



USA TODAY:

A User's Guide to US-Style Education Systems

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OVERVIEW

- Features of US-style systems
- Key assessment criteria
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- SAT + ACT
- Financial aid for US citizens



What are “*US-style schools*”?

- Public or private schools in the USA
- Charter schools throughout the US
(independent, alternative)
- American schools overseas
- Schools accredited by the US which offer US diplomas



Key Differences CAN & US systems

- Grade distribution/grade scales
- “Weighted” GPAs
- Reliance on external exams (SAT, ACT)
- Importance of essay, recommendations etc in “process”
- Admission selective & subjective at most private colleges



“Selecting the Class”: Boston College

- Demanding college prep program (including honours or AP courses)
- Top 10 per cent of graduating class
- Strong test scores (1900 + for SAT)
- “Soft” characteristics like curiosity, strength of character, creativity, as demonstrated through recommendation letters & personal essays
- Diversity plays key role

Source: www.bc.edu



Isn't an "A" always an "A"?

- Schools determine their own GPA/grading scale
- Huge variance (F can be 70 %)
- Some schools "weight" for IB/AP
- Inflation a challenge in both public & private schools



What kind of school is this?

- **Profile** key to understanding transcript
- Look for **accreditation** info
- Understand **grading scale**
- Check for “**weighted**” scores
- **Re-calculate GPA** if necessary



How to cut through the ranking

- Use as supplement to GPA to establish benchmarks
- In general, try to compare to comparable Ontario pool (ie. top third or half of class, etc)
- Some schools use distribution charts & percentile



What's all this paper?

- US-style students are used to submitting personal essays, letters of recommendation, etc as part of the process
- Most CAD universities disregard; may be helpful for borderline or special needs applicants



Understanding Advanced Placement (AP)

- Oldest “enrichment” program in US
- 37 courses in 22 subjects
- Grading scale 1-5
- Coordinated through school or taken independently
- Most CAD universities offer transfer credit for scores ranging from 3-5; may be limit on credit offered

Source: www.collegeboard.com



Standardized Tests

- Key component to admissions process in US; less important here
- Can provide reassurance in face of grade variability
- SAT and ACT are both commonly used: scores can be sent direct or copied into student transcript



What the heck is an “SAT”?

SAT I (Reasoning)

- Combines 3 tests (math, reading, writing)
- Each scored between 200-800 for total maximum 2400
- Required by many CAD universities

SAT II (Subject)

- Written in specific subject areas
- Scored same as SAT I
- May be useful to determine base level knowledge (eg. for engineering programs)

Source: www.collegeboard.com



And what about “ACT”?

- Standardized tests in English, math, reading, science
- Scored from 1-36; students are given a *composite* score on 36
- Becoming more popular because of cost, accessibility

Source: www.act.org



Funding for American students

- American students not eligible for OSAP or Canada student loans
- Canadian universities accredited by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) as eligible institutions for the HOPE Scholarship and Lifetime Learning tax credits, and the Student Financial Assistance Programs (FAFSA, including Stafford Loans).
- To confirm a certain university's eligibility, search for its [Federal School Code](#) on-line.

Source: www.fafsa.edu.gov



Additional Resources

Accreditation by Region

Middle States www.msche.org

New England www.neasc.org

North Central www.ncacasi.org

Northwest www.boisestate.edu/naas

Southern www.sacs.org

Western www.wascweb.org

Advanced Placement

www.collegeboard.com

ACT

www.act.org

FAFSA

www.fafsa.edu.gov

SAT Scores

www.collegeboard.com



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