

AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES ABROAD

Brief Background: American Universities Abroad (AUA), formerly American Colleges Overseas (ACO), is a group of private American universities located outside of the US that offer English-taught degree programs modeled on American curricula and quality oversight practices. AUA universities meet the following criteria:

- Have US regional accreditation
- Are nonprofit
- Operate on the US academic credit system
- Participate in US federal financial aid

AUA universities are located in different regions of the world, and encourage international perspectives and cross-cultural education within the context of their degree programs. Each AUA university enrolls a significant number of international applicants, leading to a diverse and multinational population of students on campus. American students make up the largest percentage of students at most AUA universities, but there is typically less than 50 percent of any one nationality.

Good to Know: Many AUA institutions specialize in the humanities. AUA universities offer a liberal arts style

of education, including general education as well as major requirements, and grant US degrees. Some AUA universities also offer a nationally recognized degree from the local host country.

For institutions that have a US-based campus and a campus abroad—such as Webster University or Saint Louis University—degrees can be completed in their entirety at the campus abroad, or students can spend time completing academic requirements in both countries. Some AUA universities, such as John Cabot University, have direct exchange partnerships with US universities, allowing students to complete part of their undergraduate experience in the United States.

Fundamental to the student experience in AUA programs is engagement with global issues, experiential learning, travel and cross-cultural exchange, and an emphasis on global citizenship. AUA universities instill a cosmopolitan outlook and teach students how to adapt to change. Students have the opportunity to experience not only a US-style education, but are also uniquely situated to immerse themselves in the culture of the university's host country as well.

Academic Calendar: AUA universities follow a traditional American academic calendar, generally beginning in August or September and continuing until May, with summer course options.

Search: Many AUA universities are members of The Common Application and can be found using the Common App search function. Many AUA university admission representatives are also active in events and fairs in the United States throughout the fall and spring, and some AUA institutions have admission representatives based in the United States.

Apply: AUA universities follow a traditional US timeline, with applications accepted beginning in the late summer or fall. Institutions that are members of The Common Application require students to use the portal to apply, sometimes asking applicants to complete a supplementary essay. As in the US, other requirements vary, and sometimes include an interview, meeting, or phone conversation in addition to the application. Those schools not on The Common Application use a similar approach to admission, but requirements differ among institutions.

Deadlines: AUA admission decisions are often rolling, though there are deadlines for confirmation of acceptance. For US students the May 1 deadline is generally observed.

Application Fee: Fees vary by institution, even those that accept The Common Application.

Academic Requirements: Most AUA institutions opt to review applications holistically. Counselors and students should check with each school for the required minimum GPA, as they vary by institution. The universities award academic credit demonstrated by AP test scores, IB diplomas, and A-level exams. While test scores are not always required, the institutions will accept and may assess them as a part of the application review when submitted.

Upon Acceptance: US students should confirm enrollment by May 1.

There are associated deposit fees for confirmation and in some cases for housing. AUA universities generally have an extensive pre-arrival process. Admission counselors and student life officials help students with each step they need to complete to arrive promptly and safely—including visa acquisition, as well as travel, housing, and banking arrangements. Some AUA universities direct students to websites that offer discounted student airfare.

Tuition and Fees: Tuition varies among institutions. Counselors and students should check each school for estimates regarding tuition and living costs.

How do I know if a university abroad has US regional accreditation?

US regional accreditation is one way to assess institutional quality. In the US there are seven regional accrediting bodies that oversee postsecondary education at public and private institutions. While national accreditation seems like it would be more important, regional accreditation is older and generally more prestigious. American accrediting agencies are increasingly evaluating foreign institutions as they believe they have a role to play in promoting the mobility of students and faculty.

The following agencies keep an updated directory of accredited institutions, including non-US institutions:

- [Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges](#)
- [Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#)
- [Higher Learning Commission, formerly part of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools](#)
- [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#)
- [Western Association of Schools and Colleges](#)
- [New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission](#)

Some AUA universities bill tuition in the currency of the country where they are located. Some schools list the dates when the exchange rate will be set—typically early July for the fall semester, and early November for the spring semester—so students and families can better understand what they will pay in US dollars, and budget accordingly.

Financial aid, both institutional and federal, is available at all AUA institutions. Institutional financial aid is determined by each university. US citizens can also access federal student loan opportunities by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Note that current US government legislation prohibits US citizens enrolled in colleges or universities outside the United States from receiving Pell Grants, SEOG, Perkins Loans, or Federal Work Study funds, even though they may be eligible for such assistance. Additionally, all AUA universities offer merit-based scholarships. Some award need-based scholarships and have programs similar to American work study.



Housing: Each university strives to provide affordable housing options for their students. Accommodations vary among institutions and can include on-campus housing (some with residential advisors) and off-campus accommodations, such as apartment-style living, host families, or residence halls managed by local universities. Meal plan options also exist at many AUA universities. Most AUA institutions have a housing department and/or housing partner that will help students secure housing for their first year and beyond. Some AUA universities require that students use university-approved housing—on-campus or provided by a partner—during their first year of studies.

Visas and Other Permits: In most cases students will need a student visa to study in their AUA host country. The visa acquisition process varies in length, but students begin it once they have confirmed their attendance. Fees to obtain the student visa vary depending on the destination country. AUA institutions offer admitted students help with the required paperwork and process. However, students must follow the host country's policies for visa application.

Students may be able to work part-time with their student visa while studying at an AUA institution, however, availability varies by country. For the most part, students are not guaranteed any type of visa or permit to remain in-country after they complete their education, unless sponsored by another organization or employer.

Advice from the Field: Communications and the assistance provided by an AUA university are similar to that of US-based institutions. One possible difference is that many of the AUA universities are smaller in size compared to many universities in the US, so the support that students and counselors receive tends to be very personalized. Students can expect one-on-one attention starting with the admission process and extending on to academic advising and on through graduation.

Because student visas are required in most cases, it is important that counselors encourage students to be in constant contact with their admission representative for help with each step of the process.

US BRANCH CAMPUSES

A branch campus is one that operates in one country, but is owned and operated (at least in part) by a university that is based in a different country, according to the SUNY Albany-based Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-Bert). C-Bert [maintains a list of institutions](#) that meet its definition of an international branch campus (along with links to branch campus websites). Note that this website is not specifically focused on admission procedures. Some college guidebooks, including Fiske Guides, also identify several branch campuses that draw a diverse student body, including US students.

More than 50 US colleges and universities operate one or more branch campuses in another country, offering additional opportunities for students to earn a US college degree outside of the United States. Most US branch campuses operate very similarly to their main campuses in the United States, with courses typically taught in English. However, a branch campus is usually smaller in size than its home campus and boasts an extremely diverse student body.

There are various models associated with the branch campus concept. Many branch campuses are organized as part of a hub, in which several branch campuses—for example from the United States or other countries—are operating alongside one another. Major hubs can be found in Qatar, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and China. Education City in Qatar, for example, includes six American universities, one British university, and one French university, each offering a degree program in a field for which the institution is well-known. Alternatively, Yale-NUS College in Singapore is sometimes viewed as a branch campus by virtue of its affiliation with Yale, however it does not award a Yale degree. Rather, it awards a Yale-NUS degree. New York University offers another model, where its campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai form a global network with its main campus in New York and 11 international academic centers.

Enrollment at branch campuses is open to local nationals who meet admission criteria and other students coming from around the world. Many US universities that operate branch campuses welcome US students to these locations for short-term educational experiences,

and some actively recruit US students for full degree programs. The following represent examples of US student enrollment at branch campuses:

- At New York University (NYU) Shanghai, a degree-granting campus in NYU's global network, 51 percent of each entering class is made up of Chinese nationals, while the remaining 49 percent come from around the rest of the world, including the United States.
- Many students at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia study abroad at Mason Korea, just outside of Seoul. The branch campus also enrolls several US citizens in full undergraduate degree programs.
- The Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus enrolls 750 students with around 300 coming from St. Louis for semester programs.

The number of majors available at any one university's branch campus tends to be fewer than what the home campus offers. Marist Italy, a branch campus of Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, offers four-year degrees at its Florence campus in majors such as studio art, art history, conservation studies, digital media, fashion design, interior design, and Italian language.

It is important to note that some governments place restrictions on teaching and research, potentially influencing the types of programs offered. This also raises concerns about academic freedom.

Many branch campuses follow an academic calendar that is similar to that of the home campus. In some cases, the application process, fees, and other admission-related policies and procedures are similar for US students at both the home and branch campus. However, because admission representatives at branch campuses review applications from a very diverse applicant pool, standard US admission requirements—for example the SAT or ACT—may or may not be factored into admission or scholarship decisions. Exceptions tend to be context-specific. For admission to NYU Shanghai, for example, Chinese nationals must take the gaokao as part of the university's agreement with the Ministry of Education in China.

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INTERNATIONAL PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

Community colleges are an integral facet of the US higher education sector. More than 1,460 community colleges across the United States serve an estimated 10 million students each year, offering a wide variety of vocational courses as well as academically oriented associate degree programs. For many students, community colleges provide a cost-effective path toward attaining a bachelor's degree via established transfer agreements with four-year colleges and universities.

Historically, community colleges have developed these “2+2” progression programs with local and regional institutions. Increasingly, however, there is a growing interest among community colleges to also partner with international institutions. These international partnerships not only strengthen a college's global outlook, but also provide students with more options for completing their undergraduate degrees.

A number of community colleges across the country have already established progression agreements with universities from the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, and South Korea, among other countries.

Benefits of International Transfer: Research has shown that community college students are the least likely to consider studying abroad. However, transferring to an international university may be a particularly attractive option for these students because of the cost-saving benefits. Since foreign institutions tend to charge substantially lower tuition than their American counterparts, enrolling in an international university may be cheaper than attending a local public or private college.

In addition, because of how the progression agreements are structured, students may only need to study for one year abroad to attain their bachelor's degree. In contrast, a four-year American institution typically requires transfer students to complete two additional years of coursework. The “2+1” programs offered by some international universities can therefore save students a year's worth of tuition and living expenses.

Transfer Agreement Structure: International collaborations tend to take a few forms. Some institutions establish guaranteed admission agreements that ensure students' entrance to a partner institution when certain academic requirements are met. Others create articulation agreements that define the way specific courses and programs of study will transfer between partner institutions. Guaranteed admission and articulation agreements are not mutually exclusive.



Note that sometimes these agreements encompass only certain degree programs. For example, Brookdale Community College (NJ) has an articulation agreement with Aberystwyth University (UK) applicable only for students with associate degrees in business administration, English literature, creative writing, media communication, and fine art.

Application Process: The process of applying to a partner institution abroad varies. Whereas some universities require students to complete an online application and furnish a copy of their transcript, others have a more involved application process. For instance, Green River College (WA) has specific conditions for admission to its University Transfer Pathway Program with University College Roosevelt in the Netherlands. In addition to completing 60 college-level credits and earning at least a 3.5 GPA, interested students must submit a letter of recommendation and sit for an admission interview with university faculty and staff.

Sample of US Community Colleges and International Universities with Progression Agreements

US Community Colleges	
Brookdale Community College	NJ
College of Marin	CA
De Anza College	CA
Diablo Valley College	CA
Foothill College	CA
Green River College	WA
Hawaii Tokai International College	HI
Kapi'olani Community College	HI
Kirkwood Community College	IA
Leeward Community College	HI
Los Angeles City College	CA
Mercer County Community College	NJ
Mira Costa College	CA
Moraine Valley Community College	IL
Northeast Community College	NE
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College	WI
Northern Essex Community College	MA
Northern Virginia Community College	VA
Northwestern Michigan College	MI
Orange Coast College	CA
Raritan Valley Community College	NJ
Santa Barbara City College	CA
International Universities	
Abertay University	United Kingdom
Aberystwyth University	United Kingdom
Bath Spa University	United Kingdom
George Mason University Korea	South Korea
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Ireland
Josai International University	Japan
Kansai Gaidai University	Japan
Tokai University	Japan
Keele University	United Kingdom
University of Lincoln	United Kingdom
Open University	United Kingdom
Robert Gordon University	United Kingdom
Temple University – Japan	Japan
The American University of Paris	France
University College Roosevelt	Netherlands
University of Greenwich	United Kingdom
University of Wales – Trinity Saint David	United Kingdom
University of West England Bristol	United Kingdom
University of West London	United Kingdom

INTERNATIONAL DUAL AND JOINT PROGRAMS

International dual and joint degrees are programs in which two or more institutions from different countries form partnerships to design and deliver an academic program. In many of these programs, institutions in non-English speaking countries are paired with US institutions. According to research conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE), the top five partner countries for international joint and dual degree programs are China, France, Turkey, Germany, and South Korea.

ACE defines two types of programs:

In dual degree programs, a student receives a qualification from each of the partner institutions. These programs are also known as double degrees.

In joint degree programs, a student receives a single qualification endorsed by both institutions.

Dual degree programs tend to be more complex and variable. In some programs, students might receive a degree from each university in the same program of study, while at others they may receive a degree from each institution for distinctly different majors. Some offer two degrees, but at different levels, such as awarding a bachelor's from one institution and a master's degree

from another. Students are advised to make sure they understand program policies before enrolling.

Many joint and dual degree programs require students to study at the partner institution overseas for one to two years or during the summer. One such example, the program between the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, offers undergraduate students the option to pursue a joint degree in economics, English, history, or international relations. Depending on where they enroll their first year, students will then spend their second year at the other university, and consult with their advisors on how to split their third and fourth years between the two locations.

International joint and dual degree programs also help US institutions diversify their campuses. ACE's data show that 63 percent of joint or dual degree programs enroll non-US students only; 34 percent enroll a mix of US and non-US students; and only 4 percent enroll just American students. US universities express eagerness to expand the numbers of US students engaged in such programs, but thus far they have proven more popular among international students hoping to study in the United States.