courses you'll need to apply directly to the university – check the details provided by the institution.



[Find out how to get a UK student visa.](#)

Applying to study in Australia

You have 43 universities to choose from if you want to study in Australia, most of which are public. There are also over 1,100 accredited vocational and technical higher education institutions in Australia, offering short courses, certificates I through IV, diplomas, and advanced diplomas in industry training designed to prepare you for a specific job.

There is no federal or state-level application system for international students applying to universities in Australia, so you will need to apply directly to the university, usually online and often for a fee. In addition to submitting your academic record to date, you may also need to submit proof of proficiency in English language, as well as completing any set tests or interviews.

The beginning of the academic year in Australia is February, although it may also be possible to commence studies in July, at the start of the second semester. You can usually apply between

three and 18 months before a course starts, but the earlier the better. After you receive replies from the institution/s you applied for, you can choose which one to accept and study at, and then sort out your student visa.



Find out how to get an Australian student visa.

Applying to study in Canada

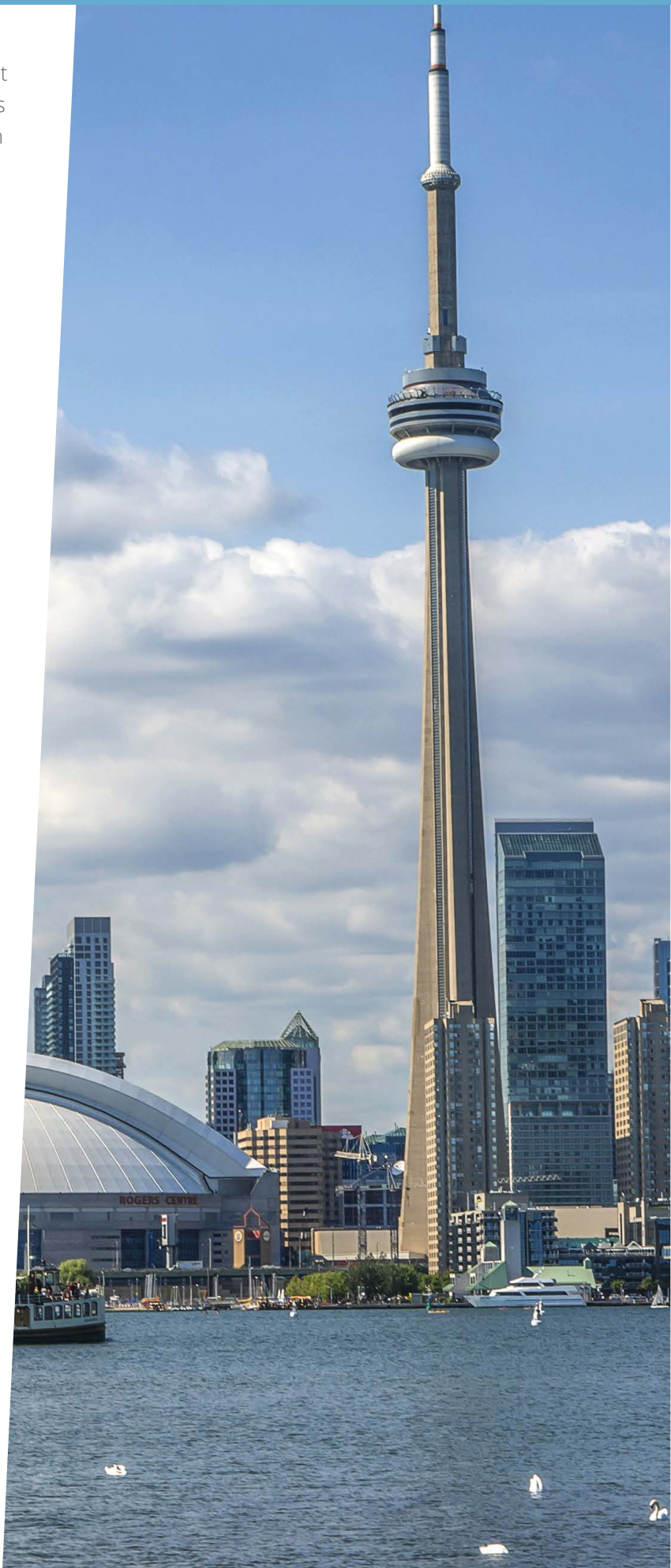
To study in Canada, you will need to apply directly to each university, as there is no centralized application system. The process is generally straightforward. Most Canadian higher education institutions require the completion of a high school diploma and, in some provinces, the completion of 40 hours of community service/volunteer work (this may not be expected of international students – check with the institution). International students may also be asked to provide proof of language proficiency, either in English or French.

For some university programs, and for almost all international students, you will be required to provide an essay, a statement of intent or personal statement of experience. Other documents required may include: letters of reference, examples of extracurricular involvement, evidence of community service, athletic participation, and details of awards and scholarships won.

In order to study in Canada, you will need to obtain a Canadian study permit, which serves as a Canadian student visa for the duration of your stay. You do not need a Canadian study permit if your course or program lasts six months or less.



Find out how to get a Canadian student visa.



Applying to study in Germany

Generally, you can apply directly to the international office of your chosen university. Alternatively, you can use the website www.uni-assist.de, a centralized admissions portal for international students, run by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Bear in mind that not all German universities use this service, and those that do may require applicants to complete their own application process as well. For PhDs, applications may be made directly to potential supervisors, by submitting a project proposal, or – for “structured” PhDs – via the official application process detailed by the university.

The dates you need to keep in mind for applying to study in Germany depend on whether you’d like to commence your studies in the winter or summer semester – if you want to enroll in the winter, you should make your application by 15 July. If you want to enroll in the summer, you should submit your application by 15 January. These are general dates, however, as application deadlines vary between institutions, so you should carefully check the specific dates for your chosen course.

It’s recommended to submit applications at least six weeks before the deadline, to allow time for corrections or additions if any information is missing. You should expect to receive a formal acceptance or rejection approximately one to two months after the deadline has passed.



Find out how to get a German student visa.



More questions?

Got more questions about applying to university abroad? Visit our [international student forums](#) for more advice.