



Belgrade, August 2017

HOW TO APPLY FOR
UNIVERSITY ABOARD

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SCHOLARSHIP ADVISING

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What to study?

If you have decided to apply for a scholarship that lasts for one year or longer, this guide will assist you in finding the best possible match for your university of choice. The process of applying for an international scholarship programme is an exhausting procedure that demands your full commitment and patience. In this document, you can find all relevant information and the time scheme required in order to properly plan your application.

The preparation for university and the planning process need to begin at least a year in advance. Before planning the enrolment itself, you need to decide ***in which country you would like to study***. Some of you might have parents, friends or distant relatives in a foreign country; therefore, you might opt for that particular country. Others might have different preferences, not necessarily associated with having acquaintances abroad. The second most important element you need to consider before planning your enrolment is ***the field you would like to study***. Some of you may opt for social studies, while others might choose natural sciences, art, music, or theatre. The direction that you are going to take will ***lead you to your future master or doctoral studies***.

The future master studies can have different forms; in the USA, master's degrees have the following forms: MA – Master of Arts, MSc – Master of Science and MBA – Master of Business Administration. In any of these cases you might need to have excellent knowledge in the chosen field of study and preferably some practical experience during your university years. Almost all master programmes last around two years, regardless of the location. Postgraduate studies are mostly oriented towards research and narrowing down your field of interest into a specific specialisation.

How to find the right university?

Once you have identified your field of interest, you can begin your quest for the right university. If you use the Internet as your main resource, you will be able to find plenty of universities that are available in the USA, the UK and Europe in general. There is a particular ranking of universities that will serve you as a guide in your research. You may research universities from the Erasmus Mundus, JoinEU-SEE and Basileus programmes. This kind of search will allow you to identify the competitive universities in the fields you have chosen and the country where you will base your studies. More competitive universities provide a more prestigious title when finished. Likewise, the universities that are ranked the highest have more options to provide you with the **possibility of scholarship**.

In order to avoid being rejected from the sole university you have applied for, try to follow these pieces of advice to ensure your placement in the university of your choice. Bear in mind that international universities **require applicants to prepare a lot of paperwork** in advance. This is why you need to plan ahead and **choose multiple options**. This means that you need to **prepare a wish list** of 10–15 universities. Then make the following steps:

- Arrange your choices according to the financial aid or scholarship options they provide and see how they match your wishes.
- Refer to the number or percentage of applications received, as well as the results on standardised tests to check your competition.
- Refer to the listed lesson topics and research material, as well as the activities at the university to see if they match your expectations.
- Check the availability of accommodation and the living conditions on campus or in the vicinity of the university (e.g. prices, traffic, availability of grocery stores, etc.). Choose your location wisely and remember that you will reside there for a longer period of time; therefore, try to make yourself as comfortable as possible.

- Check the paperwork required for the application and start preparing the documentation; also, read the instructions for the application as thoroughly as possible to make sure you understand everything that is required.
- Research the deadlines for the application and make a timetable of all important dates.

*****Note: These points should be completed by October, a year prior to the proposed date of enrolment.***

August, a year ahead...

The choice of your mentor or advisor is perhaps the most important choice when deciding on your future studies. A mentor is a person who will guide you through your postgraduate studies and provide coaching/guidance during the preparation period, as well. If you haven't visited any summer camps, international seminars or conferences, or experienced a visit of a guest teacher, and you are unsure as to your future mentor, make a list of potential ones after researching scientists in your area of interest. Here are some useful links that will keep you posted on international conferences and potential mentors:

- [Google Scholar](#)
- [PapersInvited](#)
- [Conference Search](#)

Try to research at least 20 authors that re-appear from year to year. You can examine their published articles and books, and check how many times they were cited in publications (CiteSeer Impact Factors, ISIHighlyCited). If you are wondering how to contact a professor, try to contact some of their students first; introduce yourself and ask if the professor in question would consider being your mentor or if they are accepting new students. Then contact the professor directly. When sending the first email to a potential mentor, try to present yourself in the best possible light.

Contents of your first letter

- Introduce yourself and present your request
- Explain your interest in the specific area of study; convey your enthusiasm, motivation and discreetly mention your previous work
- Ask the professor if they intend to take on new students; if the answer is yes, explain that you would like to discuss that matter

In case they fail to reply within two weeks, try again. If the professor does not reply to your emails, contact him/her via phone or fax. If none of this works, search for a new mentor. Bear in mind that you will be cooperating with this person for a longer period of time and that communication problems at the very beginning may lead to a questionable relationship later on.

September, a year ahead

Once you have completed the list of subjects and potential mentors of your choice, move on to standardised tests (TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.). Universities use these tests to assess your potential in different fields of study. The tests are usually charged as follows:

- TOEFL – \$100
- GRE – \$125
- SAT – \$75
- GMAT – \$250

Check everything there is to know about these tests; visit relevant websites and learn about the prices, schedule, dates, and so on. Test your knowledge by doing mock tests or actual ones. If the results are not good, you need more preparation.

The actual preparation should start at least two months before the test dates and you should practice 2-3 hours per day in order to prepare well for the test. Good English language skills are essential to passing any exam. The main goal of preparing for these tests is to become accustomed to any type of problem; some of the materials are available online since the preparation books are very expensive. ETS, the educational testing and assessment organisation, will inform 4 or 5 universities of your results free of charge, depending on the test. This is why, when applying for these tests, you should list the universities you are interested in. Pay attention to TOEFL. US universities comply with the country's legislation, so make sure you research the validity of the tests before taking them.

If you would like to pass these tests in November, you should make the payment in September.

October and November

While preparing for the tests, having chosen a university, start working on your application essay, research proposition and letter of motivation. As they are not easy to write, you will most certainly go through several variations before reaching the final version. For more detailed advice on how to write the structured essay, research proposition and motivation letter, please visit the following links:

- [Motivation letter](#)
- [Structured essay](#)

November

In November, as the test is approaching, discuss your recommendation letter with your professors. Give them two or three weeks to write the letter, but not more than that; make sure they do not forget. After the initial discussion, ask them again in ten days, but be prepared that it might take longer than that.

December

In December, your essays are almost done; you have passed the tests, submitted the forms and letters to the teachers, and you can start filling in the application forms for the universities. Make copies of the application forms and first fill in the copies to avoid any mistakes. If possible, use a PC for typing or write printed letters. All documents written in your mother tongue, or any language other than English, must be translated and verified by a certified court interpreter.

We suggest that you translate the documents only if you are certain that the translation will be correct. You can also consult a translator. After translating and verifying the documents and the motivation letter, place them in an A4 envelope. Also, make sure you have sufficient copies, as some universities ask for additional copies.

In the spring

After completing and sending the application, you need to wait and be patient. Candidates applying for a programme in January shall receive a reply from the university in March. In some cases, you might receive an offer for financial aid or scholarship a bit later. Universities send their offers periodically, so don't be afraid if the answer doesn't come immediately.

If you receive multiple offers, you need to make a decision. Focus on the offer for financial aid or scholarship first, and check for any hidden expenses. Brace yourself and face the bureaucracy sooner rather than later, and **good luck!**





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