

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. Fill in the gaps with suitable words from the box.

Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Education	Bachelor of Science	college	degree
Doctor of Philosophy	freshmen	Master of Arts	postgraduates	research
semesters	sophomores	terms	thesis	undergraduates

A British university year is divided into three _____. Students are known as _____. At the end of a university course, graduates are awarded a _____ - probably a BA (_____), BSc (_____) or BEd (_____). After graduating, if they wish to continue at university, _____ can take a further course or do _____ and write a _____ in the hope of becoming an MA (_____) or a PhD (_____).

In America, first-year students are known as _____ and second-year students are called _____. Their year is divided into two _____. A university is often called a _____.

2. Using a good dictionary to help you, find out the meanings of these words and abbreviations.

dormitory	grad school	SAT
campus	elective course	GPA
fraternity/sorority	assistant professor	tenure
major (noun)	associate professor	multiple choice test
minor (noun)	board of trustees	to enroll for admission

3. Match the words and phrases on the left with their opposites on the right.

to pass an exam	to take a course
to be admitted	free
full-time student	graduate
freshman	to flunk out
to drop a course	E student
A student	to fail an exam
public	compulsory
elective	part-time student
fee-paying	private

4. Write a paragraph of 10-12 sentences to comment on this statement:

Education is what remains after what has been learnt has been forgotten.

Higher education in the United States

Higher education in the United States refers to a variety of institutions of higher education. Strong research and funding have given American colleges and universities a deserved place among the world's most prestigious. This is particularly attractive to international

students, professors and researchers. Public universities, private universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges all have a significant role in higher education in the United States.

The 2006 American Community Survey found that 19.5 percent of the population had attended college but had no degree, 7.4 percent held an associate's degree, 17.1 percent held a bachelor's degree, and 9.9 percent held a graduate or professional degree. Only a small gender gap was present: 27 percent of the overall population held a bachelor's degree or higher, with a slightly larger percentage of men (27.9 percent) than women (26.2 percent).

The American university system, like the primary and secondary education system, is largely decentralized.

American universities have developed independent accreditation organizations to guarantee the quality of the degrees they offer. The accreditation agencies rate universities and colleges on criteria such as academic quality—the quality of their libraries, the publishing records of their faculty, and the degrees which their faculty hold. Non-accredited institutions are perceived as lacking in quality and may be termed diploma mills.

Colleges and universities in the U.S. vary in terms of goals: some may emphasize a vocational, business, engineering, or technical curriculum while others may emphasize a liberal arts curriculum. Many combine some or all of the above.

Two-year colleges (often but not always community colleges) usually offer the associate's degree such as an Associate of Arts (A.A.). Tuition fees at community colleges are low. Four-year colleges (which usually have a larger number of students and offer a greater range of studies than two-year colleges) offer the bachelor's degree, such as the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.). These are usually primarily undergraduate institutions, although some might have limited programs at the graduate level. Many students earn an associate's degree at a two-year institution before transferring to a four-year institution for another two years to earn a bachelor's degree.

Four-year institutions in the U.S. which emphasize the liberal arts are liberal arts colleges. These colleges traditionally emphasize interactive instruction (although research is still a component of these institutions). They are known for being residential and for having smaller enrollment, class size, and teacher-student ratios than universities. These colleges also encourage a high level of teacher-student interaction at the center of which are classes taught by full-time faculty rather than graduate student teaching assistants (TAs), who often teach classes at universities. Most are private, although there are public liberal arts colleges.

Universities are research-oriented institutions which provide both undergraduate and graduate education. For historical reasons, some universities—such as Boston College, Dartmouth College, and the College of William & Mary—are still called colleges. Graduate programs grant a variety of master's degrees—such as the Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), or Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)—in addition to doctorates such as the Ph.D.

Some universities have professional schools for those who want more practical and less academic education. These schools train students for careers in journalism, business, medicine,

law, veterinary medicine or dentistry. A common practice is to refer to different units within universities as colleges or schools (what is referred to in other countries as faculties). Some departments may be divided into smaller departments—such as an anthropology department within a college of liberal arts and sciences within a larger university.

The federal government does not directly regulate universities, although it can give federal grants to them. The majority of public universities are operated by the states and territories, usually as part of a state university system. Each state supports at least one state university, and several support many more. California, for example, has three public higher education systems: the 11-campus University of California, the 23-campus California State University, and the 109-campus California Community Colleges System. Public universities often have a large student body, with introductory classes numbering in the hundreds, and some undergraduate classes are taught by graduate student teaching assistants (TAs).

Among private universities, some are secular while others are involved in religious education.

Tuition is charged at almost all American universities. Public universities often have much lower tuition than private universities because funds are provided by state governments (residents of the state that supports the university typically pay lower tuition than non-residents). Students often use scholarships, student loans, or grants, rather than paying all tuition out-of-pocket.

Students can apply to some colleges using the Common Application. There is no limit to the number of colleges or universities to which a student may apply, though an application must be submitted for each. With a few exceptions, most undergraduate colleges and universities maintain the policy that students are to be admitted to (or rejected from) the entire college, not to a particular department or major. Some students, rather than being rejected, are "wait-listed" for a particular college and may be admitted if another student who was admitted decides not to attend the college or university.

1. Match the words on the left with their meanings on the right.

accreditation	• money that is provided by an organization or government for a particular purpose
admissions	• a large organization that has a particular kind of work or purpose
application	• admired as one of the best and most important
Associate of Arts	• a first university degree
bachelor	• official approval to do something, especially because of having reached an acceptable standard
campus	• a degree given after two years of study at a community college in the US
community college	• all the teachers in a university
curriculum	• the subjects that are taught by a school, college etc, or the things that are studied in a particular subject
faculty (AmE)	• the money you pay for being taught
funding	• the areas of learning which develop someone's ability to think and increase their general knowledge, rather than developing technical skills
grant	• a college in the US that students can go to for two years in order to

institution	learn a skill or prepare for university
liberal arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an educational institution at the highest level, where you study for a degree
loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the land and buildings of a university or college, including the buildings where students live
prestigious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a student at college or university, who is working for their first degree
secular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not connected with or controlled by a church or other religious authority
scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an amount of money that is given to someone by an educational organization to help pay for their education
tuition (AmE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an amount of money that you borrow from a bank etc.
undergraduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an amount of money given to someone, especially by the government, for a particular purpose
university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the process of allowing people to enter a university, institution etc, or the number of people who can enter • a formal, usually written, request for something such as a job, place at university, or permission to do something

2. Complete these sentences.

The major types of institutions that offer higher education in the United States are _____ .

The high quality of American higher education has been achieved thanks to _____ .

The aim of independent accreditation organizations is to _____ .

Young people in the USA who want to learn skills in a certain profession or to prepare for a university can enter _____ .

Liberal arts colleges provide _____ .

One can get a Bachelor's degree at _____ .

If you want a more academic education you should apply to _____ .

American students seldom pay all the tuition out of their pockets – instead, they _____ .

3. Explain the meaning of the following sentences.

The American university system is largely decentralized.

Non-accredited institutions may be termed diploma mills.

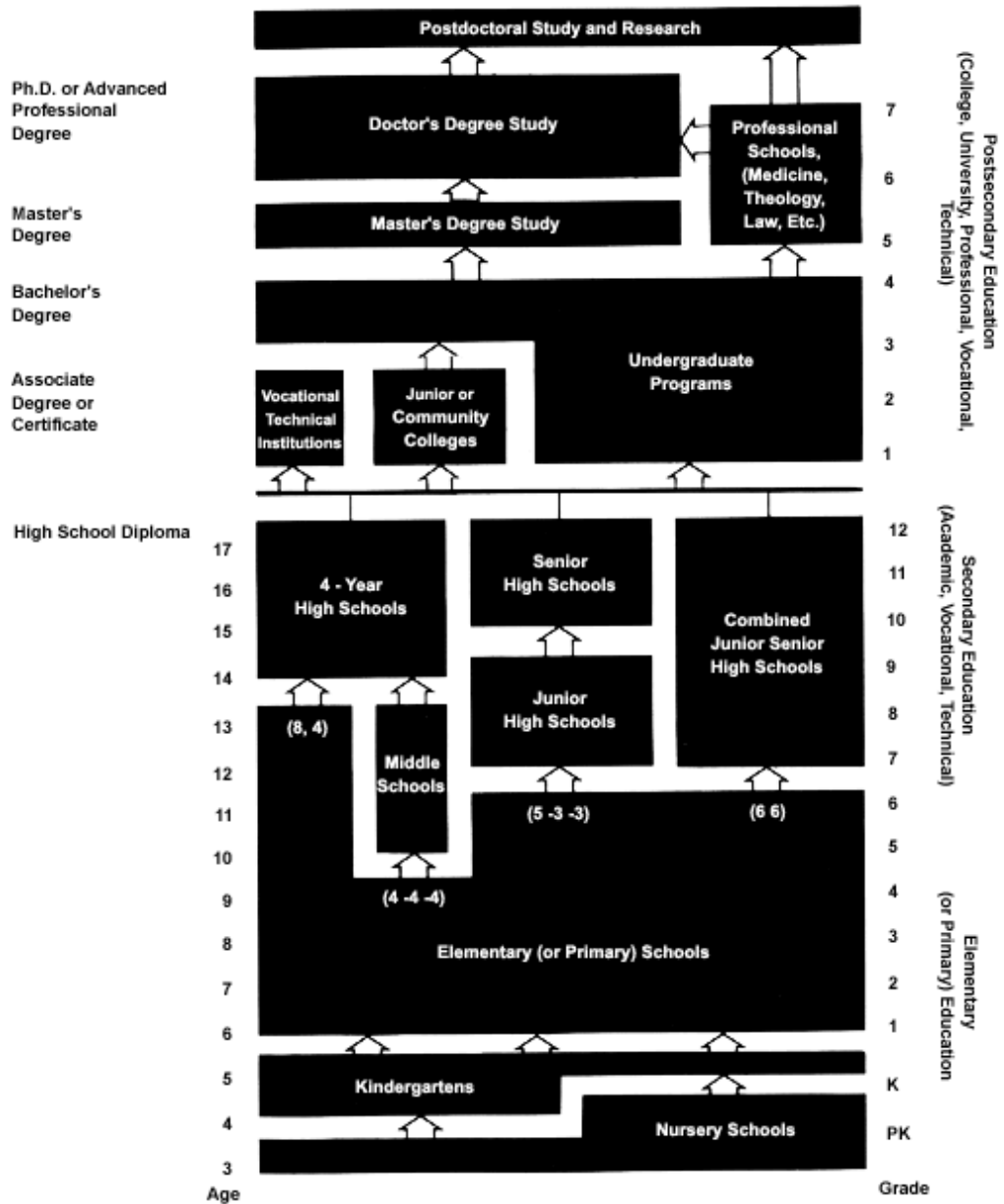
The federal government does not directly regulate universities.

Each state supports at least one state university, and several support many more.

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Some students, rather than being rejected, are "wait-listed" for a particular college.

4. Look at the chart and make a short presentation about higher education in the United States.



Read what Vicky Smith, a 4-year chemistry student of Oxford University, recalls about her entering the university and her present impressions and plans.

My chemistry teacher encouraged me to apply to Oxford; he told me I'd regret it for the rest of my life if I didn't give it a try. I never thought I'd get accepted and I had a genuine fear of rejection. There is a stigma attached to Oxford that suggests only public school applicants will gain admission. With this in mind, I was concerned that I'd have difficulty making friends and fitting in. I soon found out that my worries were unjustified.

I made an open application and was called for an interview at St.Hilda's. I just had one interview with tutors from my three subject areas followed by an encouraging meeting with the Principal. The questions were designed to make you think and respond - they certainly weren't text-book style. I was impressed by the friendliness of the College and by Oxford as a city.

St.Hilda's is an all-women college, but classes and practical groups are mixed so I have made friends with people from other colleges and have a varied social life.

I sat my finals last year and was awarded a First. When I finish my thesis this year, I hope to stay on at Oxford and study for a Dphil at Balliol.

What did Vicky feel about applying to Oxford University? What was she afraid of?

Why did she think she would have difficulty making friends and fitting in?

What does she mean by words "I made an open application"?

What were Vicky's impressions of the interview before the admission?

What kind of college is St.Hilda's?

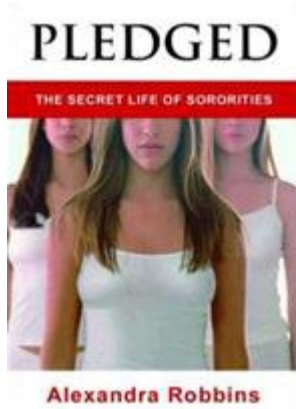
What do the words "classes and practical groups are mixed" mean?

What does Vicky mean by "a varied social life"?

What is Vicky doing at present? What are her plans for the future?

Compare Vicky's impressions of her four years at college with your impressions of your student years. Work in pairs and interview your partner to find out: what he/she remembers about entering the university; whether he/she had any fears, problems in the first year; what he/she appreciates about the university and what he/she dislikes; his/her plans for the future.

“Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities”



How do you choose a college? Academics? Location? Class size? Some girls will map out their entire college career based on the sorority they want to join, says Alexandra Robbins, author of “Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities” (Hyperion).

In her book, Robbins goes undercover at a college she calls “State U.” during the 2002-2003 school year to find out whether the stereotypes—binge drinking, drug use, eating disorders and promiscuity—are true. Because many of the myths turn out to be more than accurate, Robbins refuses to identify the university and the two sororities to protect the identity of the four girls she shadows (who agreed to participate in the book). She did manage to spill a few beans to NEWSWEEK’s Vanessa Juarez about what she witnessed. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: Why did you go undercover?

Alexandra Robbins: Originally I was openly going to be a re-porter in a house on a specific campus. I had been to some meetings, and I had start-ed to bond with these girls. Then one day, the adviser of the sorority sat me down and she said something like “I can’t let you be here unless the national office allows you, and I really don’t think they’re going to.” And then she said, and I’ll nev-er forget this: “And if they do let you in, I simply cannot allow you to write about the drugs.” I called the national office, and it turned out that the 26 national Panhellenic sororities had instituted a media blackout because they were upset with the MTV show “Sorority Life.” It turned out that the only way to get behind the scenes in a sorority house was to fly under the radar.

Why these sororities and girls? Did you do any other reporting?

Well, I choose Vicki, Sabrina, Caitlin and Amy because they’re sweet, smart, friendly girls who could be the girl next door. I wanted “Pledged” readers to see that most of the girls, as individuals, are good people who we’d think of as normal, instead of a caricature. I also spoke to and I visited hundreds of other sorority sisters across the country. I wanted to get an as broad and as diverse an experience as possible if this was really going to be a book that really investigated sorority life.

What kinds of things did you witness?

I really hadn’t expected to find the level of “Animal House” campiness that I did in some groups. They had a tradition called boob ranking where pledges had just a lim-ited amount of time to strip off their shirt and bras to examine each other topless so that by the time the clock was up, they were basically lined up in order of chest size in order of the sisters to inspect. Some sorori-ties hold what they call “naked parties,” during which after a few drinks sisters and pledges strip off their clothes and basically run around the house naked, some of them hooking up with each other before they let the boys in.

Isn’t there a constant emphasis on boys?

From the mixers to the formals to the homecomings to fraternity parties—there’s frequently a race to get dates from a limited pool of acceptable fraternity guys. And white sororities are so centered on relationships with their ceremonies and rituals and songs to celebrate specific relationship mile-stones. By comparison, in at least one white sorority, the award for getting the

highest GPA was a bag of potato chips. And you have to wonder what's the point of a girls-only organization if it revolves around men.

Would you say binge drinking, eating disorders, promiscuity happen at most sororities?

I probably wouldn't be able to make that statement comfortably because I didn't visit the majority of sororities across the country. All those things are prevalent enough to be of concern. But certainly, there are some wonderful sororities out there. I want to make clear that "Pledged" is not anti-sorority.

But if you had a daughter, would you let her join a sorority?

Not until sororities make some broad changes. I think sororities have the potential to be so much more than they are, but the national offices are so concerned with things like money and image that they've lost touch with the girls as individuals. I think if they wiped out the idea of pledging, didn't force girls to live in a house together and really overhauled the rush process then I'd be much more likely to happily let a girl in. Some parents take sororities so seriously that they hire rush consultants, which are kind of like pageant consultants to guide their girls through rush.

Questions for final discussion on higher education:

1. Comment on the following statement: Education is what survives when what has been learnt has been forgotten.
2. What do you think education is, inputting the information or allowing young minds to explore?
3. Tradition and innovation: can they go hand in hand?
4. What are the responsibilities of the state as regards educating people?
5. What are the main functions of universities?
6. Should there be any choice in education?
7. Paid higher education in Ukraine: pluses and minuses.
8. Equal opportunities in education: myth or reality?
9. What makes a good university?
10. How would you improve Ukraine's higher education system? What would you borrow from the United States or UK?