Department of Higher Education

Ohio Direct Admission | Frequently Asked Questions



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The Basics

1. What is Ohio Direct Admission?

Ohio Direct Admission enables participating colleges and universities to **proactively** offer admission to eligible students from participating high schools based on data the high school already has, such as grade point average (GPA), class rank, and/or standardized test scores. If a student meets a college's requirements, then they will receive an offer of admission **without even having to apply**. Students will need to follow institution-specific next steps in order to claim their spot at a participating institution where they received an offer.

2. What is the timeline for Ohio Direct Admission?

This program will be piloted during the 2026-2027 academic year and it is anticipated it will expand in the subsequent school year. The Ohio Direct Admission portal will be live and undergoing testing this summer. Participating seniors will receive Direct Admission notifications by November 1, 2026.

3. How does Ohio Direct Admission intersect with selective and limited-capacity programs?

Ohio Direct Admission guarantees admission to the main campus, not specific majors or programs. Students interested in selective and limited-capacity programs will need to complete all relevant steps at their chosen institution of higher education.

4. How will the Ohio Direct Admission process be facilitated?

ODHE is partnering with Management Council to develop and operate the Ohio Direct Admission portal. In this portal:

- Participating IHEs can set their criteria and provide information about their IHE.
- Participating K-12 schools can verify and/or upload student data and track student access to the portal.
- Participating students can view Ohio Direct Admission matches and choose whether to initiate the “claim your spot process” at institutions they are interested in enrolling at.

The same portal will be used for the Governor’s Merit Scholarship Program and the Ohio Guaranteed Admissions program.

5. How will success of the pilot be defined and measured?

Success of the Ohio Direct Admission Program pilot will be defined and measured by increases in student enrollment and completion by Ohio Direct Admission students, as well as qualitative feedback from institutions of higher education, K–12 districts, and students and families.

6. How will student data be protected?

Encryption protocols will be in place to ensure the protection of student data.

7. How does FERPA impact the opt-in process?

The Ohio Direct Admission program is being run in compliance with FERPA.

Participation Requirements

8. What types of institutions of higher education may participate in

the Ohio Direct Admission program?

Participating institutions of higher education may include:

- Four-year public main campuses
- Four-year public regional campuses
- Community college
- Private non-profit institutions
- Private for-profit institutions
- Ohio Technical Colleges

9. Can branch or regional campuses participate?

Yes. Branch or regional campuses may participate, either in coordination with their main campus, in coordination with other branches/regional campuses, or independently.

10. What types of high schools may participate in the Ohio Direct Admission program?

School governing bodies must opt-in to participate and may authorize any high school they operate to participate in the program. Eligible school governing bodies include governing bodies of:

- All public schools - including city, local, exempted village, and joint vocational school districts
- All chartered nonpublic high schools
- Community schools established under Chapter 3314
- STEM schools established under Chapter 3326 of the Ohio Revised Code

11. Will K-12 schools opt in by school or by district?

The district governing body may opt in some or all high schools within their district.

12. Will this program be open to all students?

The program is open to all students at participating K-12 schools. Students must be provided an opportunity to opt in/out of the Ohio Direct Admission process. Schools will be able to note which students have opted out of the program within the Ohio Direct Admission portal.

13. Will this program be open to transfer students?

In accordance with Ohio Revised Code, students must attend a participating high school in order to participate in Ohio Direct Admission. Participating students must opt in to the Ohio Direct Admission program by a date specified by ODHE.

14. Can home-educated students participate?

In accordance with Ohio Revised Code, students must attend a participating high school in order to participate in Ohio Direct Admission. Home-educated students will not be able to participate.

15. Can students without a traditional college preparation curriculum (e.g., JVSD students) participate?

Yes. Students at a school without a traditional college preparation curriculum that has opted into direct admission may participate. While some higher education institutions may have only GPA and/or class rank criteria for admissions standards, others may require college entrance exams. Students who do not have college entrance exam scores will only be matched to institutions with GPA and/or class rank criteria.

16. Can students without college entrance exam scores participate?

Yes. While some institutions of higher education may have only GPA and/or class rank criteria for admissions standards, others may require college entrance exams. Students who do not have college entrance exam scores will only be matched to institutions of higher education with GPA and/or class rank criteria.

17. Does Ohio residency play any role in the process? If a student just moved to Ohio and is not yet a resident, are they eligible?

Any student at a participating school may opt in. Direct Admission ensures students are automatically accepted at institutions they have been matched to but does not impact their consideration as in-state students. This includes eligibility for in-state financial aid.

18. If Ohio Direct Admission notifications occur in November, can students opt in after that date?

Students must opt in prior to November 1 to participate, according to the timeline established by their school and the Ohio Direct Admission program.

19. Can students opt out after opting in?

Students who have opted in prior to the portal matching process will be matched to institutions of higher education based on their academic records. However, the student may elect whether to review and/or utilize any Ohio Direct Admission offers. No information will be shared with IHEs without student permission due to an intent to enroll.

20. What happens if a student moves at some point in the process?

Students who have opted in prior to the matching process will have offers generated based on their existing academic record at their school at the point of opt in. However, if a student has not updated their email address in the portal, they may not be able to view/access their Ohio Direct Admission offers.

IHE Participation

21. Will institutions of higher education have the ability to set their

own admission criteria?

Institutions may define up to three Eligibility Pathways. Students who meet the requirements of **any** pathway will receive a Direct Admission offer. Eligibility pathways may be based on a combination of any of the following elements: minimum GPA, college entrance exam score, class rank, and/or proximity to IHE (where the IHE does not offer a residential option).

22. Will institutional requirements submitted to ODHE be publicly visible to students?

This will be determined by participating institutions of higher education.

23. How does test-optional admissions factor into the Ohio Direct Admissions process?

Each institution of higher education may establish their own criteria based on one or more of the following three factors: GPA, class rank, college entrance exams. Institutions may choose whether they will utilize test scores as a factor for admissions. If an institution of higher education has established a mandatory threshold on college entrance exams and a student does not have a college entrance exam score, they will not be matched to that institution of higher education. They will be matched to institutions that have only GPA and/or class rank criteria.

24. What information will institutions of higher education receive regarding the type of curriculum a student pursued?

Students who receive offers from the Ohio Direct Admission program will need to submit supplemental information to the institution of higher education through their “claim your spot” process.

25. Does the Direct Admission program consider holistic admission factors?

No. Ohio Direct Admission utilizes available data (GPA, class rank, test scores) and matches that data

to institutional criteria.

26. How does the program plan to minimize or resolve GPA reporting errors?

The Ohio Direct Admission portal will make matches based on student records maintained at their K-12 school. Counselors will have a period of time to review and verify all records. Students who receive Ohio Direct Admission offers will need to submit supplemental information to the institution of higher education as part of the institution's "claim your spot" process, which provides an opportunity for institutions to confirm the portal data.

27. What information will institutions of higher education receive regarding the type of curriculum a student pursued?

Students who receive offers from the Direct Admission program will need to submit supplemental information to the institution of higher education through their "claim your spot" process.

28. What is the latest date that participating universities will be able to establish their direct admission criteria?

Draft criteria will be entered in the summer to allow for system testing. Higher Education Institutions will have until October 1 to finalize admission criteria into the portal.

29. May institutions of higher education operate Ohio Direct Admission as a supplemental program alongside existing processes?

Ohio Direct Admission is intended to complement existing institutional programs. Participation in Direct Admission does not preclude an institution from facilitating a local pre-existing or future direct admission program, as well as other admission programs.

30. What does it mean for a student to “claim their spot”?

Ohio Direct Admission guarantees students automatic admission to an institution based on their academic records provided they follow the institution’s process to “claim your spot.” This process allows institutions to collect supplementary information that allows them to verify student information, match students with financial aid, competitive majors or programs, and other institutional opportunities, as well as to conduct background checks. This process is specific to each institution and may occur through the institution’s application portal.

31. Are institutions of higher education able to establish their own “claim your spot” process for students who would like to utilize a direct admission offer?

Yes. Each institution of higher education will design its own “claim your spot” process. While institutions are encouraged to keep their process efficient and no-cost/low-cost for students, institutions determine the steps involved and the platform used. Institutions may collect information necessary to match students with financial aid, competitive majors or programs, and other institutional opportunities, as well as to conduct background checks. However, qualitative materials—such as essays or letters of recommendation—may not be collected for the purpose of informing an institution-wide admission decision. Likewise, institutions may not use academic records submitted during the “claim your spot” process, such as transcripts or additional academic information, to reconsider or rescind a Ohio Direct Admission offer unless such materials demonstrate the information in the Ohio Direct Admission platform informing the match was inaccurate. Students will be able to view the next steps required by any institution that has made a Ohio Direct Admission offer through the Ohio Direct Admission portal.

32. Are Ohio Direct Admission offers considered “conditional”, allowing institutions of higher education to rescind offers if the student no longer meets the institutional criteria or due to conduct/criminal background concerns?

Institutions of higher education may rescind an offer if a student no longer meets the institution’s acceptance criteria that would be applied to students who are admitted through the standard application procedure. Generally, students are expected to maintain general academic performance,

graduate on time, and meet any conduct-related requirements. Additionally, some institutions may have mission-specific criteria—such as alignment with a faith tradition or a specialized academic focus (e.g. a college that offers only nursing degrees)—that students must commit to for the offer of admission to remain valid. Institutions will share their conditional elements with ODHE so that they can be displayed in the Ohio Direct Admission portal.

33. Will Ohio Direct Admission communicate clearly to students that additional institutional requirements may exist beyond Ohio Direct Admission?

Yes. The Ohio Direct Admission offer will remind students of general expectations (e.g. maintaining academic performance and graduating on time). We will work with institutions with mission-specific criteria to display that information in the portal.

34. Can students accept more than one Ohio Direct Admission offer?

A student may choose to complete the “claim your spot” process at more than one institution.

35. Does the required dedicated email address for the Ohio Direct Admission Program need to be a separate, program specific account, or can institutions use their general admissions inbox as long as Direct Admission Program messages are monitored and routed to the appropriate staff?

Either option is permissible.

36. Will institutions of higher education receive student-level data and contact information?

Institutions of higher education will not receive student-level data or contact information from the Ohio Direct Admission program automatically. Students may elect to send their information (name, email, GPA, class rank, test score) to up to three matched institutions of higher education. Students will provide the required supplemental information requested by the institution of higher education

directly to the institution through their established process.

37. Will institutions of higher education need to collect additional required information (e.g., criminal history, intended major) through supplemental applications?

Yes. Institutions should collect all necessary information through their “claim your spot” process.

38. How will ODHE ensure consistent messaging across high schools and institutions of higher education?

A communications toolkit will be developed for schools and institutions of higher education. Additionally, technical assistance will be provided through webinars and facilitated peer-collaboration.

K-12 & Student Participation

39. How is student information entered into the portal?

K-12 schools that contract with one of Ohio's 16 Information Technology Centers (ITC) for student information software (SIS) support, may elect to have data automatically provided for the Direct Admission portal. This data would be loaded and the district could then verify student data and make necessary updates. K-12 schools that choose to not have the ITC provide the data or that do not work with an ITC will need to upload information using the supplied templates on the portal.

40. What is the process for high schools to opt in?

In order for a high school to participate, the school governing body must opt in the high school. The opt-in process includes completing a brief Qualtrics survey and uploading a signed Data Sharing and Participation Agreement.

41. Who is responsible for opting an eligible high school into the pilot?

The opt-in form should be signed by an individual with the authority to commit the governing body to the program per their policies. The governing body may choose to opt in all high schools within their purview or identify select high schools to participate.

42. What is the K-12 deadline for opt in?

July 15, 2026.

43. What does it mean for a participating student to “claim your spot”?

When students access the portal and review their Ohio Direct Admission offers, they may identify institutions they are interested in enrolling in and then select “claim your spot.” This step does **not** enroll the student. Instead, it begins the institution’s “claim your spot” process, which allows institutions to collect the additional information needed to verify student details, connect students with financial aid (including award letters), match students with competitive majors or programs, and share next steps. Each institution’s “claim your spot” process may differ, but it is designed to be simple, low-cost or no-cost for students.

44. How much will claiming your spot cost?

Claiming your spot in the Ohio Direct Admission portal is free for students. Selecting “claim your spot” does not require an application fee and does not enroll the student. Instead, it simply signals to the institution that the student is interested so the institution can begin sharing next steps—such as financial aid information, program details, or other required follow-up. Institutions may have their own low or no-cost next step processes, but the act of *claiming your spot in the portal itself has no cost*.

45. Can students claim their spot at more than one institution?

Yes. Students may claim their spot at more than one institution. Claiming a spot is **not** the same as enrolling — it simply signals interest and allows institutions to follow up with next-step information, including financial aid, program details, or other requirements. Because each institution designs its own "claim your spot" process, students may complete this process with multiple institutions before making an enrollment decision. Students can claim their spot at multiple institutions so they can compare financial aid, academic programs, support services, and overall fit before enrolling.

46. Can nonprofits that provide college access support enter the portal?

At this point access to the portal is only planned for designated staff at participating schools. However, it is encouraged that nonprofits and other entities that partner with schools/districts collaborate with counselors to provide support throughout the Ohio Direct Admission process.

47. Does participation in Ohio Direct Admissions replace a traditional application and/or application fee?

Students who receive offers from the Ohio Direct Admission program will need to submit supplemental information to the institution of higher education through the "claim your spot" process. This process and associated costs will vary by institution. The portal will make information available to students on the process for each institution.

48. What will students see in the portal if they do not receive any Ohio Direct Admission offers?

Ohio Direct Admission includes open-access institutions of higher education. We expect every student will view at least one offer when accessing the portal.

49. How should institutions of higher education handle students who apply directly before receiving notice of their Ohio Direct

Admission offer?

Institutions of higher education may elect whether to consider those students as Ohio Direct Admission students or to enable them to complete the process as traditional students.

50. Does the Ohio Direct Admission Program guarantee affordability?

Admission does not impact financial aid. Families should review aid packages before committing.

51. Will students be able to receive additional merit scholarships through a traditional review process?

The Ohio Direct Admission Program will not preclude a student from applying through a traditional application process. However, through Ohio Direct Admission, institutions of higher education may collect all information needed to successfully match students to financial aid, competitive majors/programs, or other programs as part of the “claim your spot” process.

52. Is there messaging in the offers about financial aid deadlines and filling the FAFSA?

Yes. FAFSA completion and financial aid messaging will be incorporated.

53. Will students still have to pay acceptance fees or deposits by May 1?

Students will have to follow institution-specific requirements.

54. What if students are overwhelmed by the choice?

The Ohio Direct Admission portal includes tools that allow students to sort and compare institutions using basic criteria—such as geography—so they can more easily narrow their list of options. Additional tools will be provided to support students in the choice-making process.

55. Which students will benefit from this most?

The Ohio Direct Admission program is designed to benefit students who are qualified for college but may not otherwise apply or navigate the traditional admissions process. Students who may benefit most include:

- **Students who are academically prepared but unsure about the application process.** The program reduces "application friction" and proactively shows students where they qualify based on their academic data.
- **Students who may not have strong support systems for college planning.** By receiving clear, simplified offers directly, these students get early guidance that can help them make informed decisions.
- **Students who might underestimate their eligibility or options.** Many qualified students never apply to institutions where they could be admitted; Direct Admission helps surface those opportunities.
- **First-generation, low-income, or underrepresented students** who typically face more logistical and informational barriers in the college-going process. The program's simplicity helps increase access and awareness.
- **Students exploring multiple pathways.** Direct Admission includes a wide variety of participating institutions, giving students a broader view of opportunities aligned to their goals.
- **Students who are anxious about the application process**. Students who are anxious about the competitive nature of college applications may feel reduce anxiety by participating in Direct Admission, which helps provide additional opportunities.

56. How will students know about their financial aid packages?

After a student claims their spot with an institution, the college or university will follow up directly with the student to share next-step information — including financial aid details such as award letters. The Ohio Direct Admission portal itself does not transmit financial aid data; instead, it connects the student to the institution, which then provides information about scholarships, grants, and other aid. Students will receive their actual financial aid packages from the institutions, after they claim their spot and the institution begins its follow-up process.

57. What supports will students receive to ensure they engage with Ohio Direct Admission and follow next steps?

High school counselors will be able to review the portal and see which students have logged into the Ohio Direct Admission portal. Additionally, once students have opted to send their information to institutions they have matched with, those institutions of higher education will be able to reach out to students.

58. How will work experience be incorporated, given statutory requirements to consider it?

Students who receive offers from the Ohio Direct Admission program will need to submit supplemental information to the institution of higher education.

59. How will counselors know which schools students are interested in?

The participating student will be able to review results through the Direct Admission portal. The student can opt to share this information with the school counselor.

60. Will students lose the experience of completing college applications?

Students are welcome to participate in other processes, such as Early Action and the traditional application process, as a complement to Direct Admission.

61. How will scholarships and athletics be impacted by the Ohio Direct Admission Program?

Ohio Direct Admission will have no impact on scholarships or athletics. After receiving a Ohio Direct Admission notification students will provide additional information to their institution of choice that will help determine scholarship, athletic, and other opportunities.

62. How will students be notified of portal access?

ODHE will work with participating K-12 partners to ensure proper communication to participating students.

63. Can independent counselors also view student interactions with offers? Or do you anticipate there being a way to add independent counselors to the portal?

Access to the portal will be limited to school counselors and staff. However, it is encouraged that nonprofits and other entities that partner with schools/districts collaborate with counselors to provide support throughout the Ohio Direct Admission process.

64. Will institutions of higher education need to collect additional required information (e.g., criminal history, intended major) through supplemental applications?

Yes. Institutions should collect all necessary information through their “claim your spot” process.

65. How will ODHE ensure consistent messaging across high schools and institutions of higher education?

A communications toolkit will be developed for schools and institutions of higher education. Additionally, technical assistance will be provided through webinars and facilitated peer-collaboration.

66. Will Direct Admission use weighted or unweighted GPA to make admission decisions?

All participating K–12 schools must report an unweighted GPA for each student.

Data, Technology & System Integration

67. Will institutions of higher education need to collect additional required information (e.g., criminal history, intended major) through supplemental applications?

Yes. Institutions should collect all necessary information through their “claim your spot” process.

68. How will ODHE ensure consistent messaging across high schools and institutions of higher education?

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