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# Validity of the SAT<sup>®</sup> at Higher Education Institutions Outside the U.S.—An Overview for Outreach, Admissions & Enrollment Leaders

Patterns in international student decision making and mobility are shifting. Globally mobile students are increasingly looking at an expanded set of study abroad destinations for undergraduate degree programs. More high school students, including those within the U.S., are likely to consider destinations outside their own country than in the past. In turn, a wider range of institutions around the world are offering English-medium programs to attract talent from outside their borders, as well as to retain globally minded students, who may have been looking abroad, to institutions closer to home.

The SAT<sup>®</sup> is a pivotal tool for higher education institutions in the U.S. and abroad for the assessment of college readiness globally. Over 450 higher education institutions outside the U.S. consider SAT scores in their admissions- and enrollment-related decisions.<sup>1</sup> And in the class of 2019, nearly 162,000 test takers from over 200 countries/regions outside the U.S. took the SAT, the largest international cohort ever.

Research confirms that the SAT is a powerful predictor of academic success for international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities.<sup>2</sup> New data confirm that the SAT is also useful in predicting success for students studying at universities outside the U.S., providing admissions and enrollment professionals with a pivotal tool in assessing the academic readiness of their applicants.

## Key Takeaways:

- The SAT is strongly predictive of college success for students attending non-U.S. institutions of higher education.
- Using the SAT in conjunction with high school grade point average (HSGPA) is the most powerful way to predict future academic performance of students.
- This study's results, which are remarkably similar to the analysis of the use of the SAT with international students in the U.S., attest to the global applicability of the SAT as a critical lens for assessing the academic readiness of students throughout the world.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on universities outside the U.S. that have established SAT policies, see our [policy directory of universities outside the U.S.](#), a resource we provide to counselors at international schools and for others with internationally mobile students.

<sup>2</sup> [Validity of the SAT for Enrollment Related Decisions: Focus on International Students Attending College in the U.S.](#)

*More information and the complete report at:* [sat.org/globalvaliditystudy](https://sat.org/globalvaliditystudy).

## Major Findings

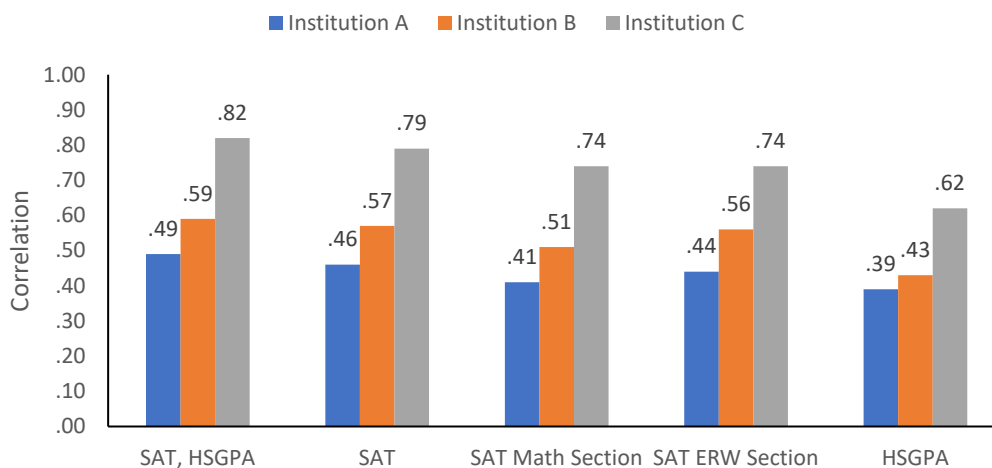
Data from case studies of three institutions of higher education in three countries (India, Lebanon, and Scotland) reveal:

- **The combination of SAT scores and HSGPA is the strongest predictor of first-year college GPA (FYGPA).** Student success in college is best predicted when colleges and universities use both metrics in their evaluation of college readiness.
- **The added predictive boost of SAT scores above HSGPA alone to predict FYGPA, ranged from 26% to 37% in this study.** In other words, the ability to predict a student's FYGPA is greatly enhanced by considering SAT scores in the admission process.
- The relationship between SAT scores and FYGPA for students at these institutions is aligned with findings from previous studies showing **the importance of the SAT in predicting success for international undergraduate students** studying in the U.S.

## Relationship Between SAT Scores, HSGPA, and FYGPA

Students' SAT scores and HSGPA were analyzed to determine the extent to which these measures predict student success in their first year at university. Figure 1 shows the correlations of the singular predictors and combinations of predictors with FYGPA. At all three institutions, the SAT (and its two main sections, Math and Evidence-based Reading and Writing [ERW]) are more strongly correlated with FYGPA than HSGPA. However, the most accurate prediction of student success is achieved when SAT scores and HSGPA are combined.

Figure 1: Correlations (Corrected) of FYGPA Predictors: SAT and HSGPA



Findings across the SAT validity studies conducted over the past year show a consistent portrait of the SAT—especially when combined with HSGPA—to provide admissions and enrollment professionals with globally relevant information about the academic readiness of students. Table 1 below summarizes the predictive validity of the SAT, as well as its incremental validity above HSGPA to predict FYGPA.

Table 1: Validity of the SAT for Students Studying at Non-U.S. Universities and International Students Studying at U.S. Universities

	<b>Students Studying at non-U.S. Universities (Current Study)</b>	<b>International Students Studying at U.S. Universities (Reference)</b>
<b>Incremental Validity of SAT Over HSGPA to Predict FYGPA</b>	.10–.20	.16
<b>Validity of the SAT when Combined with HSGPA to Predict FYGPA</b>	26%–37%	44%

## Implications for Admissions and Enrollment Leaders at Universities Internationally

There are two important implications of this research for admissions and enrollment professionals.

**First, the SAT provides additional information for international specialists who must make admissions decisions among applicants who have strong and perhaps similar HSGPAs.** The use of SAT scores along with HSGPA can aid admissions officers' professional judgment in their selection of students, especially those from secondary schools where they may be unfamiliar with the academic rigor of the courses offered.

**Second, there is remarkable similarity in research results for the use of the SAT by higher education institutions within the U.S. and by universities outside the U.S.** This attests to the global applicability of the SAT as a critical lens for assessing the academic readiness of students throughout the world.