

Setting Entrance Requirements: Comparison of State Higher Education Systems

Eligibility

The concept and implementation of “eligibility” make the University of California unique among major public university systems in the United States. No other state system has an eligibility construct that establishes the University’s academic standards and makes admission available to every student in the state who meets those standards. Most states have either statewide/systemwide minimum eligibility standards or standards that guarantee systemwide admission. No other system has a single eligibility standard that serves both purposes.

Along similar lines, the UC eligibility *pool* is also unique in being defined as a proportion of high school graduates. Other states’ minimum statewide/systemwide standards are explicitly based on levels of adequate preparation and/or probability of student success.

Because the measurement of adequate preparation is the central component in setting standards and reviewing student preparation, the importance of the mechanism by which admission occurs cannot be overstated. There is considerable variation between systems in the degree to which there is central coordination of admissions processes. Unlike the University of California, many systems do not allow students to apply to multiple campuses with a single system application and, thus, do not accommodate student preferences or offer referral to non-admitted students. In practice, guarantees of systemwide admission for eligible students may mean little in systems with little or no systemwide admissions coordination.

A summary of statewide admission requirements is attached. It shows that across the country, state systems use similar criteria and metrics to determine minimum standards or systemwide admission guarantee standards. They are usually defined in terms of required high school coursework, a minimum GPA, and, to a lesser extent, class rank. In addition, 19 state systems also seem to rely on an index or sliding scale that is composed of several metrics – ACT/SAT scores, GPA, and/or class rank. Of these 19, 10 systems report that as a result of statewide policy, minimum requirements vary by the selectivity level of the institutions within and across the university systems.

Selection

Large state university systems typically use two-tiered selection systems in which a portion of students are admitted based on academic index score alone and the remainder are admitted through some combination of index and comprehensive assessment. In the latter, guidelines for readers, rather than deterministic scoring schemes, are usually used in considering non-academic factors. (A more comprehensive discussion on selection will be forthcoming in future Study Group briefing materials.)

Summary of Statewide College Admission Requirements

Source: ACT and State Higher Education Executive Officers, 1998*

	High School Coursework Units	Minimum ACT/SAT Test Scores	Minimum GPA	Minimum Class Rank	Eligibility Index, Sliding Scale, or Other Options Based on ACT/SAT, GPA, and/or Class Rank
Arizona	X				X
University of California / California State University	X ¹		X ¹		X ¹
Colorado					X ¹
Florida	X		X		X
Georgia	X		X		X ²
Idaho	X				X
Illinois	X				
Iowa	X ¹			X	
Kansas	X				X
Kentucky	X				
Maryland	X		X ¹		
Massachusetts	X		X ¹		X
Minn State Colleges & Univ	X	X		X	
Mississippi	X				X
Missouri	X				X ¹
Montana					X ¹
University of Nebraska	X				X
Nevada	X		X		
City University of New York	X				X ¹
North Carolina	X				

	High School Coursework Units	Minimum ACT/SAT Test Scores	Minimum GPA	Minimum Class Rank	Eligibility Index, Sliding Scale, or Other Options Based on ACT/SAT, GPA, and/or Class Rank
North Dakota	X				
Ohio (recommended)	X ³				
Oklahoma	X				X ¹
Oregon	X		X ¹		
Rhode Island	X				X ¹
South Carolina	X				X ¹
South Dakota	X				X
Tennessee	X				
Texas				X ⁴	
Utah	X ¹				X ¹
Virginia (recommended)	X ⁵				
Washington	X				X ¹
West Virginia	X	X	X		
Wisconsin	X				

¹ According to statewide policy, minimum requirements or cutoff points vary by system/institutional selectivity level. In the case of UC, courses must be approved by the University.

² Beginning 2001, a Freshman Index will be used, with minimum requirements varying by sector.

³ In 1981 the Ohio Board of Regents developed a college preparatory curriculum, which it recommended that institutions adopt for unconditional college admission. Institutions have done so voluntarily, but remain autonomous, strictly speaking, and there are no statewide *requirements*.

⁴ In response to *Hopwood v. Texas*, which banned racial preferences in college admissions, the Texas legislature passed a law in 1997 stating universities *must* admit all students in the top 10 percent of their graduating class and *may* extend automatic admission to students who graduated in the top 25 percent of their class.

⁵ There are no statewide *requirements*, but in 1983 the State Council for Higher Education developed a 23-unit "advanced studies high school diploma" *recommended* for college-bound students.

**Summary of Coursework Required for Admission
(Expressed as One-year Carnegie Units)**

Source: ACT and State Higher Education Executive Officers, 1998*

	English	Math	Science	Social Science	Foreign Language	Other/Electives	Total Units
Arizona ¹	4	4	3	2	2	1 fine arts	16
Univ of Calif ²	4	3	2	2	2	2 electives	15
Calif State Univ ²	4	3	1	1	2	1 visual/ performing arts; 3 electives	15
Florida	4	3	3	3	2	4 electives	19
Georgia	4	3	3	3	2		15
Idaho	4	3	3	2 1/2	1	1 1/2 electives	15
Illinois	4	3	3	3		2 electives	12-15
Iowa	4	3	3	2-3	0-2		12-15
Kansas	4	3	3	3		1 computer science	14
Kentucky	4	3	2	2		1 health/PE; 8 electives	20
Maryland	4	3	3	3		2 foreign language or advanced technology; 6 electives	21
Massachusetts	4	3	3	2	2	2 electives	16
Minn State Colleges and Univ	4	3	3	3	2		15
Mississippi	4	3	3	3		1/2 computer applications; 1 foreign language or world geography; 1 other elective	15 1/2
Missouri	4	3	2	3	[2] ³	1 visual/ performing arts; 3 electives	16
Univ of Nebraska	4	3	3	3	2	1 elective	16
Nevada	4	3	3	3		1/2 computer science	13 1/2
City Univ of NY	4	3	2	4	2	1 fine/visual/perf arts	163
North Carolina	4	3	3	2			12
North Dakota	4	3	3	3	[2] ³		13

	English	Math	Science	Social Science	Foreign Language	Other/Electives	Total Units
Ohio ⁵	4	3	3	3	3		16
Oklahoma	4	3	2	3	3		15
Oregon	4	3	2	3	2		14
Rhode Island	4	3	2	2	2	1/2 computer science	13 1/2
South Carolina	4	3	2	3	2	1 PE or ROTC; 1 elective	16
South Dakota ⁶	4	3	3	3		1/2 fine arts	13 1/2
Tennessee	4	3	2	2	2	1 visual/performing arts	14
Utah	4	3	3	1	2	4 electives	17
Virginia ⁷	4	3	3	3	3	1 fine/practical arts; 2 health/PE; 4 electives	23
Washington	4	3	2	3	2	1 elective	15
West Virginia	4	2	2	3			11
Wisconsin	4	3	3	3		4 electives	17

¹ Alternatives to high school coursework have been developed for each subject area, based on minimum scores on specified ACT or SAT tests or on specified courses taken at accredited institutions of higher education.

² Note that in California curricular content for campuses must be approved by UC in advance; only UC-approved preparatory courses can be counted.

³ Strongly recommended, but not required.

⁴ Currently only 10 units are *required* for admission to senior colleges in CUNY, and the 16 units described here are *recommended*. By 2000, all 16 units will be required.

⁵ The course units listed here describe the college preparatory curriculum developed by the Ohio Board of Regents in 1981; the Board *recommended* that all institutions adopt these as requirements for unconditional college admission, and institutions have done so voluntarily. Institutions remain autonomous, however, and strictly speaking, there are no statewide admission *requirements*.

⁶ Alternatives to high school coursework have been developed for each subject area, based on minimum scores on specified ACT or Advanced Placement tests.

⁷ In 1983 the State Council of Higher Education developed a 23-unit Advanced Studies High School Diploma, which it recommended for college-bound students. There are no statewide requirements.

* Source: Statewide College Admissions, Student Preparation, and Remediation Policies and Programs: Summary of a 1997 SHEEO Survey: Alene Bycer Russell: January 1998