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Education

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AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIPS

A guide for learners,
parents and carers
For entry in 2025



Established by



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Foreword

Welcome to the guide to American Scholarships. The purpose of this booklet is to offer practical and independent advice to current and former CCO learners who are considering taking up a soccer scholarship to study in The United States of America.

In recent seasons, a growing number of learners have taken advantage of the opportunity to start scholarships in America.

This booklet is designed to help you understand the background and process involved in obtaining a scholarship. It should also help you evaluate whether this is the right option for you.

LFE is aware that the eligibility criteria regularly changes which can sometimes cause difficulty for players to access this opportunity. However, we are seeing a consistently high number of learners making the transition and you can consider this option as a realistic possibility.

We hope this booklet provides you with much of the information that will assist you in pursuing your ambition to start university life in the USA. If you require any further guidance, please feel free to contact our Transition Officer on 01772 503422.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Stephen".

Sarah Stephen
Chief Executive

Soccer Scholarship Journey



1 Eligibility Check

It is important to understand whether you are eligible to study and compete at USA university level before you take any of the below steps. Read the 'Eligibility' section on page 8 in this guide and/or call LFE's Transition team on 01772 326875.

2 Research

Investigate which universities and colleges offer Men's & Women's Soccer at Varsity level at www.ncaa.org, www.naia.org and www.njcaa.org

Then check out who offers scholarships in Men's Soccer by visiting individual university and college athletic department web pages.

3 USA University Entrance Exam

Register for and sit the SAT or ACT Test. Remember to take advantage of the tips and test preparation information available via www.collegeboard.org, www.act.org and www.fulbright.org.uk

4 Making your Selection

Obtain contact details for coaches at universities and colleges which offer soccer scholarships and match this list against institutions that you feel can help you fulfil your academic and personal aspirations. Then draw up your shortlist, i.e. make sure that the institutions to which you are going to apply offer a course you will want to major in.

5 Highlighting your talent

Contact coaches on your shortlist and send out your CV and covering letter that explains both your academic and soccer playing abilities in terms that they understand.

6 Using the Web for your advantage

Individualise and strengthen your CV by offering coaches access to footage of you in action.

7 Initial Eligibility Clearing House (IECH)

Register with the appropriate IECH i.e. NCAA, NAIA to show prospective colleges/universities that you are eligible to study at their institution.

8 Visa

Once you have been offered a place your college/university will issue you with an I-20 form (The document you need to apply for is an F-1 student visa) and guidance on applying for a Visa.

9 Your new Journey begins

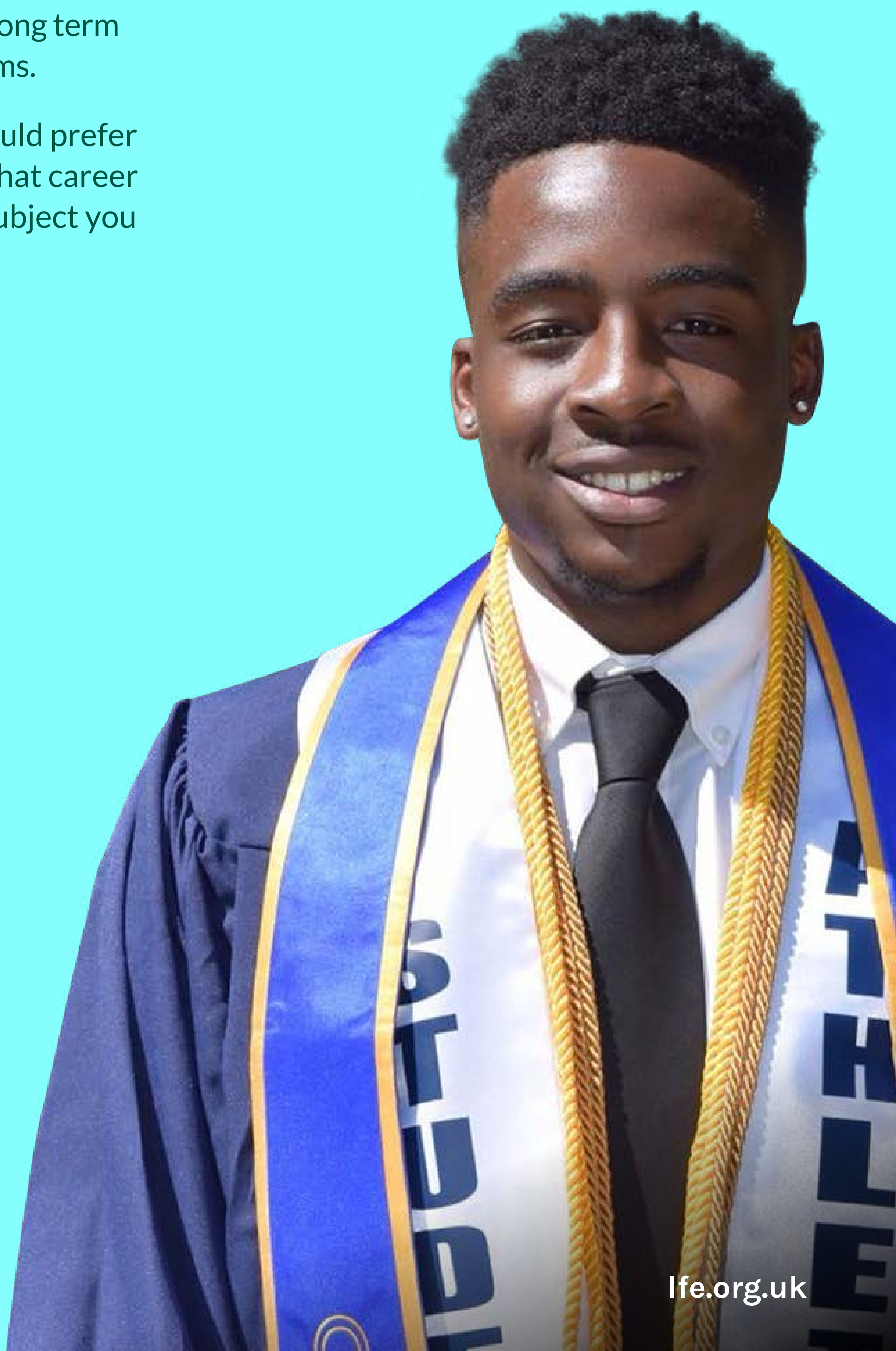
Once your Visa application has been approved book your flights and head across the pond to start your new life as a scholar in the United States.

Studying in the USA

Thinking about studying for a degree in the USA?

This process in itself can be quite exciting as well as daunting. If you are considering going to university and playing football in the USA, it is important to explore the cultural differences that you may encounter and how studying in the USA fits within your long term personal development and career aims.

When deciding what degree you would prefer to do, take the opportunity to see what career possibilities could follow from the subject you are interested in.



Studying in the USA

Why study in the USA?

1 Choose from the wide range of universities on offer

There are over 4,500 US universities offering undergraduate degrees.

2 Take advantage of funding opportunities

Many students are able to fund their studies through scholarships from USA universities and external funding bodies. Scholarships can be offered on merit, financial need and extracurricular achievement but you will most likely be seeking a scholarship which will be offered in recognition of your ability to play soccer.

3 Experience American college life

USA universities are known for their vibrant campus life, marked by a plethora of opportunities for students to get involved on campus and in the community. There are literally hundreds of student organisations, athletic and campus events that allow students to pursue their interests in the arts, sport, leadership, voluntary service and more, all whilst getting their college degree.

4 Have the flexibility to explore your academic interests

Generally speaking, the undergraduate curriculum in the USA is quite flexible. It is perfectly acceptable to be undecided about your major or field of study when applying to university.

USA universities teach under what is called the 'liberal arts philosophy'. This means students take classes from a variety of subjects during the first 1–2 years of university study before specialising in their major field. Students also have the option to complete a 'double major', degrees in two academic fields, which are often completed within the normal four years of study. Students may also earn a minor qualification, which is awarded upon completing 3–5 classes in one field.

5 Internationalise and strengthen your CV

When the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) surveyed 230 major UK recruiters, 65% of employers favoured applicants with overseas work experience. International students in the US have the opportunity to gain work experience during their studies and to work in the US for up to one year after graduation on the Optional Practical Training scheme.

6 Travel in the US and learn about another culture

The USA spans six time zones and has a great diversity in geography and culture. Long university summer holidays and programmes organised by the international students office, such as holiday trips and host family schemes, offer students a great opportunity to see the USA.

Studying in the USA



What course should I choose?

At university in the USA, your 'major' is the main academic subject that you will study on your degree. It is your field of specialisation during your undergraduate studies. You will also be required to study a core curriculum. Therefore, unlike the UK system in your first year (Freshman) you will be required to study a compulsory core curriculum, which may include Mathematics, Science, English, History, Logic and Philosophy, but which also allows you to choose electives in subjects that interest you. This is also your chance to take introductory courses in what you hope will become your main subject of study (known as your major).

In your second year as a Sophomore, you will complete the core curriculum and advance in some subjects to the next level. At this point if you have decided on a major subject you may begin taking classes specific to that subject. However, you are not required to formally declare a major until your third (Junior) year. Your third year or Junior year should see you commence the advanced coursework for your major, which will see you build up to your fourth (Senior) year where you will complete your undergraduate study and take your final exams.

Eligibility

Are you eligible to study in the USA?

Athletic associations govern college sports and set rules regarding scholarships and athletic recruitment. There are a number of associations that colleges or universities can join, most notably:



National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

There are over 1200 member universities and colleges classified within three NCAA divisions (Divisions I and II being the most competitive). Athletic standards are high and the level of competition is intense. Only students with the very highest standard of ability tend to be recruited. (www.ncaa.org)



National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)

There are around 350, mostly smaller colleges in the NAIA, organised by districts. Many NAIA colleges have excellent sports programmes and may offer some sports scholarships. The level of athletic ability is still high, although the standard is not set as high as for NCAA Division I teams. (www.naia.org)



National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)

Member colleges are accredited two-year institutions. The NJCAA is comprised of two divisions. Division I colleges may offer full scholarships, whereas Division III do not offer scholarships. (www.njcaa.org)

Junior colleges act as a good entry point to the USA collegiate system. They can help players without sufficient grades to study in the USA prior to gaining entry to a NCAA/NAIA school.

Students hoping to be considered for a sports scholarship must meet normal university/college entrance requirements (published on the university admissions page) and continue to obtain satisfactory grades at university in order to receive and retain their scholarships. As a guideline, various sporting authorities have set their own minimum academic requirements for competing students.

Eligibility

Admissions Criteria

As a general rule, USA universities will expect to see a similar type of qualification and results as British universities of a similar level of prestige and competitiveness.

As a minimum requirement for four-year Bachelor's degrees, you should have completed at least five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above (or five Scottish Standard Grades), including English and Maths, plus be completing or have completed a post age 16 qualification.

A small number of high ranking academic universities will require A-Levels for entry. Students aspiring to very high academic universities are recommended to research their individual requirements.

Certain universities in the states will prefer those that have completed their extended diploma.



Eligibility

Academic Performance

Your academic abilities will be evaluated in the first instance by your GCSE results and or your predicted A-Level/BTEC results.

However, your academic aptitude will also be assessed through your performance on admissions tests. Admissions tests are used as a common denominator to compare applications from different US states (there is no national curriculum) and different countries.

The stronger your academic record inside the classroom and on standardised tests, the stronger your chances of admission. If you have done particularly well in your previous study, you may be awarded advanced standing by the USA university you attend. However, academic achievements alone will not guarantee entrance to competitive USA university programmes.

Unfortunately, there is not an official grade conversion between USA and UK marks. Instead, USA university admissions officers either evaluate international credentials internally or require that students use an external credential evaluator. On the right-hand side is a chart displaying approximate grade conversions that may be useful in determining competitiveness for admission and funding.

USA universities may use this Grade Point Average to help them form an opinion of an applicant's academic strength. Please note, if you are applying to go to the USA, Fulbright does not recommend converting your UK grades in to USA scores on your application. Your UK results should be submitted in their original format.

GCSEs and A-Level Results Converter

UK Numerical Grade	US Letter Grade	US Grade Point Average
7, 8, 9	A	4.0
5 or 6	B	3.0
4	C	2.0
1, 2 or 3	D	0

Eligibility



National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

- Five or more core academic subject passes at GCSE grades 9-4 or Scottish Standard grades 1-6, including maths, English, science and social studies (history, geography etc.) with an overall average of grade 5.
- The NCAA applies a sliding scale for the minimum SAT scores that are required for acceptance to NCAA Division I colleges. This will depend on your average academic grade. The higher your average academic grade is, the lower the minimum SAT score required.



National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)

A '4' grade average overall in GCSE subjects, Scottish Standards, or an alternative qualification, such as Level 2 Diploma, if the school authorities can confirm your marks were in the 'Top Half' of the class.

You should aim for a minimum score of 18 on the ACT or 970 on the SAT to compete at a NAIA institution.

If you take the SAT more than once, scores cannot be combined. Colleges will only look at your highest test score.



National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)

Talented individuals who do not qualify for either of the above may be able to gain admission to a junior college. Each college will set its own entrance requirements.

NJCAA colleges in general do not have a minimum passing score for the SAT although individual colleges may set one.

Once enrolled at an NJCAA institution, athletes must maintain a 2.0 GPA to stay eligible.

Entry Requirements

Overview – The SAT Test

The SAT Test, also known as SAT Reasoning Test, is a standardised test for college admissions in the USA. The SAT is owned, published, and developed by the College Board, a non-profit organisation in the USA. The College Board claims the test can assess a student's readiness for college.

The current SAT test consists of two main sections (Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing), whilst there is also an optional essay which a small number of universities may also require.

The cost to register for the SAT Reasoning Test is \$111 including essay.

To register an account and book your seat for a test please visit www.collegeboard.org

Please note: Testing of English as a second language may also be required for apprentices who do not consider English to be their first language. In addition, the test often require candidates to use American spellings, language and grammar.

Overview – The ACT Test

The ACT test is another standardised test for college admissions in the USA. You can undertake this test instead of the SAT if you preferred, as both are equally reputable.

The cost to register for the ACT Test is \$171.50.

To book onto an ACT Test, or to learn more about the ACT, please visit www.act.org

Study Material

www.khanacademy.org

is the college board recommended study material.



Entry Requirements

SAT and ACT Dates

SAT and ACT Reasoning Tests are run at a variety of centres across the country. There is generally a requirement to pre-register for these tests at least six weeks prior to the test date:

SAT Test Dates:

5th of November 2024

(Register by 22nd October 2024)

7th December 2024

(Register by 26th November 2024)

8th March 2025 (Digital)

(Register by 25th February 2025)

3rd May 2025

(Register by 22nd April 2025)

7th of June 2025

(Register by 16th May 2025)

ACT Test Dates:

26th October 2024

14th December 2024

8th February 2025

5th April 2025

14th June 2025

12th July 2025

SAT Scores

SAT consists of two major sections, with each section receiving a score on the scale of 200-800. This means that your overall SAT score could range between 400-1600 points.

ACT Scores

ACT consists of two major sections. A student's composite ACT score is the average of the student's scaled scores in four multiple-choice test sections, with 36 being the highest possible score, while the writing test score ranges from 1 to 36.

It is possible to register for the SAT or ACT Tests after the registration deadlines have passed. Specific terms can be found on the SAT/ACT website.

Sports Scholarships

Overview

The process by which you could be considered for a sport scholarship can be a lengthy and complicated one. Unlike academic scholarships where you would simply submit an application indicating an interest in receiving funding to study at a university, students must engage in a highly-regulated recruitment process (please see below for further details).

Sport scholarships are granted by the university or athletics association in which a university participates with athletic directors or coaches playing a central role in decision making.

Scholarships can be awarded for a number of different sports, including: American Football, Athletics, Baseball, Basketball, Rowing, Golf, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Swimming, Tennis and Football or as it is more commonly named in the USA, Soccer.

Scholarships are provided on a yearly basis, generally renewable for four years which is the normal time required to complete a USA undergraduate degree.

If you enter university with transfer credit or advanced standing, you will still be considered a first-year student for sports scholarship purposes.

Award amounts vary and can be anywhere from a few thousand dollars to \$50,000 for one academic year. It is very important to keep in mind that sport scholarships do not necessarily cover the full cost of tuition and maintenance.



Sports Scholarships

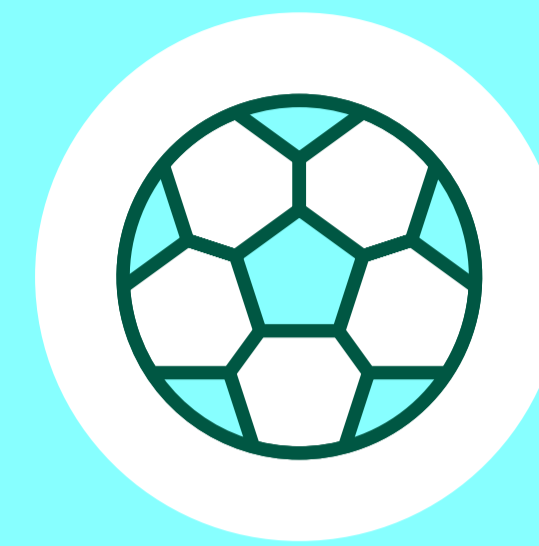
Overview (continued)

Scholarships are often offered on a percentage basis (i.e. a 75% scholarship will cover 75% of the total cost of tuition fees for one year), and universities have strict limits on the total amount they can award each year. Therefore, a university may split a small number of large awards into a larger number of lesser-value awards. For example, a university that has three 100% scholarships to offer per year may split them up to award six 50% scholarships to twice the number of student-athletes.

Importantly, whilst playing for a college team a scholarship can pay for the cost of earning an undergraduate degree, you do not attend university solely to play your sport. Students with sports scholarships must be working toward an undergraduate degree (in any field offered by the university).

There are a wide range of courses available, including those with a sport focus, such as exercise science, physical therapy, administration, marketing, etc. For more information about choosing, applying for and other funding opportunities related to USA universities, please visit www.fulbright.org.uk or www.khanacademy.org

High school student-athletes in the USA are somewhat at an advantage to international students hoping to obtain a sport scholarship as they will have had some level of exposure to college and university coaches at local, regional and national competitions.



For more information on funding options, please visit Undergraduate Study in the USA - Finances section on www.fulbright.org.uk or www.khanacademy.org

Coupled with the fact that their coaches may have contacts within university programmes and university scouts may be tracking their progress in the news or at competitions, engaging in the recruitment process to pursue their sport at the collegiate level can be somewhat more straightforward, and will certainly start earlier, than for an international athlete.

However, every year talented international students are successful in receiving scholarships in a variety of sports at a wide range of USA universities every year. The important thing to remember is, whichever avenue you choose to take in the recruitment process, is that the earlier you start and the more time you put in, the more likely you are to achieve your goal.

Sports Scholarships

How to get a Scholarship

The DIY Scholarship

Although it may be preferable to receive expert support when seeking a USA Scholarship, the 'do-it-yourself' approach is a viable option. To get started, you may wish to follow the steps outlined below:

- 1** Visit the NCAA website (www.ncaa.org), or one of the other athletic associations mentioned earlier, to view both the list of universities offering your sport at the varsity level and the eligibility rules for being considered for a sport scholarship at their member universities. Determine whether you meet the eligibility criteria and make a list of universities to consider.
- 2** After identifying which universities offer your sport, you should then do some research into whether or not that institution provides scholarships for athletes and what the criteria for selection are, both of which should be readily available on the athletic department's webpage for each university. At this point, it is also very important to do some research into the qualifications and reputation of each coach as you want to ensure that you will be well-supported and receive good training within your sport during your four years at university.

You may also wish to consider other factors that are important in choosing a university to help narrow down your list.



Sports Scholarships

The DIY Scholarship (continued)

- 3 Compile a list of contact information for the coaches at each university in which you are interested.
- 4 Draft a CV that includes, academic, personal and football accomplishments. Be sure to include teams played for, number of years, tournament/league results and or records held. **You can request a template of this type of CV from LFE's Anthony Cato via email: acato@lfe.org.uk**
- 5 Write a letter/personal statement to the relevant coach at each institution that explains both your academic and athletic abilities in terms that can be identified by him or her (this is where the CV comes in as an easy reference tool for athletic accomplishments).
- 6 You may want to include a link to online video footage and a reference from a current or former coach in your correspondence with university coaches. (Make sure to provide the name and status of the coach providing the reference in your cover letter).
- 7 Register with the appropriate Eligibility Center. This is an agency that provides initial eligibility certification for prospective athletes, but is not a placement agency. It provides initial eligibility certification results to colleges/universities that request the information.

For any further information, advice and guidance regarding eligibility and the process in general, please contact LFE Transition Officer acato@lfe.org.uk

Sports Scholarships

The DIY Scholarship (continued)

- 8 With luck, you should receive responses from universities within a few weeks. Some may invite you to submit a video of you participating in your sport, others may send a recruiter to see you in action for your club or invite you to visit their university.
- 9 Receiving notice of a coach's interest in you is a great start, but you still need to apply for admissions to the university through the same channels as other students. So you will need to register for and sit the SAT exam, as well as submit all required application materials by the deadlines set by each institution.
- 10 Throughout the process, keep in mind that students who are interested in pursuing sport at the varsity level in university should focus on the recruiting process towards becoming a university athlete rather than a quest for funding through a sports scholarship. Sports scholarships are often offered only late in the recruiting process.

This includes the Ivy League and all NCAA Division III universities. Additionally, because receiving a sport scholarship is extremely competitive, you will also want to look into other sources of funding and have fall back options for your undergraduate education, should you not receive a scholarship from the universities you've selected, or choose to attend a university that cannot offer a sport scholarship.

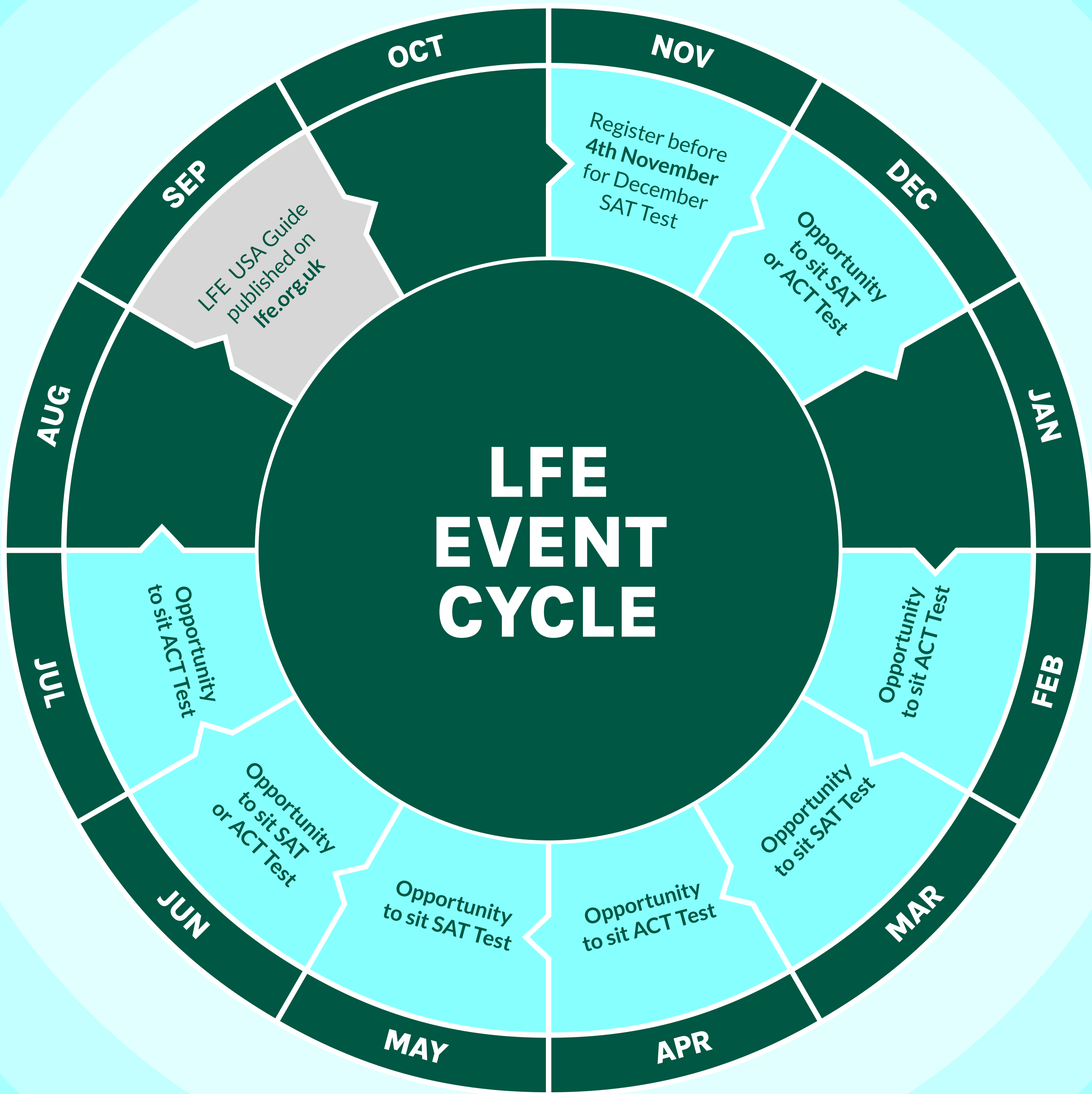
Sports Scholarship Agencies

The second option is to work with a sport scholarship agency or placement service to connect with US universities actively seeking international student athletes and offering scholarships. These organisations will charge a fee for their assistance, but generally offer a comprehensive service that can make navigating the often complicated recruitment process clearer.

Students that choose to use an agency typically view paying their fee as an investment in their expertise and university contacts. However, this does not always guarantee a scholarship offer.

Other additional costs and things to consider are:

- international medical insurance
- travel and accommodation costs
- tuition fees and the level of scholarship offered
- your eligibility
- which institution you are offered a place at
- USA Visa



Useful Contacts

College Board

www.collegeboard.org

Provides information tips on dates and fees, online registration, SAT test preparation etc.

The ACT

www.actstudent.org

An alternative to the SAT test.

NCAA Eligibility Center

www.eligibilitycenter.org

This agency provides initial eligibility certification for prospective NCAA athletes. It provides initial eligibility certification results to colleges/universities that request the information.

NAIA Eligibility Center

www.playnaia.org



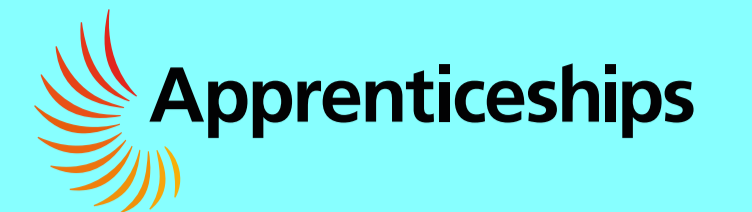
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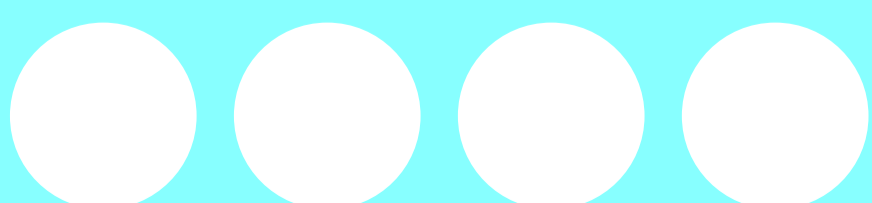
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