



Applying to Universities in the United States

**Application Information
2015-2016**

Applying to a U.S. University with an OSSD

Rosedale Academy overseas students can earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) without leaving home and apply to top universities in the United States as Ontario high school graduates.

The minimum requirements necessary for a successful application to a University in the U.S. include the following:

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- 6 Grade 12U or 12M Courses including ENG12U (English Grade 12)
- Although English 12U is required for every university academic program, many also have course specific requirements. For example a Business program may require one or two Grade 12 math courses as well. Fine arts or Media programs may require a portfolio of work.
- Each university has specific requirements for the minimum English Language Proficiency Level score they accept and which tests they will require students to complete. TOEFL and IELTS are the most common tests required.
- While the minimum admission average for university programs can be as low as 70%, most highly competitive programs have admission averages ranging from 80 to 90%. U.S. Universities will convert your grades into a "Grade Point Equivalent" (GPA) in order to rank you with other applicants.
- The SAT Reasoning test or the ACT College Test and SAT Subject Tests are often required as part of your application.
- Many programs require a "personal essay" or "personal statement" that describes who you are and what your objectives in life are and they may also request an interview as part of the application process.
- U.S. Universities will require letters of recommendation from teachers, counsellors, sports coaches, community leaders and volunteering associates. Extra-curricular activities are an important part of your application.
- If you are applying to a program in music, theatre, drama, fine arts or literature and creative writing, you may be required to provide a portfolio of your work.
- Students with an OSSD who are applying to U.S. Universities must follow the application processes and deadlines outlined on each of the University's website. Students will be responsible for sending their Ontario and Chinese grade transcripts to these universities. U.S. schools require a transcript listing all their grades from Grade 9 to 12.



Important **U.S.** University Application Information and Dates

The following information will help you with the process of applying to **U.S. Universities**. Remember that Rosedale Academy academic staff are here to help you too!

International students often underestimate the amount of time required to apply for admission to a college or university in the United States. You can avoid this mistake by setting a schedule for yourself that begins well in advance of the time that you plan to begin your studies. Especially for schools with competitive admissions, the application process takes a significant amount of time and effort. You will need to write personal statements and request recommendations from teachers or others who know you well as well as taking entrance tests for admission.

Grade 11

SAT

The SAT test is composed of writing, critical reading and mathematics components. Register for a SAT preparation course two months before you write the test. The SAT should be written by the end of Grade 11 or early Fall in Grade 12 if you are not applying for early admission. SAT Test Dates are usually in the months of October, November, December, January, May and June. For more information see the [College Board SAT](#) site.

Research Programs and Universities

Now is the time to research university programs and requirements and begin to identify 5 to 10 of the Universities you would like to apply to and start to review their admissions websites. Two places to start are on the [U.S. Department of Education College Navigator](#) site or the [College Board](#) search site.

University Rankings

There are many sites that provide rankings for U.S. universities. One of the best known is the [US News Best Colleges](#) site.

Grade 12

English Language Proficiency Test

If English is not your first language, or you were educated in a country where English is not the language of instruction, most universities require you to take one of these language tests:

Note: Each institution has its own requirements, which are subject to change. Contact the universities directly for more information. **In particular pay close attention to the deadline for submission of English language proficiency test results as these vary widely across universities.**

IELTS: International English Language Testing System
www.ielts.org

MELAB: Michigan English Language Assessment Battery

www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/testing/melab/

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

www.toefl.org

Determine what the Language Proficiency requirements are for the Universities you intend to apply to. You will need to forward scores from this test as part of your application package.

Application Deadlines

Most college applications are due between January 1st and February 15th however some Universities have deadlines as early as November. It is important to check the University website for their specific deadlines. Early admission application deadlines are usually early in November.

Accepting an Offer

Respond to an offer of acceptance by the stipulated deadline which is usually May 1st but check the University website for their specific deadlines. You must also send your rejections of offers from other universities at this time.



“How to Guide” for Applying to a U.S. University

How to apply:

Step 1: Research Your University Selection

- Identify 5 to 10 of the Universities you would like to apply to and start to review their admissions websites. Two places to start are on the U.S. Department of Education [College Navigator](#) site or the [College Board](#) search site.
- Review University Rankings on one of the many sites that provide rankings for U.S. universities. One of the best known is the [US News Best Colleges](#) site.
- Narrow down the university program selections by talking to your parents, teachers and guidance counselors about your interests and options.

Step 2: Gather the Information Needed to Apply

- High School transcripts for all courses from Grade 9 to 12
- Create an itemized list of all the extra-curricular activities that you have been involved in
- SAT/ACT Test scores
- English Language Proficiency Test Scores
- Letters of Recommendation
- Draft versions of the personal essay or statement which will help you get started on the specific topic each university wants you to write about.

Step 3: Apply

- Use the application required by each University. Some Universities will refer you to the Common Application Form. Download the correct form and complete all sections of the application.
- Submit your application, with payment before the application deadline. Application fees range from \$20 to \$60 per application.

Step 4: After Applying

- Complete the transcript request form asking your high school(s) to send an official copy of your transcript to each University you applied to.
- Many Universities will request an interview as part of your application process. This may be done through electronic means for international students.
- Universities will request portfolio of work demonstrating your capacities and range of work for applicants to music, theatre, drama, fine arts, and sometimes for literature and creative writing.

Step 5: Accepting an Offer

- Respond to an offer of acceptance by the stipulated deadline which is usually May 1st but check the University website for their specific deadlines. You must also send your rejections of offers from other universities at this time.



Working in the U.S. – Information for International Visa Students

(Source: internationalstudent.com Date: September 16, 2015)

Most international students in the United States hold an [F-1 visa](#), which is the U.S. non-immigrant student visa. F-1 students are allowed to work in the United States, but only under certain conditions and in accordance with complex guidelines and restrictions issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

Generally, all employment is contingent on remaining within the terms and restrictions of your F-1 visa. There are several categories of employment during the term of your stay as an F-1 student in the United States. On-campus employment is the most freely available, and then there are four categories of off-campus employment:

- [On-Campus Employment](#)
- [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#)
- [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#)
- [Economic Hardship](#)
- [International Institutions](#)

On-Campus Employment

On-campus employment is the category most freely permitted by the [USCIS regulations](#), and it does not require USCIS approval. However, although F-1 status includes an on-campus employment privilege, on-campus employment opportunities at most schools are limited. Even if you can obtain a job on campus, you may not rely on it to prove financial resources for the year, and often these jobs are not related to your studies. Many schools do require that you obtain permission from the International Student Office prior to accepting any on-campus employment, and may not permit such employment in a student's first semester or year.

For on-campus work, an F-1 student is subject to the following rules:

1. You must maintain valid F-1 status
2. You can work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session
3. You can work full-time on campus during holidays and vacation periods if you intend to register for the next academic semester
4. The employment may not displace (take a job away from) a U.S. resident

The definition of on-campus employment includes:

- Work performed on the school's premises directly for your school (including work affiliated with a grant or assistantship).
- Work performed for on-location commercial firms which provide services for students on campus, such as the school bookstore or cafeteria (Employment with on-site commercial firms which do not provide direct student

services, such as a construction company building a school building, is not deemed on-campus employment for the purposes of the rule).

- Work performed at an off-campus location which is educationally affiliated with the school. The educational affiliation must be associated with the school's established curriculum or related to contractually funded research projects at the post-graduate level. In any event, the employment must be an integral part of the student's educational program.

Since your status is always contingent on your school's support, you must seek guidance and clearance from your International Student Office prior to applying for or accepting any employment and you should request their particular interpretation of any ambiguous situation. You will also need your school's guidance to ensure that you file all appropriate forms with USCIS and receive any necessary USCIS approval.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

International students in the U.S. in valid F-1 immigration status are permitted to work off-campus in optional practical training (OPT) status both during and after completion of their degree. Rules established by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) govern the implementation of OPT, and all OPT employment requires prior authorization from USCIS and from your school's International Student Office.

You can apply for OPT after being enrolled for at least 9 months, but you cannot begin employment until you receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS and you have been enrolled for at least a year. You do not need to have a job offer to apply for your OPT EAD, and your OPT employment can occur anywhere in the US. Start early—USCIS takes up to 90 days to process your application—and make sure you work closely with your school's International Student Office. As with everything you will do while in the U.S., permission is based on maintaining lawful F-1 status and your International Student Office is there to help you maintain that status throughout your stay.

General OPT Requirements:

1. Employment must be "directly related" to the student's major
2. Student must maintain lawful F-1 status
3. Student must apply for OPT before completion of all work towards a degree
4. Students who have engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible for OPT
5. OPT is permitted for up to 12 months full-time in total – part-time OPT (while still in school) reduces available full-time OPT by half of the amount of part-time work (for instance, if you work part time for 6 months, you can work full-time for up to 9 months)

Students can be authorized for 12 months of OPT for each successive level of degree achieved – for instance, you can do 12 months of OPT after receiving your undergraduate degree, go back to graduate school, and then do 12 months of OPT after receiving your graduate degree. Pre-completion OPT (students are still in school) and post-completion OPT (students have completed their degree) each have different rules:

OPT before completing a degree:

- Students must be enrolled in school full-time
- Students may only work 20 hours per week while school is in session
- Students may work full-time during summer and other breaks (as long as the student will return to school after the break)
- Student may work full-time after completion of all coursework, if a thesis or dissertation is still required and student is making normal progress towards the degree

OPT after completing a degree:

- After completion of your degree, OPT work must be full time (40 hours/week)
- All OPT must be completed within 14 months after completion of your degree
- Applications for post-completion OPT must be received by USCIS before the completion of the degree

One Final Note – Be mindful of the travel regulations governing F-1 students on OPT. If you leave the country after completion of your degree, but before receiving your EAD and obtaining a job, you may not be readmitted. You can leave the country after completion of your degree if you have your EAD and a job, but make sure you bring everything that you'll need to get back in (including valid passport, valid EAD card, valid F1 visa, all your I-20s with page 3 endorsed for travel by your international student advisor within the past 6 months, and a letter of employment, including dates of employment and salary).

OPT Update - April 2008

In April 2008, the Department of Homeland Security updated their OPT requirements for students who are studying certain degree programs so that OPT can be extended for an additional 17 months, up to a total of 29 months of OPT. This was instituted to plug the gap between students who completed their OPT and did not have a chance to file for an H1B visa due to the time frames and visa caps that exist on the H1B visa. Students can now extend their OPT so they still have the opportunity to apply for an H1B visa.

The special extension of the OPT program is only available to those who are employed by companies who are enrolled in the E-Verify program, and you have to be studying one of the following subjects:

- Actuarial Science
- Computer Science Applications
- Engineering
- Engineering Technologies
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Military Technologies
- Physical Sciences
- Full [list of STEM Designated Degree Programs](#)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

[Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) is an off-campus employment option for F-1 students when the practical training is an integral part of the established curriculum or academic program. CPT employment is defined as “alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.” To qualify, the work experience must be required for your degree, or academic credit must be awarded. And yes, you can get paid for CPT employment. Prior authorization by your school's International Student Office and notification to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) is required.

To be eligible for CPT employment:

1. You must have been enrolled in school full-time for one year on valid F-1 status (except for graduate students where the program requires immediate CPT)
2. The CPT employment must be an integral part of your degree program or requirement for a course for which you receive academic credit
3. You must have received a job offer that qualifies before you submit your CPT authorization request

4. Your job offer must be in your major or field of study

Your International Student Office must authorize you for CPT. Once you receive CPT authorization, you can only work for the specific employer and for the specific dates authorized (unlike with OPT or severe economic hardship off-campus employment, where you can work anywhere in the US). Your CPT authorization will also specify whether you are approved for part-time (20 hours per week or less) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) CPT employment. While in school, you can only be approved for part-time CPT.

Regardless of whether you are approved for full or part-time on CPT, there is no limit to how long you can work. However, if you work full-time on CPT for 12 months or more, you are not eligible for OPT. If you work part-time on CPT, or full-time on CPT for less than 12 months, you are still eligible for all of your allowable OPT. So make sure you watch the dates and hours closely – don't jeopardize your OPT!

As with all employment, you should work closely with your International Student Office. The general rules will apply somewhat differently to undergraduates, graduate students and PhD candidates, and they can guide you. The office can help you determine your eligibility for CPT, make sure your job offer qualifies, and make sure you follow all necessary steps in applying to USCIS. They also have to authorize your CPT, so you have no choice – you have to work with them. But they are pros, especially when it comes to USCIS regulations, so use them – they are there to help you.

Many schools in the United States offer [work and study programs](#) that coordinate immediate employment through CPT programs. Not only does this give international students the opportunity to help cover the costs of their education, but they will at the same time gain valuable work experience and obtain their masters degree.

Severe Economic Hardship

Any F-1 student suffering "severe economic hardship" as defined by USCIS is eligible to work off-campus for up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, and full-time during breaks.

To be eligible under "severe economic hardship", a student must:

1. Be in valid F-1 status for at least one academic year (9 months)
2. Be in good academic standing
3. Provide evidence of economic hardship based on unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control
4. Show that on-campus employment is neither available nor sufficient
5. Make a good faith effort to locate employment on campus before applying

Examples of Severe Economic Hardship:

The rule gives examples of the types of things that could be considered "severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control." These circumstances may include:

- loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student
- substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate
- inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs
- unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
- medical bills or other substantial and unexpected expenses.

You must apply for an "employment authorization document" (EAD) with the help and guidance of your International Student Office -- you do not need a job offer before you apply for the EAD. But several forms and documents are required, together with fees and photos, etc., and processing can take up to 12 weeks or longer -- and you cannot start work until you receive the EAD. Once you receive the EAD, you may work for an

employer at any job, anywhere in the United States. Employment authorization is automatically terminated when a student fails to maintain valid F-1 status.

Employment with an International Organization

The final category of employment for international students in the U.S. on F-1 visas is employment with a "recognized international organization." To qualify, an organization must be on the official State Department list, and listed organizations include the Red Cross, African and Asian Development Banks, the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, and many other similar but less well-known organizations. Because it does not have the universal application of OPT or CPT, this category of employment is often overlooked. Only students with a job offer and sponsorship from one of the listed organizations are eligible. However, for those lucky students who do have such sponsorship, there are clear benefits of this employment category.

Requirements to work for an international organization:

1. The student must have an internship/employment with a "recognized international organization." Click here to see a recent listing of all ["recognized international organizations."](#)
2. The employment must be within the scope of the organization's sponsorship, and within the student's field of study.
3. The student must have been in valid F-1 status for at least one full academic year.
4. The student must be in good academic standing.

If you meet these requirements, you can apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). You can start to work only after you receive your EAD, which can take up to 3 months.

Advantages of this type of employment when compared to CPT or OPT:

- Employment does not have to be for-credit nor required for your degree program.
- Regardless of how much or how long you work, this type of employment will not take away from your 12-month post-completion OPT.