



Application dictionary

Transfer

Academic recommendation

A recommendation submitted by a college academic advisor, professor, dean or instructor who oversees your college academic progress.

Admission plan

An admission plan is the schedule and method by which colleges and universities accept and review applications, and notify applicants of their decisions. Examples of admissions plans include early action, early decision, and regular decision.

Transfer

Adult student

An adult learner (also known as a returning student, adult student, or returning adult) is typically 25 years of age or older, and has delayed their post-secondary education for reasons such as family obligations, work responsibilities, and military service.

First-year

Advisor

A recommender role that lets you share your in-progress application with a trusted individual. Advisors can keep track of your progress, though they don't submit any forms on your behalf.

Application fee

The fee a college charges you to apply to their institution. The amount varies from 1 college to the next. See Fee Waivers.

Transfer

Articulation agreement

Colleges can use articulation agreements to help students with transferring credits. The agreement clarifies which courses will or won't transfer toward their intended major. The goal is to help students graduate on time and reduce the loss of academic credits.

CBO (Community Based Organization)

A not-for-profit college access organization that offers free advising for students.

CEEB code

A unique identification number assigned to high schools and colleges by the College Board. Some international schools may not have an assigned CEEB code.

Citizenship

Your status as a person recognized under the custom or law as being a member of a state or country. Depending on your citizenship status you may be asked to provide additional information.

Coed

Used to describe a college that offers the integrated education of male and female students in the same environment. You can filter by coed colleges in the College Search tab.

Transfer

College report

Collects information about your standing at your current institution. You may need to gather this information from more than 1 official at your institution, such as the advisor, dean, or registrar.

College specific questions

Questions that colleges ask in addition to the information collected in the Common App tab of the application. This includes the start term and admission plan you'd like to apply for.

Common App

The name of our online system used by students to apply to member colleges and universities across the country and around the world.

The name of the non-profit membership organization.

Common App ID (CAID)

A unique 8 digit numeric identifier that colleges use to match your materials with your application. You can find your unique CAID in the top right corner of your account.

Community college

A 2-year post-secondary institution that offers associates degrees. Students that have received their high school diploma or earned a GED can enroll in a community college. Students who earn their associates degree at a community college can transfer to a 4-year college or university to earn their bachelor's degree.

First-year

Counselor

An individual who provides academic, career, and college readiness to all K-12 students through a school counseling program. The counselor is also responsible for submitting your transcripts to colleges.

First-year

Counselor recommendation

A broad-based assessment written by your counselor to address things like your academic, extracurricular, and personal characteristics.

Transfer

Credit evaluation

Colleges review prior academic coursework and, in some cases, prior work, military, internship, or other experiences for credit toward a new degree program. Credit evaluations can be unofficial or official.

CSS Profile

The CSS Profile is required by many private colleges and universities to determine your eligibility for non-government financial aid, which includes grants, loans, and scholarships from a college. Be sure to visit The College Board website for more information.

Deadline

The date by which you must submit your application materials. All deadlines are in your local time zone.

Early action (EA)

An application process to apply and receive a decision earlier than the regular decision notification date. Unlike early decision (ED), EA is “non-binding” and you have no obligation to enroll and will have until May 1 to consider the offer and confirm your enrollment.

Early decision (ED)

A “binding” application process by which you commit to enrolling in a certain college if you’re admitted. You can apply to other colleges, but only apply ED to 1 college. If admitted, you must withdraw your other applications.

Essay

The “personal essay” or “personal statement” within the Common App gives you the chance to tell your story and to show off your writing skills. Not every college requires the essay and you can filter by this requirement in the College Search tab.

Evaluation

A writing prompt that your teachers and non-academic recommenders can use to elaborate on what they think colleges should know about you.

FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is used to determine your eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid. This includes grants, educational loans, and work-study programs. Be sure to visit the FAFSA website for more information.

Fee waivers

A request to the college to remove the application fee. Using either the Common App fee waiver, which your counselor must confirm, or a college-specific fee waiver, you will not be required to pay the fee to submit your application.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that protects your education records. To learn more, visit the U.S. Department of Education.

First-year

Final report

A form submitted by your high school counselor that typically summarizes your academic performance from freshman year to the end of your senior year of high school. The final report is the last form your counselor will submit.

Financial aid

Funding in the form of grants and loans to help you pay for education-related expenses including tuition, room and board, textbooks, and supplies for college. Funding in the form of grants and loans to help you pay for education-related expenses

First-year

You are a first-year applicant if you will be completing high school this academic year or if you have never enrolled at a college or university. Please check with the colleges you applied to see which application type is best for you.

Gap year

A break you take in your formal education, typically between graduating from high school and starting college.

Transfer

Guaranteed admission

Guaranteed admission agreements between colleges can help students transfer with confidence. If a student meets specific academic requirements, they can apply to transfer and the partnering college will automatically accept their application. Guaranteed admission is also sometimes referred to as transfer admission guarantee (TAG), automatic admission, or guaranteed transfer.

GPA (grade point average)

The academic performance measurement calculated based on your grades. Many high schools calculate GPA differently. While you can self-report this information, your counselor will submit official transcripts as part of their forms.

High school

The name used in the United States for a secondary school with students between grades 9–12.

Transfer

High school official recommendation

A recommendation submitted by a high school counselor or school official which also includes a copy of the final high school transcript.

International applicant

Any applicant who is not a US resident is considered an international applicant by the Common App. Colleges might require different information from their international applicants, so be sure to check their website for more information.

Matriculation

The formal process of entering a college or of becoming eligible to enter college by completing certain academic requirements.

Transfer

Mid-term report

Collects information about courses in which you are currently enrolled. Please print the form and follow the instructions provided before mailing to each of your colleges.

First-year

Mid-year report

Submitted by your counselor, this form usually summarizes your academic performance through the middle of your final year of high school.

First-year

Optional report

A “just in case” form that your counselor can submit if they want or need to.

First-year

Other recommender

A type of recommender that lets you invite coaches, employers, etc. to support your application for admission. Be sure to check the college’s Other Recommender requirements.

Transfer

Personal recommendation

A recommendation submitted by someone who can speak to your character and abilities.

Portfolio

A supplemental form used to showcase your special talents in 1 or more subjects. Certain colleges will require a portfolio to complete your application.

Transfer

Prerequisites

A course or program that needs to be completed before you are able to apply to a program.

Transfer

Professional recommendation

A recommendation submitted by an individual you know from a professional experience, like a job or internship.

Transfer

Program

A listing of academic areas or majors that share the same admissions requirements. One college can offer multiple programs in the Common App for transfer.

Recommenders

Individuals you invite to complete assessments to support your application for admission. There are several different types of recommenders you can invite through the Common App. Remember to check each college’s recommendation requirements, since they vary from college to college.

Regular decision (RD)

An application process in which you apply by a specific date and then receive an admission decision within a stated period of time.

Restrictive early action (REA)

Similar to early action, applying for REA requires that you submit your application earlier than regular decision (RD). As a result, you will receive your admission decision earlier than you would receive a RD decision. Additionally colleges place certain restrictions on your applications to other early application processes.

Rolling admission

A decision plan that lets students submit an application at any time throughout the year. Colleges will review applications as they receive them, and make admission decisions throughout the year.

Transfer

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Schools determine whether students are making sufficient grades and are taking enough classes to make satisfactory academic progress toward a degree within a reasonable amount of time. If not, the student may risk losing federal or state financial aid.

First-year

School report

A form submitted by your high school counselor to provide basic information about your academic performance.

Standardized tests

Any form of test that either requires all test takers to answer the same questions in the same way, and that is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner. This makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. Many colleges require you to take and report the results from certain standardized tests.

First-year

Teacher

A type of recommender that has taught you in a specific subject and can speak to your performance in their class.

Transcript

Documentation to prove which courses you’ve taken and the grades you received for those courses. Your counselor will be required to provide an official transcript on your behalf.

Transfer

A transfer student is anyone seeking to continue their college education. Common App for transfer supports a wide range of applicants including community college students, 4-year to 4-year transfers, new and returning adult learners, and veterans and active military members.

Writing supplement

Not required by every college, these are additional writing prompts asked as part of the college specific questions. The Writing Supplement can only be submitted once your application to that college has been submitted.