

feature

Serious intentions

An established part of English language teaching in the USA, academic preparation courses bring all sorts of benefits for students and academic institutions alike.

As the USA is the most popular destination for international students wanting to study at a university overseas, it is not surprising to find language courses that focus on academic preparation playing a dominant role in the US language teaching marketplace. Indeed, many language schools in the country report long-term experience of dealing with this sector of the market.

"We have offered academic preparation English as a second language courses for 18 years now," says Arlene Spencer from Fulton-Montgomery Community College in Johnstown, NY. "We saw early on that international students needed these courses so they can build on their English skills and maximise their abilities to be successful in their college studies that would follow."

At Maryville College in Maryville, TN, academic preparation programmes have been offered since 1986.

"Because our college is a very small liberal arts college and many courses have heavy writing requirements, we quickly realised that our offerings in the ESL programme also needed to have more focus on the reading and writing programmes," says Kelly Franklin.

Many universities and colleges in the USA started offering academic preparation courses to their international students in direct response to demands from students and also university faculty. However, on-campus academic preparation courses can also be an important way of attracting international students to mainstream courses, as Spencer explains. "[Our academic preparation courses] are very popular – particularly as students can apply for the combined academic preparation ESL programme with their college academic programme in one application process – and we do not require any specialised testing (Toefl, SAT, etc) for students prior to admission. Students find the removal of these barriers to be particularly attractive," she says.

Independent language schools looking to move into this market

sector usually find that links with local educational institutions are an important asset. Des Levin from Talk International in Davie, FL, says that academic preparation programmes have been offered at the school since 1997, although their full potential was not explored until a later date. "In 2000, Talk International moved on to the campus of Nova Southeastern University and it was at that time that the academic preparation programmes really became important," he says.

Academic preparation courses are often worth the extra time and expense incurred in the long run. Green River Community College in Auburn, WA, offers concentrated college preparation courses for students about to embark on a course at the college, as well as developmental courses in English and mathematics that run in conjunction with the mainstream courses. "Once students are taking a full slate of challenging academic classes, they come to realise the benefits of preparation classes," says Ross Jennings at the college.

Notwithstanding the many academic benefits for language students, some schools and universities claim that enrolling on academic preparation courses can result in increased chances of success in getting a visa. "As a general statement, the system is designed so that a more serious student is more likely to get a student visa than a less serious student," says Levin. "Therefore, the student that intends to further their studies in the USA at an accredited university, has a formalised study plan and plans to study English on-campus, is more likely to get a student visa."

Spencer agrees and adds that the nature of the academic component of any preparation course is often key in this respect. "Students who have in the past been only enrolling in ESL coursework without an academic component, now, it seems, face a greater chance of visa denial," she asserts. "Embassies seem to prefer it when students choose coursework that is more academic in nature."

subject focus

Alternative health

Below is a list of colleges and universities around the world offering courses in alternative health.

Location	Name of institution	Types of courses	Subject areas	No. of start dates p/yr
Australia				
Coffs Harbour, NSW	NSW School of Natural Medicine	ce,pg,sh	a,ay,h,he,i,o,r	1-2
Jandakot, WA	Australian Inst. of Holistic Medicine	sh,ug	a,ay,h,he,i,o,r	2
Lismore, NSW	Southern Cross University	ce,pg,ug	a,h,he,o	2
Melbourne, VIC	Australian Col. of Natural Medicine	ce,ug,sh	a,c,h,he,o,r	2
Surry Hills, NSW	Australasian Col. of Natural Therapies	ce,pg,sh,ug	c,h,he,i,o,r	v
various, NSW	University of Western Sydney	ce,pg,ug	ch,o	2
Canada				
Toronto, ONT	Homeopathic College of Canada	ce,pg,sh,ug	h,he,o	2-3
Toronto, ONT	Ontario Col. of Homeopathic Med.	pg	h	2
Vancouver, BC	Dominion Herbal College	–	he	yr
Vancouver, BC	Int. Col. of Traditional Chinese Med.	ug	a,c	3
Vancouver, BC	Pacific Institute of Reflexology	ce,sh	r	15
New Zealand				
Canterbury	Canterbury Col. of Natural Med.	ce,pg,sh,ug	he,o,r	v
Hamilton	Waikato Institute of Technology	pg,ug	a,ay,c,h,he,i,o,os,r,re	1
UK				
Bristol, England	South West Col. of Oriental Medicine	ce	a	2
Glasgow, Scotland	Scottish School of Herbal Medicine	ce,pg,sh,ug	he,o	1
USA				
Birmingham, AL	Clayton College of Natural Health	ce,pg,sh,ug	ay,c,h,he,i,o,r,re	yr
San Francisco, CA	Institute of Classical Homoeopathy	pg,sh	h	v

a acupuncture ay ayurveda c chinese medicine ce continuing ed. h homeopathy he herbalism i iridology o others os osteopathy pg postgraduate r reflexology re reiki sh short courses v varies ug undergraduate yr year round