
Communicating **Test-Flexible** Admissions Policies to Prospective Applicants in Light of the Coronavirus: How Our Members Are Communicating to Students

College Board members have asked for guidance in communicating reassuring messages to prospective students and their families about the use of standardized exams in admissions given disruptions associated with the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. The examples below highlight the ways in which selected institutions are providing clear information to students. While they take a variety of approaches, all emphasize their commitment to evaluating applications in context, and stress that no applicant will be harmed by impacts they could not control.

Case Western University (Ohio):

We understand students' concerns about completing Case Western Reserve's standardized testing requirements for admission. In response, the university has approved a test-optional policy for students applying for the fall 2021 semester. In light of the unprecedented circumstances the COVID-19 pandemic has created, Case Western Reserve believes students' best interests are served by an approach that assures them of our flexibility as they progress through the college search process...We are test-optional for students entering in the fall of 2021. We will determine policies for future classes in winter 2020/21.

Clarkson University (N.Y.):

Students entering Clarkson University in the Fall of 2021 have the choice if they want to submit their standardized test scores when they apply for admission to the university. The decision comes as the University seeks to support its future student community who will face other challenges when considering college admissions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Clarkson will also abide by the policy for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, even though many students will have already taken their tests for admission for those semesters.

Columbia University (N.Y.):

Testing options around the world have been affected. We remain committed to our holistic and contextual review process that considers the individual circumstances that shape each applicant's journey. Columbia does not require SAT Subject Tests or Advanced Placement exams, and students are at no disadvantage in our process if they do not submit scores from these tests. Please note that we accept SAT and ACT scores from November test dates for Early Decision applicants and scores from January test dates for Regular Decision applicants.

Concordia University (Tex.):

In response to the concerns about the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), college entrance exam administrators ACT and the College Board have postponed or rescheduled upcoming ACT and SAT tests. With these delays, many students may not be able to take either of the exams before applying to universities. In an abundance of caution, Concordia University Texas has temporarily waived the college entrance exam test requirement for admission. Students who apply to join Concordia University Texas between the Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 semesters will not be required to submit ACT or SAT scores.

Hofstra University (N.Y.):

If you are trying to decide whether to submit test scores, our best advice is to encourage you to submit your scores if you feel that they are representative of your achievement, that they paint a realistic picture of your academic accomplishments, and that you truly believe that they will enhance your application. In other words, if you are pleased with your test scores, we would be pleased to see them.

Midway University (Ky.):

Midway University has announced that it will waive the SAT/ACT test requirement for admission consideration for Fall 2020...The test optional is for general admission to the University. There are some majors that still require specific test scores for acceptance into those programs but students can be admitted and then take the required test at a later date prior to those specific program admission deadlines.

Mansfield University (Pa.):

Mansfield University will be test optional for Fall 2020, meaning students may choose to submit test scores if they have them, but applications from students without test scores will also be considered. The university advises applicants that SAT/ACT scores are preferred for admission consideration for a limited number of accredited programs such as the Bachelor of Science in Nursing with limited capacity. In addition, admitted students who do not submit SAT/ACT scores may need to take placement tests during the orientation process to determine the appropriate English and/or mathematics courses to meet their educational needs.

Northwestern University (Ill.):

We always view [test scores] in context. While we require an ACT or SAT score from all of our applicants, it is always the case that applicants across the globe experience variable access to testing centers, test-prep resources, high school curricula that correspond to test content, opportunities for re-testing, etc. So again, we are prepared for and committed to reviewing applications, including standardized test scores, fairly in light of the current pandemic.

We recognize that canceled test dates raise concern among students who have been hard at work preparing for them. But the College Board and ACT appear committed to providing future testing opportunities as soon as possible, including free statewide tests where applicable, and at this point there is still time for students to test before next year's application deadlines.

Pennsylvania State University (Pa.):

Penn State wants to help support our future students impacted by the outbreak. We understand that fulfilling all parts of the application process may be difficult at this time, so we will remain flexible and work with students on a case-by-case basis. We continue to encourage students to submit applications and supporting documentation, including test scores (SAT or ACT) whenever possible.

Princeton University (N.J.):

We know the cancelation of some test dates for the SAT or ACT will result in a limited number of opportunities to sit for these exams. While applicants will still be expected to submit standardized test results as part of their application, we know you might not have the opportunity to take these tests multiple times. Please know that we do not expect applicants to take these exams more than once. SAT or ACT test scores are only one part of our holistic review. We will continue to review our test policies as more information about the exam schedule becomes available.

University of La Verne (Calif.):

The benefit to submitting a test score varies for each person. But overall, a strong SAT or ACT score can help boost an academic record or help an applicant qualify for additional merit scholarships. Plus, test scores can be used to determine academic course placement. Submitting a test score can only help a student in the admission or financial aid process, it cannot harm them.

University of Pennsylvania (Pa.):

Testing agencies are making prudent decisions to prevent large gatherings of people. We are in communication with testing agencies around the world and we support them in the decisions they feel they need to make. We will review final results if and when they are made available. We will evaluate the final reports for all enrolling students, whether or not end of year exams are available, and we will follow up should we have any questions.