

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

APPLICATION GUIDE

APPLICATION AT A GLANCE

TEST-OPTIONAL POLICY

USC will remain test-optional for fall, spring and summer terms through 2027. This policy applies to general university admission, the South Carolina Honors College and merit scholarships awarded by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. First-year admission decisions will be based primarily on high school coursework and academic performance. Students may choose whether to have their standardized test scores considered as part of their application.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST (REQUIRED MATERIALS)

- ☐ Completed application (including essay and activities section)
- ☐ Application fee or valid fee waiver for eligible students
- ☐ Unofficial high school transcript
- ☐ Self-reported or official SAT/ACT test scores (if applicable for selected testing plan)

SOUTH CAROLINA HONORS COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST (REQUIRED MATERIALS)

- ☐ Submitted USC application (recommended by the Oct. 15 Early Action deadline)
- ☐ Submitted Honors College application (including essay and activities section)
- ☐ One letter of recommendation
- ☐ Resume (optional, but highly recommended)

IMPORTANT DATES

EARLY ACTION APPLICANTS

October 15	Application deadline
November 1	Credentials deadline*
Mid-December	Decisions released

HONORS COLLEGE APPLICANTS

November 15	Application deadline
December 1	Credentials deadline*
Mid-February	Decisions released

REGULAR DECISION APPLICANTS

December 1	Application deadline
January 15	Credentials deadline*
Mid-March	Decisions released

**Last date to submit any outstanding items listed on your USC Admissions Portal and to change your testing plan.*

REQUIRED COURSES

ENGLISH — 4 UNITS

4 units with strong reading, writing, communicating and research

Recommended that 2 of the 4 units are literature based, including American, British and World literature

College prep English I, II, III and IV meet requirement

MATHEMATICS — 4 UNITS

Algebra I

Algebra II

Geometry

Fourth higher level unit selected among Algebra III, pre-calculus, calculus, probability and statistics, discrete mathematics or computer science

LABORATORY SCIENCE — 3 UNITS

2 units from different fields: biology, chemistry, physics or earth science

1 additional unit from biology, chemistry, physics or earth science or any other laboratory science with biology, chemistry, physics and/or earth science as a prerequisite

SOCIAL STUDIES — 3 UNITS

1 unit U.S. history

½ unit economics

½ unit government

1 unit world history or geography strongly recommended

WORLD LANGUAGE — 2 UNITS

Both units must be same language

FINE ARTS — 1 UNIT

Art appreciation, art history or performance in one of the fine arts

ACADEMIC ELECTIVES — 2 UNITS

2 units of college-preparatory coursework

Computer science with significant programming content recommended

STEP 1

CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT

There are two ways to apply for admission to USC. You should choose the application you are most comfortable submitting. There is no advantage to using one over the other, and there is no separate application for general university merit scholarships.

Common Application

To create your Common Application account, follow the steps in the [Application Guide for First-Year Students](#).

If you choose to complete the Common App, your [USC Admissions Portal](#) login information will be emailed to you 24-48 hours after we receive your application.

USC Application

To create your USC application account, follow these steps:

1. Access the [USC application](#) and select the term in which you expect to start college. Then, click "Start Your App."
2. Select "First-time user" and then enter your email address, name and birth date on the "Register" page. We suggest using an email other than your high school email so you will have access to important messages once you graduate. A temporary, unique PIN will be sent to this email.
3. Enter your temporary PIN and birth date on the "Login" page and create your new secure password on the "Set Password" page. Make note of your login information as you will need it to access your [USC Admissions Portal](#) and view your admission decision.
4. Click "Start New Application" and then "Create Application" and "Open Application" to begin.

Once you start your application, you can update it as many times as you want and submit it when you're ready.

To continue your application:

1. Access the [USC application](#) and click "27-28 Freshman" under "Your Applications."
2. Click "Open Application." Your application will appear on the page where you last stopped.

STEP 2

PREPARE TO APPLY

☐ Consider your testing plan options

If you're deciding whether to have your SAT or ACT scores considered as part of your application, review the academic profile below. It includes the middle 50% ranges for standardized test scores, high school GPA and class rank for students admitted to the university, Capstone Scholars and the South Carolina Honors College. While these ranges are not minimum requirements or guarantees, they can help you understand how your academic credentials compare to those of last year's incoming class.

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES MIDDLE 50%

	South Carolina Residents	Nonresidents	Capstone Scholars	Honors College
SAT	1170 - 1340	1250 - 1380	1260 - 1410	1410 - 1500
ACT	24 - 31	28 - 33	29 - 33	32 - 35

HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE MIDDLE 50%*

	Freshman Class	Capstone Scholars	Honors College
GPA	4.1 - 4.8	4.6 - 5.0	4.7 - 5.3
Class Rank	8% - 33%	3% - 11%	1% - 4%

* Class rank ranges only include students whose high school provides a ranking.

Students are able to change their testing plan on their [USC Admissions Portal](#) until the [credentials deadline](#) depending on whether you apply Early Action or Regular Decision.

USC superscores both the SAT and ACT (ACT English, Math, and Reading sections only) regardless of when the exam was taken. If you took either test more than once, we will superscore using all tests taken.

STEP 2

PREPARE TO APPLY

☐ Gather your materials

- **Copy of your transcript(s):** Ask for a copy of your high school transcript, or take a clear photo if you only have a paper copy. The transcript must list grades through the end of your junior year, and show your full name and the name of your high school. You may upload documents in PDF or JPG formats. Do not send an official high school transcript unless it is requested.
- **Senior-year and middle school coursework:** You are required to self-report your in-progress senior-year coursework and any middle school courses that qualify as high school credit.
- **A list of activities, work and family responsibilities:** This includes work, volunteering, sports, research, clubs and organizations, arts, taking caring of family members and other activities. If it's important to you, we want to hear about it!
- **Academic honors and achievements:** We want to learn about any areas in which you excel or achievements that are meaningful to you.
- **Parent/Legal guardian information:** This includes parent or guardian contact information, education level and if they attended USC. This information is collected for demographic purposes only.
- **Test Scores:** You will need to compile your SAT/ACT scores if you intend to report them. You will also have an opportunity to report AP/IB/AICE scores in your [USC Admissions Portal](#).

ORGANIZATION TIPS

- Create a digital folder for application materials.
- Save PDFs of your transcript and resume in the folder.
- Keep a running list of activities, honors and awards.
- Gather parent/guardian information before you begin.



STEP 2

PREPARE TO APPLY

☐ Review the essay prompts

Both the USC application and Common App require an essay for one of the prompts below. Use this as an opportunity to tell your story and share more information about yourself in 250-650 words.

- Some students have a background, identity, interest or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story.
- The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Reflect on something someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- Describe a topic, idea or concept you find so engaging it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
- Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt or one of your own design.

There are also two optional questions about extenuating circumstances. Answer these questions if you would like to provide more context for your application. USC cares about impacts to your health and well-being, safety, family circumstance, future plans and education.

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR ESSAY

- Be creative but still make sure your writing is solid.
- Start by preparing early.
- Make it less about the topic and more about you and why that topic is important to you.
- Let your personality and character shine through.
- Imagine how the person reading your essay might feel.
- Don't feel pressured to include every detail of your experience.
- Tell a specific story rather than a generic one (add details and examples).
- Make sure to address how the experience affected you and how it might benefit you in the future.
- Proof it, and then proof it again.



STEP 3

COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

☐ Select your term and plan

Start by selecting the term in which you expect to begin at USC. The majority of freshmen will select the Fall 2027 entry term as a 2027-2028 freshman.

Next, familiarize yourself with our application deadlines and decide if you want to apply by Oct. 15 (Early Action) or Dec. 1 (Regular Decision). The requirements are the same whether you apply Early Action or Regular Decision, and all our admission plans are nonbinding. If you are interested in being considered for the South Carolina Honors College, we recommend applying by the Early Action deadline to give yourself one full month to complete the Honors College application.

Finally, decide if you want your ACT or SAT scores considered as part of your admission and scholarship decisions. You have until the [credentials deadline](#) to change your testing plan through your [USC Admissions Portal](#). Refer to the credentials deadlines on page 1 of this guide. Remember, we superscore both the SAT and ACT, which means we will use your best subscores from different test dates to give you an overall higher score.

☐ Select your major

Select the college your major falls under and then your first-choice major. View our full list of colleges and majors on [page 8](#). You have the option to choose a second-choice major on the application. This will ensure the highest consideration for admission. Some majors are more competitive than others based on student interest and capacity. If you're unsure of what you want to study, you can select "Undeclared" under the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences.

☐ Enter your high school information

Add your high school information, your weighted GPA and your class rank (if available) as listed on your transcript. Then, list your senior year schedule. Be sure to enter all the courses you will take throughout your senior year.

☐ Upload your transcript

Upload a copy of your high school transcript in PDF or JPG formats. Make sure your full name, high school name and grades through your junior year are clearly displayed. You can verify this in the preview before you upload the file. If you choose to apply through Common App, your transcript must be sent directly from your high school. Invite your counselor to upload your transcript by providing their information in the "Recommenders and FERPA" section of the Common App.

☐ Decide if you want to apply for the South Carolina Honors College

Our top-rated [South Carolina Honors College](#) provides a comprehensive and individualized academic experience. If you have excellent high school grades and an outstanding resume, we encourage you to apply to the Honors College.

To be considered, you are required to submit the Honors College application that will become available in your [USC Admissions Portal](#) beginning Sept. 1 and after submitting your general university application. The deadline to complete the Honors College application is Nov. 15.

STEP 3

COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

☐ Enter your additional education information

Enter your high school graduation information, course rigor and junior high/middle school coursework.

In the high school equivalency section, be sure to only check “Yes” if you have taken or plan to take an equivalency exam instead of graduating from high school (e.g., GED).

Pay close attention to the junior high/middle school coursework section. It’s important to enter any of the required courses you took in middle school that earned high school credit but may not appear on your high school transcript. Skipping this section could delay your admission notification.

☐ Complete the activities/work experience section

This section allows you to list and explain up to 10 extracurricular experiences you’ve been involved in throughout high school. If you’re not sure how many hours you’ve participated in each activity, give us your best estimate. In the description, indicate your duties, recognitions and/or leadership roles. Explain the activity and your specific involvement. Remember, this section is about quality, not quantity.

☐ Write your essay

The essay allows you to provide information about who you are beyond the numbers. It is a great place to share more information about yourself or to further explain a topic or activity that interests you. We suggest drafting your essay outside of the application so you can review it for completeness and accuracy.

Remember, you can always reach out to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at 803-777-7700 if you have questions. You can also contact your [admissions representative](#).

TIPS FOR REVIEWING YOUR ESSAY

Once you're done, ask yourself these questions:

- | • What? | • Why? | • How? |
|---|---|---|
| • Does the essay convey what I want the reader to know? | • Does the essay convey why the topic is important to me? | • Does the essay convey what I've learned and how it will benefit me in the future? |
| • Does it get straight to the topic and use clear and concise language? | • Does it clearly articulate the topic's effect on me and how this experience has shaped my view? | • Does the topic show how I can be successful at USC? |



MAJORS AND CERTIFICATIONS

McCAUSLAND COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

African American Studies
Anthropology
Art Education
Art History
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Biological Sciences
Cardiovascular Technology
Chemistry
Criminology and Criminal Justice
Cyber Policy and Ethics
Dance
Data Analytics
Data Science
Economics
English
Environmental Science
Environmental Studies
Film and Media
Geography
Geological Sciences
Global Studies
History
International Studies
Languages, Literatures and Cultures
- Chinese
- Classics – Classical Studies
- Classics – Greek
- Classics – Latin
- Comparative Literature
- French
- German
- Italian
- Linguistics
- Russian
- Spanish
Marine Science
Mathematics
Neuroscience
Philosophy
Physics
Political Science
Psychology
Religious Studies
Sociology
Statistics
Studio Art
- 3D Studies
- Ceramics
- Drawing
- Graphic Design and Illustration
- Painting
- Photography
- Printmaking
Theatre
Women's and Gender Studies

DARLA MOORE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Accounting
Business Economics
Finance
International Business
Management
Marketing
Operations and Supply Chain
Real Estate
Risk Management and Insurance

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Applied Sport Psychology and Counseling
Early Childhood Education
Elementary Education
Middle Level Education
Physical Education
Special Education

MOLINAROLI COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTING

Aerospace Engineering
Biomedical Engineering
Chemical Engineering
Civil Engineering
Computer Engineering
Computer Information Systems
Computer Science
Electrical Engineering
Industrial Engineering
Integrated Information Technology
Mechanical Engineering

COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY, RETAIL AND SPORT MANAGEMENT

Hospitality Management
Interdisciplinary Studies in Services Management
Retailing
- Fashion Merchandising and Digital Innovations
- Retail Management
Sport and Entertainment Management
Tourism Management

COLLEGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Advertising
Broadcast Journalism
Communication
Information Science
Journalism
Mass Communications
Public Relations
Sports Media
Visual Communications

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Composition
Jazz Studies
Music
Music Education
- Band
- Choral/Vocal
- Strings
Music Industry Studies
Music Theory
Musical Theatre
Performance
- Chamber Music
- Entrepreneurship
- Music Technology



COLLEGE OF NURSING

Nursing

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

Pharmaceutical Sciences
(B.S. includes two-year pre-pharmacy curriculum plus first two years of four-year Pharm.D. curriculum)

ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Exercise Science
Public Health

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

Social Work

SOUTH CAROLINA HONORS COLLEGE

Any major listed on this page
Baccalaureus Artium et Scientiae
B.A. (B.S.)/J.D. (six-year pre-law/law degree)
Accelerated Undergraduate to M.D. program
(seven-year pre-med/medical degree)

PRE-PROFESSIONAL TRACKS

Study any major and still pursue a law, medical or other professional degree. Our Office of Pre-Professional and Graduate Advising specializes in preparing students for graduate and professional schools.

UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES

These certificates allow students to develop skills that align closely with in-demand jobs and can be completed without increasing time-to-degree.
- Artificial Intelligence Literacy
- Data Analytics and Visualization
- Digital Studies
- Project Leadership and Management
- Strategic Thinking and Communications

STEP 4

SUBMIT THE APPLICATION FEE/WAIVER

Once you have completed your application, submit the nonrefundable application fee or select an approved application fee waiver. We accept SAT or ACT college application waivers, as well as NACAC, Scoir, TRIO or Common App fee waivers. This step must be completed to finish your application.

If using an SAT or ACT fee waiver, be sure to submit the college application fee waiver and not the SAT or ACT exam fee waiver. Students who are eligible for the SAT or ACT application fee waiver may use it to waive the application fee even if they do not report a test score.

STEP 5

EXPLORE YOUR USC PORTAL

Your [USC Admissions Portal](#) serves as your personal landing page for important information and reminders. Through the portal, you can:

- Update your testing plan.
- Self-report your SAT/ACT scores.
- Self-report your AP/IB/AICE test scores.
- Check for and upload missing credentials.
- Complete any application change requests.
- Connect with your admissions rep.
- Register for our events and campus tour.
- Learn more about your major, student life and USC's cost and aid.
- Receive important updates.
- View your admission decision.



OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

📍 Lieber College
902 Sumter Street Access
Columbia, SC 29208

☎ 803-777-7700

✉ admissions-ugrad@sc.edu

🌐 sc.edu/admissions

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@uofscadmissions



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