

# The International School of Paris

"Where the world goes to school"

## University Counseling Handbook

2010-11



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“Where the **world** goes to school”

## Introduction to University Counseling

The International School of Paris helps students build upon their positive experiences at ISP to gain admission into colleges and universities all over the world. Applying to colleges and universities is an exciting and revealing experience which gives you a chance to look at who you are, what you value, and what you might want to do with your life. It can also be a complicated, demanding, and time-consuming process. ISP counselors help guide, support, and counsel students and parents as you research schools, make choices, select and visit universities, and complete applications.

To assist with the university selection and application process, ISP's college counselors have developed the following guide. Good luck and *bon courage* as you begin another of life's adventures!

*The ISP University Counselors*

## ISP's Counseling Services

Our comprehensive counseling program guides and supports students throughout the university application process, beginning in grade 11 and continuing throughout grade 12. The program includes:

1. A university evening for grade 9 and 10 parents and students that provides a general overview of the university application process.
2. University presentations for grade 11 students and parents detailing all aspects of the university application process.
3. Initial individual student consultations in term 2 of grade 11 followed by meetings with both students and parents in grade 11 and throughout grade 12.
4. Consultations with students to select a list of university courses or discipline and schools as well as the choice of countries (and academic systems).
5. Providing information and materials such as university brochures, catalogs, guides, and the ISP counseling webpage as resources for students in their university search.
6. Offering the PSAT (Preliminary SAT) at ISP to grade 10 and 11 students every October.
7. Advice on standardized testing, including the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude/Assessment Test), the ACT (American College Test), the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), and the IELTS (International English Language Testing System).
8. Identifying schools that are a good fit depending on the student's interests, academic strengths, athletic skills, and other factors relevant to the student.
9. Assistance and guidance in preparation of applications including personal statements, essays, mock interviews, and contact with university representatives.
10. Counselor/referee letters of recommendation that strongly support student's candidature to appropriate universities.
11. Workshops in term 2 of grade 11 and term 1 of grade 12 on conducting university research and selection as well as preparing applications, essays, and interviews.
12. Advice on extracurricular and summer activities.
13. Counsel on how students can effectively communicate with universities in all aspects of the application process.
14. Guidance on financial aid.
15. Maintaining relationships with universities and contacting representatives to support individual applications.
16. Organization of ISP college visits from university representatives in the U.K., continental Europe, U.S., Canada, and other countries.
17. Assistance with the annual Paris College Day, where students and parents can attend and meet with admissions officers from over 70 institutions from the U.K., U.S., and Canada.
18. Taking interested students to the annual ECIS British tour at the British School of Paris.
19. "Best Fit" advice after conditional offers and acceptances in the Spring.

20. Advice on Wait List situations in the U.S. and Canada.
21. Guidance on "Clearing" and "Adjustment" in the U.K. system.
22. Maintain the Naviance site for students, which provides a web-based system for researching and managing university applications for the U.S. and Canada.

## Student Responsibilities in the University Application Process

For students in grades 11 and 12, the university application process is the first step towards individual independence. It is a complicated, demanding and time-consuming process. It can also be an exciting and revealing experience. You will have to do a lot of research and spend a lot of time filling out applications and writing personal essays, however, this will give you a chance to look at who you are, what you value, and what you might want to do with your life. You will have to make some important decisions, develop self-reliance and confidence, and perhaps for the first time think about life on your own, outside the environment of your family life.

The ISP counselors emphasize that the student is the focus and in control of the university application process, supported by a team of counselors, teachers, and of course, parents. Wherever you decide to apply in the world, we agree with the Dean of Admissions to the University of Pennsylvania, Eric J. Furda, that "selecting the ideal college (university) requires a good deal of hard work. You should think about your goals and aspirations. It is important for you to assess the elements of an education that will assure your success. It is an active process that requires you to read and to question and to visit various campuses."

In working towards these goals, you - the student - must accept the following responsibilities:

1. **Take the time to reflect and evaluate your goals and values**, assess your academic strengths, your special talents, skills and other aspects that distinguish you. This assessment is necessary in determining schools that offer an excellent university environment in which you will be most productive and happy (and therefore, successful).
2. **Research appropriate courses**, programs, and schools so that your applications are effective and fulfill your specific academic, athletic, musical, social, and any other elements that are important to you as well as your future objectives.
3. **Be aware of the academic profiles required by highly selective colleges and universities**. If the student does not have the academic record necessary to be competitive for acceptance, ISP will not be able to fully support the student's candidature to the university.
4. **Meet application deadlines both for universities and ISP** when submitting application materials and requesting letters of recommendation and transcripts. Please note that universities have different deadlines depending on countries and application systems.
5. **Be aware of any required tests**. Register on-line by the deadlines to take standardized tests, such as the BMAT, UKCAT, LNAT, SAT, ACT, or TOEFL.
6. **Submit all required forms** and request all testing organizations to submit official standardized test results to universities.
7. **Verify your correct name** on all official documents and use the same name on all documents (the name on your passport).
8. **Notify schools of any changes** in your home address or email address as well as maintaining an email address that is appropriate for applications.

9. **Notify counselors of your application results and your final choice.** Complete any necessary final forms requested by the counselor or IB coordinator in order to have your final transcript sent as well as your IB results accessible to your university.

## Choosing a Country and an Academic System:

### “Where do you want to study?”

When asking this question, students should first realize that the IB Diploma is a rigorous and demanding program that provides them with a first-class preparation for their future after ISP. Students follow a course of study with a global reputation for academic excellence, and universities throughout the world recognize the IB Diploma as an entrance qualification to higher education degree courses. In some countries, such as the United States and Canada, the IB Diploma qualifies students for advance placement or academic credits; furthermore, students with the IB Diploma are accepted at a higher rate at selective U.S. universities than those with other qualifications. In general, European universities prefer the IB Diploma for entrance over IB Certificates or the high school diploma. European and Canadian universities may require a standardized test (SAT), if a student only has the high school diploma or the high school diploma with IB certificates.

Being at ISP has probably also made you aware that there is a world of opportunity waiting for you after you receive your IB diploma. You have so many university choices that it may be difficult to know where to begin. While the majority of ISP graduates attend UK universities, many go to Canada, the US, Japan, continental Europe, or Korea, and some will return to their home country. The following provides a brief overview of the university systems in the UK, the US, and Canada. Many other systems throughout the world follow some form of the “course” based system of the U.K. or the liberal arts approach of the US and Canada. Additional information and helpful links can be found on the ISP university counseling website.

## Introduction to UK Universities

The academic system in higher education in the UK is course (subject) based. Students apply for a specific course to pursue at university, such as English, and focus solely on the one or combined subject program they have selected to study. The majority of the undergraduate degree programs in the UK (except for Scotland) takes three years to complete. Within this system, there are no general education requirements and few elective subjects outside of the course area. If you have a specific interest in a subject area and are certain this is the subject you would like to study at university, then the UK system is a good choice. If you would also like to focus in one or two areas of study and not have to take classes in other areas, this system provides that opportunity. Some of the course areas are more open to an interdisciplinary approach than others, such as European Studies or combined honors programs.

In Scotland, courses are four year degree programs and have a more general approach that also allows the student to study more elective subjects. While students still apply for a course, the system is more multi-disciplinary and allows for greater flexibility in changing courses.

Applications to all UK public universities are completed through the UCAS system ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)). Students may select a total of five courses, which could include several courses at the same university. Usually, conditional offers are based only on IB predicted grades that are submitted by the counselor to UCAS. Every course from each university lists the entry profile for IB predicted grades that are required for acceptance into the course. The UCAS application system is very straightforward, with clear explanations of the entry points required, specific courses offered at every university, suggestions for writing the personal statement, and a tracking system for following university offers. This system is advantageous for students who did not perform well academically until grades 11 and 12 and whose predicted IB grades are much better than their semester grades. For this subject-based system the students need to choose their six IB subjects carefully in order to ensure that they select courses at High Level which are related to the course they plan to pursue at university. Students' applications are accepted by the tutors in specific departments at the university. (This course-based system is common in Europe.)

UK universities have several tuition structures: UK and EU students generally pay the same fees (except for Scotland) while overseas students pay a much higher tuition.

More detailed information on applying to UK universities is under the UK section of this guide.

## Introduction to US Universities

In the US, students apply to schools as part of a general admissions process, not to departments within schools. The terms “college” and “university” are used interchangeably when referring to US institutions. Usually, college refers to an institution devoted primarily to undergraduate education. The standard undergraduate program lasts four years and students graduate with a degree (bachelor of arts or bachelor of science). A university is usually a larger institution offering a combination of undergraduate and graduate (Master’s or doctorate) degrees. Typically, universities are also committed to research as well as teaching. Both institutions are equal in providing excellent academic programs and both offer four-year bachelor’s degrees.

Universities and colleges in the US are based on a liberal arts system in which students choose the institution and study a broad range of subjects during the first two years before selecting a final subject as a major for the final two years. Except for certain majors, such as engineering and other professional programs, most students take a variety of courses that provide a general, broad education. The “core” requirements of a liberal arts education help insure all students have a breadth of knowledge when they graduate, in addition to their specialized area. This academic approach is great for students who are not sure what course or major they would like to study.

The application process in the US is somewhat more complicated than other systems, such as the UK and Canada. Universities and colleges in the US set their own criteria for determining who gets admitted. Although many schools take the Common Application or the Universal Application which allows students to fill out one form to submit online to school, most competitive schools also have supplemental essays. In addition, schools have a variety of deadlines and set their own policies regarding standardized testing requirements and other required materials. For this reason, it is very important for you to keep track of what each school requires and to be very organized with your applications.

Acceptance to US schools is based on a holistic evaluation of many aspects of the student – grades, predicted grades, talents, extracurricular activities, leadership skills, recommendations from teachers and a counselor, student essays, and standardized test scores (if required). However, since US universities think the best predictor of college success is academic performance in secondary school (grades 9 through 12), the grades earned on semester reports (the transcript) and the rigor of the courses taken are the most important factors considered. The IB diploma is well recognized in US institutions as a highly challenging, pre-university program that is an excellent preparation for success at university. Students should choose their IB subjects in their areas of strength. IB predicted grades are also included in the application materials sent to schools.

Since the university application process in the US requires students to complete very personalized, thoroughly researched applications and essays in order to maximize positive results, ISP limits the number of applications to eight institutions, unless a student depends on a financial aid award. In addition, you are strongly encouraged to make yourself known to admissions officers through personal contact and indicate why you have a strong interest in attending a particular school.

US colleges and universities make no distinction in the tuition structure between US residents and international students.

Please see the Applying to US Colleges and Universities section of this guide for more information.

## Introduction to Canadian Universities

Canada offers a great academic system for studying at university and has developed a first-rate education system with high standards and academic credentials valued the world-over. The academic approach is closer to the liberal arts than the course-based system, although students apply to general programs or faculties within the university. In addition, the application process is amazingly simple for international students – it is academic-based, so acceptances are evaluated on transcripts (semester grades) and predicted IB grades. Most universities place emphasis on grades 10, 11, and 12, although some schools may also require grade 9 grades. For students completing the IB diploma, the application does not require essays, teacher or counselor recommendations, or standardized tests. Students apply on-line for an academic program or faculty at the institution, for example the Applied Sciences program, or the Faculty of Humanities. Each university in Canada has its own policy regarding admission requirements and indicates on its website the IB diploma points the school seeks in a candidate, although both the transcript and the predicted IB grades are equally important. Students with an IB diploma are accepted into the second year at some schools (such as McGill University), and therefore, undergraduate degree programs may last three years. Since students apply for a faculty, you should be aware of the requirements for your general area of study. For example, in the Sciences and Math faculties, IB Math Studies is not acceptable, although it is for the Humanities programs.

In the Canadian system, there is a distinction between a university and a college. Universities offer academic degrees at all levels, from bachelors to advanced degrees, whereas, colleges only focus on technical training and applied arts, similar to a community college.

Canadian universities make a distinction between Canadian and international students regarding the tuition structure. An interesting benefit for French students is the Quebec policy on granting them the same university fee status as Quebec residents.

Please see the Canadian section in this guide for more information.

## Other English Speaking Universities

Every year, students apply to other English speaking universities all over the world including Australia, South Africa, and Singapore. The countries in the southern hemisphere have school years that begin later (usually around February) so the applications are usually submitted from July to September, after the student has already graduated. The IB diploma is accepted at English speaking schools around the world and therefore, students submit their IB results for admission. Students must notify the IB Coordinator to request that the IBO makes their results available to the university. The counselor will help prepare your application and gather all necessary supporting documents, wherever you decide to apply. Usually, the student's application section is completed online and paid for with a credit card. The school will send paper copies of transcripts and recommendations, unless an online system is available. Students are responsible for submitting all the required documents for admission within the deadlines. [For further information, check the ISP University Counseling site](#) for links to universities as well as the specific university websites for undergraduate admissions.

## Selecting “Best Fit” Universities

The key to finding the best university for you is knowing what you want...and knowing what you want requires you to know who you are. This important piece of self-knowledge applies wherever you decide to study in the world. Remember, you are at the center of the university application process; you are the person deciding what are the best “fit” universities for you. Selecting your schools first requires a self-assessment of your academic standing, educational values and goals, interests, talents, and aspirations. Once you know what is important to you, then you will be able to research universities to select the schools that fit your criteria.

### Some questions to ask:

The following categories of assessments and questions may help you in starting to think about what interests you as well as what distinguishes you from other students. Self-assessment will help you know what to look for when researching and selecting universities. These questions are just a beginning to start thinking about you and how you will decide your “best fit” universities.

- **What are my goals and values?**
  - How do I spend my time when I’m not studying?
  - Am I an independent, intellectually curious learner?
  - What kind of students would I like to be around?
  - What are the focus of discussions with friends and family?
  - Do I challenge myself academically?
  - How do I define success?
- **Academic related considerations**
  - What do I choose to learn on my own?
  - Do my grades reflect my ability and potential? Why or why not?
  - What are my academic strengths and weaknesses?
  - What are my favorite courses? (They should be the HL courses)
  - Do I strive to be academically challenged? Does my academic profile correspond to a highly, rigorous course or university – how do I evaluate my academic standing with the demands of a specific course or university?
- **Activities, Interests, and Character**
  - What activities do I enjoy the most?
  - In what extra-curricular activities do I participate and how involved and/or committed am I?
  - Do I take a leadership role or do I just like participating?
  - Am I an extrovert or an introvert in activities and in the classroom?
  - Do I feel passionate about a cause, a subject, an activity?
  - Do I have a special talent or interest? (playing music, singing, chess, etc.)
  - Do I have any athletic skills or actively participate in a sport?
  - Am I an independent individual who is able to organize myself and take initiative?

## Defining your Own University Selection Criteria

Once you have evaluated yourself, it now becomes clearer what considerations you may be looking for at university. While you are researching courses and universities as well as visiting or talking with representatives, the following list of considerations may help you compare your findings with your criteria. You may think of many other concerns that are important to you when looking at universities.

### University Characteristics

- Appearance of campus
- Size of student body, number of undergraduate students and graduate students
- Atmosphere: satisfaction level of current students with undergraduate experience. Student retention rate and graduation percentage
- Facilities: library, sports, dormitories
- Public or private
- Degree of selectivity in admissions
- Diversity of students
- Geographic location: Specific country and area of country as well as urban versus rural or suburban: enclosed campus versus an open-city integrated setting
- Climate
- Proximity to family or friends

### Academic Environment

- Degree of competitiveness and intensity
- Quality and availability of faculty; class size - student/faculty ratio; teaching faculty or teaching assistants
- Courses and programs offered
- Degree requirements
- Special interest or honors programs
- Flexibility in course selection
- Credit/advanced standing for IB diploma
- International study opportunities
- Internships and research opportunities
- Specific academic facilities

### Student Life/Campus Culture

- Students (caliber, diversity); number of international students
- Housing facilities (availability, quality, variety)
- Food options (variety, meal plans)
- Support services (counseling, ESL, career services)
- Campus activities: social organizations, clubs
- Cultural opportunities
- Athletic programs

- Social life and activities: How do students spend their time outside of class, what issues are important to them?
- Security

## Expenses

- Costs: tuition and fees, room/board, books and supplies, travel expenses
- Availability of scholarships, bursaries, financial aid

## Entrance requirements

- Can I get in? Do I have the academic record or special talents (if applying to art or music schools) that are competitive with the specific university student profile. Do an objective appraisal to determine if you are an eligible candidate. Although ISP counselors are your advocates, we will not be able to fully support your application to universities that are not a good fit for you academically. For example, Oxford and Cambridge courses require a minimum of 38 IB predicted points for entry consideration.

## Life after Graduation

- Job placement record for graduates
- General academic reputation
- Alumni accomplishments
- Admission to graduate programs
- Career planning and placement program

## Resources for Researching Courses and Universities

### Web Resources:

- [The ISP University Counseling webpage](#)  
This is an extensive section on the ISP website full of information about the college application process. There are articles, a listing of university news and events, timelines for Grades 11 and 12, and links to other university-related sites. Virtually everything you could possibly want to know about selecting and applying to university is on this site.
- [The official UCAS \(Universities and Colleges Admissions Services\) site](#)  
Students applying to UK universities must apply through the UCAS site ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) for most courses (except for Art Foundation and other Foundation Year courses). This site has all the information students need to research courses, universities, get advice for writing the personal statements, and more.
- [University Websites](#)  
Every college and university maintains its own website offering all information on courses, programs, course and application requirements, and even virtual tours of the campus.
- [Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter](#)  
Universities offer social networks with current students as well as videos and other forms of communication for prospective students to gather more information about schools.
- [Reference Materials](#)  
The school maintains a university reference section in the school library and the counseling office which includes college catalogues, university brochures, and university guidebooks. Some of the very helpful guidebooks include: *The Guardian University Guide*, *The Times Good University Guide*, *UCAS Progression Series for Courses*, *The Heap Guide*, *The Virgin Alternative Guide to British Universities*, *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *The Insider's Guide to Colleges*, *Princeton Review - The Best 371 Colleges*, *The Student's Guide to Canadian Universities*
- [ISP Counselors](#) are always available to advise and counsel students on their university choices.
- [Admission Office Representatives](#)  
Each year ISP hosts many college and university representatives to our school. Students should take advantage of these visits to learn more about university life and the application process in general as well as the specific school. Representatives from the US and some European universities are usually the person reading your application and deciding to admit you, therefore, it is extremely important to attend the college visits.
- [College Fairs](#)  
The Paris College Day is scheduled every year at the end of September. More than 80 universities throughout the world are represented at this event where students meet representatives, ask questions, and gather information. There are other university tours visiting ISP, including the British group tour of Imperial, LSE, UCL, and Kings College in October.

- [Summer and School Vacation Visits](#)  
Students should plan to visit schools where they have an interest in applying. This is an excellent way to help narrow your college choices. In the UK, Open Day – when the university departments open their doors to introduce prospective students to the facilities, tutors, and programs – is an excellent way to learn more about the course and university. Universities list their Open Days on their websites as well as under Open Days on the UCAS site. Most schools also offer daily tours or self-guided walks.
- [Other resources](#)  
Teachers, alumni, family friends, and current students are all great sources for discussing your university choices.

## Interviewing with Universities

There will be many opportunities for students to meet with university representatives in grades 11 and 12 and gather information which will help you in deciding where to apply. Each year, ISP hosts university representatives from around the world; in addition, students may also meet with university alumni who live in Paris. If you are being considered as a candidate for Oxford or Cambridge, you will be invited for an interview (please be aware that ISP provides mock interviews for Oxbridge). Other courses in the U.K., such as medicine and some art programs may also require interviews. Few schools in the U.S. require interviews for admittance and many may not offer them on campus, however, students are still encouraged to schedule interviews, if given the opportunity. Except the interview process for Oxbridge, UK medical schools, Art courses, and several other programs, the interview will not make or break your chances for acceptance; the purpose of the interview is to give the interviewer an idea of the candidate's suitability for the university and also to provide information to the candidate about the school and program.

Here are some general suggestions to think about when meeting with university representatives, whether it is a college visit at ISP, meeting with alumni, or an interview at a university. Additional materials on interviewing are available in the counseling office.

1. Be on time.
2. If on a university visit, remain standing until you are invited to sit down.
3. Be respectful: Do not chew gum, slouch, or use "informal, inarticulate language", turn off your cell phone and do not text message.
4. Look directly at the representative during the entire conversation or presentation. If it's a college visit at ISP and the representative hands out brochures, do not read the brochure and stop paying attention to the presentation!
5. Research the college or university, be aware of requirements, programs of study and be prepared to state why you are interested in the school.
6. Try not to have vague questions such as, "Tell me about your university." Be specific with questions, such as, "Could you tell me about class spirit? Can you give me examples of some campus traditions? In my first semester what will my class sizes probably be? What is the college's greatest asset? How would you describe the student body?" and any other questions regarding courses, financial aid, scholarships, or student life that are important to you.
7. Be sincere in your answers, questions, and attitudes. You don't want to be boastful, but don't be over-modest either. Speak to the point concisely and completely without monopolizing the conversation.
8. Practice answering questions, such as, "Why do you want to attend this university/college? What is your intended area of study, why? What do you like to read? Whom do you admire? What do you enjoy doing outside of your academic work?"
9. Wait for the interviewer to begin, listen attentively without interrupting, and answer all questions tactfully, firmly, honestly, and to the best of your ability. Don't be afraid to ask questions that you feel are important. Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to a question you may be asked.
10. Whether it is an ISP school visit or an interview at university, always thank your interviewer for his time and interest.
11. Within 48 hours of the interview, write a thank-you note.

## Standardized Admission Tests

Standardized tests refer to the college entrance examinations used by universities in an attempt to measure general aptitude and serve as a benchmark for differing academic systems. Currently, many universities throughout the world use standardized tests (mostly the SAT) as an entry requirement. If students are not taking the IB diploma, the SAT is required for admission to Canadian and UK universities as well as other European schools. Other university systems, such as in Singapore and Hong Kong, also require SAT scores. Standardized tests are optional at many colleges and universities in the US (please see the US section). With all of these different requirements at schools all over the world, it is important for students to check individual university standardized test requirements. The following offers a brief explanation of these admission tests.

The SAT and the ACT are both accepted by US colleges and universities. The SAT is more widely accepted by other university systems, such as the UK and other European and Asian schools. Students register online for all standardized admission tests at the test center where they prefer. (ISP is not a test center, except for the PSAT.) When you take an SAT, ACT, or TOEFL, you are the person who receives and “owns” the scores. Universities require that test scores be “officially” sent, which means that you must request the testing agency to send your scores to the schools. You may pay to have your scores sent at the time you register for the test online at the testing website; you may also request additional test scores to be sent through your login at any time. Please remember your user name and password to access your account and to get your scores.

- PSAT – the preliminary SAT is available for ISP students in grade 10, who would like to practice and grade 11 who are interested in applying to US schools. US citizens who take the test in Grade 11 might qualify as National Merit Scholars for US schools.
- The SAT is the most widely used college entrance exam administered by the CollegeBoard and created by Educational Testing Service (ETS). The SAT Reasoning Test has ten sections and takes just under four hours to complete. Each of the three areas of the test – math, critical reading, and writing – is scored separately, with scores ranging from 200 to 800 in each area, for a total possible score of 2400. The best time to take the test is in May or June of grade 11. You can retake the SAT again, if you would like, in the fall (October, November, December) of grade 12. [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests on a variety of subjects studied in school (math, literature, biology, chemistry, physics, U.S. history, world history, and languages). They are required by the more selective universities. For those schools that do require subject tests, generally math and a second exam of your choice are requested. Only a very few highly selective schools require a third exam. You cannot take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests on the same test day. Students usually take the Subject tests in May or June in grade 11 or in the fall of grade 12.

- The ACT (American College Testing) is a subject based, three-hour test that consists of four sections: English, Mathematics, Reading Comprehension, and Science Reasoning. Scores range from 1 to 36 for each of the subtests, with a final average or composite score. An optional 30-minute writing test is part of the ACT-Plus Writing test offered only in April, October, and December. [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)
- TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test for English language skills. If students have not been in an English speaking school for their academic career, if they don't take English HL, or if they score low on the SAT or ACT, the TOEFL may be required at English speaking universities. [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

## Applying to Universities in the UK

The country known as the United Kingdom (UK) is comprised of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Universities in all four of these lands are subject to the same government regulations and processes, but the system of education in Scotland is different from that in the other parts of the UK. Thus the application process is consistent throughout Great Britain, but what you experience as a student would be different, depending on whether you enroll in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK. Most degrees in the UK can be completed in three years, whereas in Scotland, the usual length is four years.

### What to Study?

If you are applying in the UK, you are required to indicate your course of study at the time you apply. Unlike the US, where students can apply without having decided about their major, there is no such thing as “undecided” at UK universities. If you like the idea of studying in the UK, you must be prepared to launch into quite a specific course of study, and to stay with it for three years until you complete your degree. The word “course” is used to describe the subject of study, including all the specific classes that a student will take over the three or four years of enrollment. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the course of study is usually quite specific - for example, “Psychology” at the University of Durham, or a joint course such as “Business Management with French” at Queen Mary University. Once your studies begin, all courses relate to that subject area, or two subject areas in a joint degree. If you change your mind about your course, you have to reapply to a different course, and unless it’s a closely related field, you may have to begin your degree over from the beginning. For this reason, students who are not certain of their interests may not be a good match for studying in the UK, unless the course is very broad and more multi-disciplinary.

### Researching Courses and Universities

The UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website is the best place to begin the research process. Go to the UCAS website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and click on “Course Search.” You can then search by course or by university. As you find courses of interest, you will notice the letters “EP” listed after many course titles. These initials indicate the university has registered an *entry profile* on the website, and by clicking on the course title, you will be able to view the profile. Entry profiles contain information about why one would study a course, what are the key skills and qualities sought in applicants (which is important as you write your personal statement!), where to obtain more information, what academic qualifications are needed, and a great deal of information about the course itself. The most important information in the Entry Profile includes the “Entry qualification” required for the course. This indicates the predicted points needed in the IB diploma to be given an offer for this course. In addition, the EP will indicate exactly what classes you will be required to take during each year of the course, which will help you decide if this subject is realistic for you. Entry profiles are a great place to start the research process.

Once you’ve decided on a course, you could consult Unistats, [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com) a website that allows you to compare a particular course – for example, Advertising, at all universities in the UK that offer it. You also have access to student satisfaction data, based on a survey of students in their final year of the course. Finally, Unistats also reports the percentage of graduates who are employed or enrolled in post-graduate degree courses within six months of graduation.

There are numerous other resources available for investigating courses. Many students have found the Higher Education League Tables, published by the major British newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *Times* to be very helpful. There is a link to these websites on the ISP Counseling site, as well as to other useful links.

### Application Process

UCAS serves as the central clearinghouse for university applications in the UK. Applicants fill out a single online form, a reference is added, and once the form is submitted, UCAS forwards the application to the universities that the student has indicated. Each university then makes a decision about the application, forwards that information to UCAS, and it is then posted in the student’s UCAS account, under TRACK. The UCAS application limits you to a maximum of five

courses, or four choices in clinical areas such as medicine or dentistry. These course choices could be at five different universities, or two courses or more could be chosen at the same university (e.g., one course called Psychology and another called Social Psychology at University College of London would make up two course choices).

## Starting the Application

ISP students apply through our school's section of the UCAS website, [www.ucas.com/students/apply](http://www.ucas.com/students/apply). The **school buzzword for the class of 2011** is "isparis2011".

Once you have set up an account, you can begin completing the UCAS form. It requests demographic information, a list of courses to which you are applying, a list of IB courses you are taking, and a one page personal statement which is described below. You pay the application fee online by credit card when you submit your form. After submission the referee (counselor) checks and approves the data you entered and completes the reference, which will be written by the counselor with input from your teachers in your IB High Level subjects. The counselor then submits the form to UCAS, which forwards it to your chosen universities. An admissions tutor determines whether your background, ability, and examination scores suggest success in your intended course of study.

Since the UCAS application deadline is January 15<sup>th</sup>, your completed application must be submitted online no later than December 1<sup>st</sup>, so the reference can be added and the form submitted before school closes for the winter holiday. It is highly recommended that students complete their applications by early November.

There are earlier deadlines for specific universities and courses. Students applying to Oxford or Cambridge must submit the UCAS form by October 15<sup>th</sup> to UCAS. If you plan to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, discuss this with the counselor at the end of Grade 11 in order to begin planning for submission of the work samples and tests which are often required by these two institutions. Students applying for OxBridge as well as for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and Veterinary Medicine courses must complete their applications by October 1<sup>st</sup> in order for the reference to be completed and the application to be sent to UCAS by the October 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. Interviews are almost always required for clinical courses.

## Personal Statement

Your personal statement is your chance to make a convincing case for your admission. The personal statement can be no longer than 47 lines or 4000 characters, including spaces, and should focus on why you have chosen to study the courses you have listed, and what interests you about your subject. Details about what you have studied, read, or experienced in relation to your course will help the admissions tutors assess your suitability for admission. Tutors are looking for intellectual ability, potential, commitment and determination as it relates to your selected course. The UCAS website has a section on writing the personal statement. University websites also offer advice on what they are looking for in candidates for specific courses.

UCAS is very serious about detecting plagiarized personal statements. Each incoming personal statement is checked against a library of personal statements from previously submitted applications and sample statements on websites and in paper publications. After your application is processed, your personal statement will also become part of the library of statements. Any statements showing a potential level of similarity of 10% or greater will be reviewed closely.

## The Reference

Since you apply for a particular course of study at UK universities, the UCAS reference should specifically concentrate on your suitability for the proposed course of study, and will include predicted IB exam results as reported by your teachers. Don't even think of suggesting to your teacher that your prediction be increased a bit – because your offer will reflect that higher prediction and you will then have to achieve that score – or lose your chance to attend that university, in addition, our school will lose credibility for future students if we over-predict. The counselor will write your UCAS reference and will include content or quotations from relevant teachers to emphasize how you are suited to study the course for which you are applying. In order to write a detailed, effective reference, the counselor will need background information from you. Students who have decided to apply to UK universities are therefore required to

complete the "Student Background Questionnaire" available on the ISP University Counseling web page (on the right hand side).

### After Applying

After your application has been reviewed, you will be informed of your admission decisions through a section of the UCAS website called "Track." at [www.ucas.com/students/track/](http://www.ucas.com/students/track/).

Instead of an outright acceptance, UK universities give "offers" of admission which are usually contingent upon meeting specific conditions. An offer requires certain IB diploma exam results. The more popular the course of study, the higher examination scores needed. Some universities will make an offer contingent upon IB exam scores in particular subjects. For example, if you apply for a chemistry course, you would need to be taking Chemistry HL and Math HL or SL and earn particular scores on both exams.

Each time a UK university makes a decision on one of your applications, UCAS will post the offer in your Track account, including all the details. You will also eventually receive a formal offer in the mail. You cannot respond to any offers until you receive all of them. When the last decision is posted, discuss your choices with the counselor and then use your Track account to reply to your offers. You will be asked to code all of your offers (you could have as many as five) as "Firm," "Insurance" or "Decline." Choose one firm and one insurance offer; all others must be declined. Since most offers are conditional upon examination scores and you will not have received the exam results, this can be a difficult decision, so speak with your counselor. Once you have made a commitment to particular courses, you cannot change your mind.

If you did not receive any offers, you can participate in a process in February called "Extra" in which you can apply one at a time to additional courses until you receive an offer. See the counselor for help with this process. Students who receive offers, but do not make the scores required by their firm or insurance offer can enter a process called "Clearing" in which they can compete for available places based on their actual IB scores. Clearing begins in mid-August, when the British A Level results are received. Recently, the universities have developed Adjustment, a system for allowing students who have performed higher on their IB diploma than predicted to re-apply for a course that they may now qualify. If students are eligible for Adjustment, UCAS will contact them directly through TRACK on the UCAS site.

### Mock Interviews

Students who are invited to an interview for Oxbridge, Medicine, Art, or other areas are encouraged to participate in the mock interviews offered by ISP teachers. Please let the counselor know when you have an interview and she will help arrange mock interviews with appropriate subject teachers. We also keep notes and feedback from previous interviews which may be helpful for students applying to those courses.

For further information about UK universities, review materials in ISP's library, meet with the counselor, research courses on the UCAS website, and check the links on the ISP counseling site. [www.isparis.edu](http://www.isparis.edu)

### Interesting Research Links for U.K. Universities

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) – The universities and colleges admissions service website for the U.K.

[www.isparis.edu](http://www.isparis.edu) – The ISP website that has useful links for your university searches.

[www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com) – Course comparisons at universities.

[www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com) – Students views on the quality of the education they have received in their subject area at their institution.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide> - *The Guardian* online newspaper with U.K university rankings and other useful information.

[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/education/gooduniversity\\_guide/](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/gooduniversity_guide/) - *The Times* online newspaper with U.K. university information.

## UK University Applications Grade 11 Timeline

### First Semester

- Focus on your studies and perform to the best of your abilities.
- Plan and pursue your CAS activities.
- Participate and be involved in extra-curricular activities in areas of interest to you.
- Attend Paris College Day fair in September.
- Participate in meetings with U.K. university admissions representatives who visit ISP and attend the UK University Tour Event at ISP.

### Second Semester

- Continue to concentrate on your studies and be engaged in your classes and activities.
- Attend the UK College Presentation for Grade 11 at ISP.
- Attend the UK Tour of Higher Education at the British School, in the spring.
- Schedule an individual college counselor meeting and a parent/student counselor meeting.
- Explore personal qualities, abilities, academic goals, and special interests.
- Research specific universities. Learn about the UCAS admission process and specific course requirements. Sources include: <http://www.ucas.com/>, university websites, ISP website, publications, and catalogues in the ISP library, ISP teachers, alumni, friends, relatives, and contacts.
- Develop an initial list of potential universities.
- Write your Extended Essay on a topic related to your course area for which you plan to apply.
- Plan summer university visits, check Open Days on the UCAS site, and consider taking summer programs or other enriching activities related to your course area.
- Notify the counselor if you are interested in applying to Oxford, Cambridge, or courses in medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, and veterinary medicine, which must be submitted to UCAS by October 15th.

### Summer

- Visit schools, if possible, and continue researching courses and universities.
- Check Entry Profile for universities and any requirements for the course, such as special tests or interviews.
- Write a draft of your personal statement.
- Pursue activities or internships related to your course interests, especially if you are applying for medicine courses, which require practical experience.
- Read and prepare for Grade 12 – Extended Essay, TOK essay, other coursework.

## UK University Applications Grade 12 Timeline

### September

- Bring a draft of your personal statement and your list of universities to the Grade 12 U.K. university workshop during the fieldtrip week for Grades 6 – 10. Register online at UCAS during the workshop, if you have not already opened an account in August.
- Complete and submit the "[Student Background Questionnaire](#)" by September 15th.
- Check the College Bulletin board in Chardin and the counseling website to see if schools that interest you will be visiting ISP. Attend these sessions.
- Attend Paris College Day fair, if universities that interest you also attend.
- Students applying to Oxbridge or courses in medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, and veterinary medicine, must meet with the counselor the first two weeks of school.

### October

- Applications for OxBridge and medicine, dentistry, veterinary science courses must be completed on UCAS along with any required supplements by October 1st. The UCAS submit deadline is October 15th.
- Check if there are any special tests or written work that must be submitted for courses.
- Meet periodically with the counselor over the next few months.
- Complete your final personal statement and put on your UCAS application before the end of October. Your reference cannot be started until your personal statement is completed.

### November and December

- Complete your course research and finalize your university choices.
- Complete your UCAS application and discuss it with the counselor.
- The ISP deadline for submitting all UCAS applications is December 1st. Although the UCAS deadline is January 15th, due to the winter holidays, you must finish your UCAS application by December 1st. After you have checked and completed all sections, you may pay the fees by credit card and then send to the referee (the counselor) online.
- Students who have applied to OxBridge or medical courses may be invited for interviews and additional testing in December.
- Students invited to interviews should schedule mock interviews with ISP faculty. See the counselor for advice on arranging mock interviews.
- Plan to visit universities you have applied to, if possible, during the vacation breaks.
- Talk with visiting ISP alumni, friends, and teachers about their university experiences.

### March and April

- Universities expected to have sent all decisions by March 31st. You cannot give your response until you have received all offers.
- The UCAS "Extra" begins in February. If you have not received any offers, you may use Extra to select additional courses.
- Discuss your choices with your counselor and others and select your Firm, Insurance, and Declined choices. Submit a list of your offers, including the conditional IB diploma points, to the counselor.
- Fill in any forms regarding finance and accommodations as soon as possible.
- Focus on your studies and prepare for the IB examinations. Your acceptance is contingent upon completing your IB diploma at the level of your offer.

## May

- Indicate your Firm, Insurance, and Declined choices on the UCAS Track website no later than the first week in May (the deadline will be indicated by UCAS). The earlier you can respond the better for your choices of accommodations.
- Take the IB examinations.
- Make sure you arrange to have your IB diploma results sent to the university.

## July

- Get your IB examination results and hope that you have met your offers (Firm, or if necessary, Insurance)
- If you do not make either choice, you can write letters to the course admissions departments and contact the counselor and we will write letters and call them. If you miss by 1 or 2 points they may still accept you, although if the course is very competitive with many applicants, they may not. You may have to wait until mid-August after the British A level results to have an answer on your acceptance.
- If your IB results are higher than predicted, you may qualify for Adjustment, a procedure where you are able to apply for higher predicted courses. If you qualify, UCAS will automatically contact you through Track. Make sure you continue to look on Track!

## August

- Mid-August is the start of vacancy information for courses, known as CLEARING, if you did not meet your IB points for your Firm or Insurance offer. Check if you have been offered Adjustment to trade up your course selection.
- Late September is the last date for receipt of applications for 2011 university entry.

## Applying to Colleges and Universities in the U.S.

There are over 3000 institutions of post-secondary education in the U.S., about 1500 of which are bona fide 4-year schools offering bachelor's degrees. Even considering only the "top level" schools, there are still at least 150 or more institutions from which to choose. Making the right choice of schools to apply to is probably the most important part of the application process. Amongst all of these institutions, there will be many, perhaps hundreds which would be appropriate schools for you, however, you do not have the time to apply to 100 schools, not even 50 or 20. So the problem is not to choose six to eight schools out of 3000, but out of 100. Going from 3000 to 100 is much easier than you might think. To help you eliminate many schools which would not interest you, review the criteria listed in this guide on Selecting "Best Fit" Universities. Think about them when researching schools and making your list and when you meet with the counselor, your choices of the criteria will help you to shorten the list of schools.

Normally students apply to six to eight institutions (ten, if requiring financial aid): two "likely admit" schools which you are an extremely strong candidate; two to four "possible" schools – those that generally accept students with profiles similar to ours; and one to two "reach" schools – colleges that normally accept students with grades and test scores higher than yours or that are highly competitive even if you have the grades/test scores. Because of the large numbers of outstanding students applying to the most selective schools, many acceptance decisions will be made based on extremely subjective distinctions.

A few very important points:

- ISP limits the number of applications to a maximum of eight. This policy, which is common among college preparatory schools in the US and overseas, is designed to maximize the chances for all of our students. Your list should include "eight first choices" of schools that you have researched and know you want to go there. Applying to more than eight suggests you have not done your research well.
- The US application process is very time-consuming and requires a lot of effort in filling out forms and completing essays. Your applications will be much stronger if you concentrate on a reasonable number to produce excellent results. In addition, you need to keep up with your school work which may be difficult if you are not well organized and are spending too much time filling out applications.
- ISP teachers and counselors are required to indicate the level of academic skills and achievements of the student as well as indicating the level at which they would recommend the student for a particular university. If students do not meet the university's academic profile, ISP may not be able to strongly support the student's candidature.
- Schools admit students who are likely to enroll. This means you need to show you are interested in attending the university by attending ISP school visits, requesting information, visiting the campus, and writing the admissions officers with thoughtful questions about academics, extra-curricular activities, sports, campus life, and any other areas you are interested. You need to have a correspondence - a relationship - with the admissions officer of each school where you are interested in applying!
- A must-read for students and recommended for parents: *Eight First Choices, An Expert's Strategies for Getting into College*, by Joyce Slayton Mitchell. Students receive this book at the beginning of term 2 in grade 11 during their initial meeting with the counselor.

## How an applicant is assessed for admission

This is the question that many students and parents ponder: How does a U.S. college or university decide who gets admitted? Admittance to U.S. institutions is much more complicated than for other systems. Each college may ask for a different set of information and each one weighs application components differently. The following is a list of most schools' decision-making criteria. The US takes a holistic approach in reviewing each applicant and no single factor is considered in isolation.

### Academic Record

All university admission officers give major importance to your semester grades as recorded on the transcript. Your grades are the best predictor of college success, and therefore, colleges look at grades earned since grade 9. Of course, admissions are impressed with an improvement in grades over the years with grade 11 and term 1 of grade 12 being the most important. Schools are interested if the student is taking the most challenging courses and the IB provides the rigorous pre-university program universities value. ISP does not rank students or calculate GPA, which is typical of many independent and international schools. The IB assessments also do not promote calculating a GPA. In any case, each university has its own system of calculating a GPA or reviewing grades.

### Standardized Tests

Most universities are interested in standardized test scores, although they are evaluated in the total context of a student's school performance and make up one part of your application. The more selective the institutions, the more interest there seems to be on scores since all of the applicants have top grades. There are more than 300 universities that have made standardized tests optional (see [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org) for the list).

### Extra-curricular Involvement

Schools are looking for students who are members of a learning community and get involved outside the classroom. Quality of involvement, commitment, and leadership in activities are important.

### Community Service

Service is highly recommended and valued as a sign the student will contribute to the university community and beyond. CAS credits help strengthen the student's application.

### Essays

College essays allow the student to come alive and show who you are, how you write, and what distinguishes you.

### Counselor and Teacher Recommendations

These recommendations have an impact on your chance of admission. Make sure you select teachers who know you well and provide both the counselor and teacher with the requested background forms (student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire). Of course, your motivation to learn, class involvement, and positive, polite behavior will make it easier to write about you.

### Individual Factors

Admission officers also look at individual factors that can play a role in acceptance, such as unusual talents or achievements, alumni affiliations or ethnic background.

### Character

Never underestimate the role that character plays in your application and how you distinguish yourself. Does your application have evidence that you possess individuality, responsibility, a concern for others, and self-reliance?

## The Application

Most colleges and universities encourage online applications. The student begins an online application by creating an account – make sure you remember your password and user name! The Common Application, used by many colleges and universities, is available at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) Answer all questions accurately, with correct spelling and grammar.

A complete application usually includes the following:

- Application form
- Personal essay and for some schools supplemental essays
- Application fee
- Transcript and IB predicted grades
- School profile
- School Report (counselor's recommendation) and teacher(s) recommendations
- Proof of finances for international students

### Some helpful tips

On the application form, it is highly recommended that you do not list the other places where you are applying.

Essay questions should be completed offline as word documents, then cut and pasted. The essay is probably the most important element of the student's part of the application. (See the section on "The Essay")

Keep a copy of your online application. Make sure you print out and sign the Early Decision agreement, if you are applying ED.

**The student is responsible for** sending (online) the application form, fee, and essay(s) as well as mailing any additional materials (art portfolio, voice tapes, video, financial statement, etc.).

**The counselor sends** the transcript, IB predicted grades, school profile, school report, and teacher recommendations.

This year, we are sending the school's part of the application (transcripts, recommendations, school profile) online through the Naviance Family Connection system. For Common Applications, students are required to login to Naviance and enter their Common Application user name and password so that documents can be matched up correctly.

**Students are responsible for the following:**

- Making sure teachers complete recommendations and hand them in on time to the counselor. Students should clearly indicate to teachers when they need the recommendations.
- Providing the counselor with the application list of schools, addresses, deadlines, and required forms (common app or other forms).
- Requesting from the appropriate testing agencies to have their SAT and/or ACT scores officially reported to the universities.
- Requesting all application materials (transcripts, recommendations) at least three weeks before the application deadline (not including school holidays).

## The Essay

The Essay is the opportunity for the student to come alive in the application and show who she is as a person. It is a chance to hear the student's voice – to show how you think and write and what is interesting about your "story". You have the choice of a variety of questions and so trust your instincts and choose what interests you and what feels right. There is no set style or subject matter, just make sure the essay is grammatically correct and appropriate. It is essential to show you are a decent writer and an interesting person with something to say. Give yourself plenty of time to write the essay and several drafts before your final one. More detailed information and samples of successful essays are available in the counseling office and in the essay workshop scheduled in September.

## Important Standardized Test Registration Information

If your Grade 11 scores are not satisfactory, you will want to repeat the SAT and /or the ACT, if applicable. (Remember: the ISP CEEB code is 731668.)

Note that not all Subject Tests are offered at each test administration. The American School of Paris and the Ecole Active Bilingue Jeannine Manual are the closest test centers. Stand-by places may be available at ASP and EABJM on some of these test dates, for more information please see the counselor.

Students for whom English is a second language should be aware of the TOEFL requirement for all schools to which they are applying ([www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)).

To register for the SAT and for all information about the PSAT and SAT's: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

For information about the ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

For information about TOEFL: [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

## Financial Aid and Financial Certification for a US Visa

A major concern regarding a US college education is cost. For US citizens, federal financial aid is available, if you demonstrate "financial need" as determined by a federal formula. Need-based financial aid in the form of grants, low-interest loans, and student work-study programs may be available to qualified students on the basis of the information submitted (online is recommended) on the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid – [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). On the FAFSA, parents provide information concerning their assets, income, and other data from their US income tax forms. This information will be subjected to a formula to determine the amount the family can reasonably be expected to contribute toward education. The difference between your family's contribution and the total college costs is your financial need. To apply for need-based financial aid, your parents complete the FAFSA after January 1<sup>st</sup> of grade 12. Many schools also require an additional form such as the CSS/Financial Profile, designed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS) of the Educational Testing Service. The Profile is used by many colleges and universities to award their own private funds (CSS/Financial Profile is available on the CollegeBoard site [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). These institutions combine Profile and FAFSA information to make their funding decisions. All of the financial aid forms can also be accessed through the university's Financial Aid section on its website.

Schools clearly state their policies toward financial aid, for both US citizens and international students. "Need-blind" means they make decisions that are not based on financial need – they admit qualified students and then provide whatever financial aid the student needs. "Need-aware" schools consider if a student can pay or not, awarding financial aid to those who demonstrate a financial need. With budget cuts and the current economic situation, financial need awareness may play a role in some admission cases.

Not all institutions offer financial aid to non-US students. Many colleges and universities expect international students to find their own sources of money and clearly state, if the applicant cannot fund college expenses, do not apply. Universities require financial information for international students as part of the application, although a few ask for it at a later date (International Student Certification of Finances, on the CollegeBoard site). Students must provide proof of funds, generally a statement from a bank official proving sufficient funds are available. If schools offer funding for international students, there are specific forms that students requesting aid need to provide, such as the International Student Financial Aid Application (from CollegeBoard) or the CSS/Profile. Every university has its own policy on financial aid, the required forms, and the deadlines for forms. All the required forms can be accessed through the university's Financial Aid section on its website. Students should be aware that financial aid for international students is very limited and highly competitive.

Since each university determines its own financial aid policy, it is very important that students check the university websites for the financial information required. In addition, there are Financial Aid Administrators or Advisors at each institution to help answer your specific questions. When in doubt, call them!

Non-US citizens are required to obtain a visa from the U.S. Department of Immigration before entering the US to attend college. To be eligible for a visa, you must have sufficient funds to pay for university expenses. After accepting a candidate, the university will issue an I-20 Form. A student visa is issued to the student by the American Embassy upon receipt of the I-20 Form.

## US University Applications: Grade 11 Timeline

### First Semester

- Focus on your studies and perform to the best of your abilities.
- Plan and pursue your CAS activities.
- Participate and be involved in extra-curricular activities in areas of interest to you.
- Attend Paris College Day fair in September.
- Make plans to take the PSAT at ISP in October.
- Participate in meetings with university/college admissions representatives who visit ISP.
- Research colleges on websites, publications, university view-books, visits.

### Second Semester

- Continue to concentrate on your studies and be engaged in your classes and activities.
- Attend the U.S. College Presentation for Grade 11 at ISP.
- Schedule an individual college counselor meeting and a parent/student counselor meeting.
- Register online and take in May and June the SAT's, and/or the ACT in April, and if necessary, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), which is scheduled regularly at test centers.
- Explore personal qualities, abilities, academic goals, and special interests.
- Research specific colleges and universities. Learn about the admission process and specific requirements. Sources include: college counselor, college websites, ISP website, college visits at ISP, publications: guidebooks and catalogues in ISP library, ISP alumni, friends, relatives, contacts.
- Create a file system to organize your college search, testing, and application information.
- Development an initial list of potential colleges (ideally not more than 12) and contact for additional information.
- Explore financial aid possibilities through internet, counseling, parents' connections (employers, professional organizations, affiliations).
- Plan summer college visits, consider summer programs or other enriching activities, including a summer job or an internship.

### Summer

- Visit campuses, research schools of interest, contact schools with relevant questions and express interest in programs.
- Check requirements and application documents for schools, i.e., Common Application, Supplemental forms, essays, standardized tests.
- Write drafts of personal statement and other required essays.
- Check out the ISP University Counseling Web page.
- Attend a summer program, internship, volunteer, get a job, or actively pursue an interest.
- Read and prepare for Grade 12 – Extended Essay, TOK essay, other coursework.

## Grade 12 Timeline

### September

- Register for the SAT's you would like to take in October, November, or December, if you are not satisfied with your previous test scores. If you are taking the ACT, register for the October, ACT Plus Writing test. Take the TOEFL, if necessary.
- Attend Paris College Day fair and talk with the colleges you are interested in making applications.
- Narrow college choices to a maximum of eight.
- Complete and submit the "Student Background Questionnaire" to the counseling office.
- Bring drafts of your college essays and your list of schools to the Grade 12 U.S. college workshop during the fieldtrip week for Grades 6 – 10.
- Check the College Bulletin board in Chardin, the ISP weekly newsletter, and the ISP counseling website to see if schools that interest you will be visiting ISP or EABJM. Attend these sessions.
- Meet periodically with the counselor over the next few months.
- Begin completing applications online, especially if an application is for Early Decision or Early Action, which may have application deadlines as early as November 1<sup>st</sup>. Notify the counselor of your intention to apply Early and submit the counselor report forms by the end of the month. Make sure you fill out the top part of the forms, sign, and date before turning them in to the counselor.

### October

- Take the October SAT, SAT Subject tests, or ACT Plus Writing (if you haven't already).
- Complete "Teacher Recommendation Information" form, available in counseling or on the counseling web page, have it signed by the counselor and politely ask in person for your teachers to write your recommendation (and give them the TRI form). It is the student's responsibility to obtain recommendations, often from two teachers, and to provide the appropriate teacher recommendation forms required by the colleges, filled out at the top by the student and signed. These letters and forms are confidential and should be turned in by the teacher directly to the counselor. Requests for teacher recommendations and the forms should be submitted to teachers *at least three weeks* before the college application deadline (not including vacation days).
- Early Action/Early Decision applications should be finished this month with the appropriate deadlines met for teacher recommendations and counselor report forms.
- Continue to meet college representatives, your counselor, and visit schools.

### November

- All applications with deadlines in December and January must be finished and submitted to the counseling office by December 1<sup>st</sup>. (If Naviance is used, all documents go through this system.) *It is the student's responsibility to check and meet deadlines for all colleges, as well as submit all required student forms and materials.* (All documents to be completed by the counselor must be submitted to the counseling office at least 3 weeks in advance of deadlines.) Students must submit a "Final University Form" which lists all documents required (e.g. transcripts, predicted grades, recommendations, Common Application or individual college forms) by each college along with the deadlines and the admission's mailing address, telephone, email, and fax.
- Take the SAT's, if necessary. This may be the only month the SAT Language with Listening Subject Tests is offered.
- Send SAT scores online to meet Early Decision/Early Action deadlines.
- Students applying to public universities in California and other public universities should submit applications by November 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Complete CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE, if required, at [www.collegeboard.com/css](http://www.collegeboard.com/css)

- If you will need a student visa (non-U.S. citizen) to attend college in the U.S., download the financial certification form from each college website and ask your parents to start obtaining the required documents from their bank.

## December

- All applications for December and January deadlines are due by December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Take the December SAT, if needed.
- Talk with visiting ISP alumni about their college experiences.
- Make certain you have the appropriate testing agency send your official SAT, ACT, and/or TOEFL scores directly to the colleges.

## January and February

- Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) financial aid form if you are a U.S. citizen and will be requesting financial aid. Your parents must figure their U.S. taxes (but they do not need to file their taxes) to complete this form. The FAFSA should be completed online and only submitted after January 1<sup>st</sup>. See [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Continue to complete all applications with later deadlines or with rolling admissions policies.
- Go to the college's web page to see if you can check the status of your application. Check that all supporting documents have been received.
- If you do not receive confirmation that your application was received, contact the college.
- Midyear reports go out by the last week in January to most colleges. Make sure you have filled out, signed, and submitted the college mid-year report forms to college counseling.

## March and April

- Focus on your studies and prepare for the IB examinations. Your acceptance is contingent upon your completion of Grade 12 with acceptable grades. If your grades drop, your acceptance can and will be withdrawn.
- Letters of acceptance begin to arrive depending on the schedule used by each college. As you receive decisions, please email your counselor so our files can be updated.
- Review college acceptances and financial aid packages; talk with college financial aid officers.
- You have until May 1<sup>st</sup> to make your final decision (except in the case of Early Decision applications). Notify the chosen college of your decision to attend and send a deposit to hold your acceptance. If your reply is not postmarked by May 1<sup>st</sup>, your acceptance can be withdrawn.
- Once you have made your decision, notify all of the schools you did not choose, so they can offer admission to others.
- If you are placed on a "waitlist" see your counselor to review your options.

## May

- Take the IB examinations.
- Tell your counselor and IB Coordinator what school you have chosen so that your Final Report with your transcript and your official IB diploma results will be sent to the appropriate university or college.

## Interesting research links for the US

[www.isparis.edu](http://www.isparis.edu) - The ISP website has all of the following links as well as many others. Look under Learning at ISP - drop down box for University Counseling.

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) – Information about SAT's, scholarships, My College QuickStart, and college searches.

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) – The Common Application website

[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com) – The Princeton Review site for college information.

[www.chronicl.com/students](http://www.chronicl.com/students) - The Chronicle of Higher Education publication website.

[www.nacac.com](http://www.nacac.com) – The National Association for College Admission Counselors

[www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com) – An interesting research website from the students' perspective.

<http://collegeprowler.com> – College guides written by students covering every aspect of college life.

## Applying to Canadian Universities

In Canada, there is a distinction between a university and a college. Universities grant undergraduate bachelors and advanced degrees while colleges focus on vocational and technical training. The academic approach is similar to the US curriculum and organization. Universities are organized within faculties (schools), such as the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences or the Faculty of Applied Sciences.

Canadian universities actively seek IB diploma students and widely recognize the value of the diploma. At some schools, students with the IB begin their university program in the second year; therefore, an undergraduate degree may be completed in three years. Generally, the SAT is required for students not completing an IB diploma. A TOEFL is often requested for international students if they have not been in an English speaking school for at least three years. This requirement can be waived if the student meets the English language proficiency requirements, which usually includes a letter from the counselor.

For students with the IB diploma, the application process is very stream-lined and simple. Students apply online directly to the university, except for universities in Ontario. Universities in Ontario use a centralized application process called Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC). Students submit a single application to OUAC, which is then forwarded to students' chosen universities. Students are encouraged to file the OUAC by early December, in time to process and reach the universities. Other Canadian universities may have later deadlines, however, it is recommended if students are applying to McGill to complete the online application no later than December.

The universities' online applications request basic background information of the student as well as an online fee payment of approximately 60 to 100 CAD. Letters of recommendation and personal statements are not required of international students. Canadian students seeking financial aid may be required to provide additional materials. After applying, each university will send an email or letter acknowledging receipt of your application and requesting transcripts and IB predicted grades. The letter will also contain your personal student number which is important to include on all documents, so please provide this to the counselor. Transcripts, predicted IB grades, and a school profile are sent to Canadian universities after the first term grades are reported (usually the third week in January). Students need to provide the counselor with the list of names and addresses of the universities where they are applying. Final transcripts will be sent at the end of term 2 and students should inform the IB Coordinator which university should have access to the final IB diploma exams.

Canadian universities notify students of acceptances as they make their decisions, any time from three weeks after receiving transcripts and predicted grades to several months, if they are waiting for additional results on which to base their decision.

For further information, check the University Counseling website, speak with the counselor, talk to visiting Canadian university representatives, and look on the university websites.

### Interesting research links for Canada

The [Study in Canada](#) site is a useful guide for higher education in Canada.

A [Directory of all Canadian Universities](#) is available from the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada. They provide information for Canadian and international students, along with a [search engine](#) to identify universities with particular programs of study.

A [list of all Canadian universities](#) and their homepages is also available from the University of Waterloo.

*Macleans* magazine conducts an [annual ranking](#) and review of Canadian universities.

The Ontario Universities Application Center, <http://www.ouac.on.ca/> is the standard on-line application site for Ontario universities.

[ScholarshipsCanada.com](http://www.scholarshipsCanada.com) is Canada's most comprehensive scholarship portal. This extensive database can help find scholarships, student awards, bursaries and grants, in addition to information about student loans, applications and budget planning.

Additional sources for financial aid for international and Canadian students can be found on the eduPASS site, [www.edupass.org/finaid/canadian.phtml](http://www.edupass.org/finaid/canadian.phtml), FinAid <http://www.finaid.org/>, and the Canlearn interactive site <http://www.canlearn.ca/>

Information on the Millennium Excellence Awards for Canadians can be found at <http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/>

## Applying to Japanese or Korean Universities

The school's Japanese and Korean families are two very important groups of the ISP community, and we have a college counselor dedicated to each. For obvious reasons of language and alphabet, we do not cover these universities in this handbook; however, the school has a wealth of expertise and experience in preparing students for successful entry to Japanese and Korean universities.

Mr. Kiyonori Ishimura is our Japanese College Counselor and you should contact him directly ([kishimura@isparis.edu](mailto:kishimura@isparis.edu)) to discuss the application procedure for Japanese universities.

Similarly, Mr. Jeong Nam Seo is our Korean College Counselor and you should contact him ([jnseo@isparis.edu](mailto:jnseo@isparis.edu)) to discuss the application procedure for Korean universities.

## Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

### How can we find out about the many university options around the world?

There is a wealth of information on educational and university websites which details the requirements and university options in all countries. In addition, embassies and consulates devote departments to providing information on educational opportunities in their countries. To narrow your search, the ISP school website has many research links for schools in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and continental Europe. The IBO website also has worldwide university information. In addition, our library has a section with university brochures and application information for schools in Europe, Japan, Canada, the U.S., Australia, the U.K., and Korea. ISP has college counselors who specialize in applying to colleges and universities in the U.K., Canada, the U.S., and other English-speaking schools, (Ms. Hopkinson), Japan (Mr. Ishimura), Korea (Mr. Seo), and France, non-Anglophone universities (Mrs. Debans).

### What do families need to consider when they make plans for university?

Planning for university involves many considerations, including financial, academic, social, and geographic. Parents and students need to talk about the choices that are available, the student's interests and needs, and the realistic possibilities.

**Financial** - The costs of universities vary greatly from country to country. The U.S. is the most expensive (on average \$35,000, as high as \$55,000+); the U.K. for E.U. nationals is approximately £3,000 to £10,000 for international students, while France is relatively free. Although scholarships are available in most countries, students cannot always depend on them.

**Academic** - Which system of study would be best for the Student? In the U.K. and Europe, students usually apply directly to a course of study, such as History, English Literature, Physics, while in other countries, including the U.S. and Canada, the academic approach is known as "liberal arts". Students apply to the university without a course of concentration; they study broadly from a wide range of subjects the first two years and then select a major during their junior year. In general, an undergraduate program in the U.S. is four years while in the U.K. and other European countries it is three years.

**Social** - What type of educational environment would best suit the student, i.e., a campus setting with sports and social activities, a more academic environment, living at home, living with other students? According to many studies, the greatest predictor of success at university is determined by how comfortable the student is in the school environment – is the university a "good fit" for the student. Students are able to become engaged in their studies when they are comfortable with their environment. Some determining factors in the decision-making process of selecting a university that is a good fit include: gender, religious affiliation, student population, urban vs. rural setting, campus setting, campus culture, sports programs, social activities, and international student population.

**Geographic** - What are the realistic possibilities for both the student and parents? Close to home or far away on the other side of the world? In what environment is the student comfortable and how will it impact his/her engagement in his studies?

### How do we research for university and prepare our children?

**Research** – Discuss with your children their academic, social, and extra-curricular interests. Incorporate your research and preparation for the next level of education as part of your overall approach to preparing your child for life. Listen to your children, what interests them, what are their strengths and passions. Encourage them to read, pursue worthwhile activities, turn off the TV, and get involved in helping others, i.e., community service. If your child is interested in visiting universities, take them for visits when you are in the area.

Understand and discuss the different systems of study – Subject related vs. Liberal arts. Research the various resources available.

Preparation - Parents are often concerned with when and how college preparation begins and if they are already behind in the process. Enrolling students at ISP, even as soon as the Early Years Program, is already a beginning in the process. Our students, as IB learners, are already striving to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective – all characteristics that selective universities seek in students. The IB curriculum is a pre-university program that has already put students on a path for college preparation. Even in the PYP and MYP, intellectual inquiry and critical thinking are the basis of the curriculum. Students are supported in pursuing extracurricular activities as well as volunteering for community service. Universities world-wide recognize the rigors and value of the IB program as evidenced by the higher rate of acceptance for IB diploma students in comparison to other academic programs.

Parent-Child Relationship - Planning for university can be a complex and emotional process. Adolescents are sometimes reluctant to discuss issues with their parents and communication may not always seem open. ISP teachers and counselors are advocates for the students and place them at the center of the process while emphasizing the importance of family involvement. During the application process, parents play a significant role in encouraging their child to take responsibility for university applications as well as listening to their ideas and empowering them to make important decisions.

[How do we decide on prospective universities or a specific field of study, e.g., engineering, medicine, law?](#)

Obviously, the student's academic success at ISP is a major factor in determining which universities the student is qualified to attend. Also, the subject areas in which the student excels play a significant role in the specific field of study.

In schools around the world, academic standing determines the level of university opportunities. In the U.S., schools are primarily interested in the student's transcript, a record of grades from grades 9 to first term of Grade 12. In the U.K., only the predicted grades for the IB diploma are considered, while in Canada some schools are only interested in predicted IB scores and grades from 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The specific field of study depends on the strengths and interests of the student. To succeed in engineering courses, math and physics skills are required. In some universities, such as the U.K. and Canada, Math HL and Physics at SL/HL are required. In medicine, an interest and aptitude for chemistry and math are important. However, in the U.S. an undergraduate degree in any subject, even art, is accepted for medical school as long as Chemistry requirements are met.

Additional tests are usually required in most countries to apply for medicine and law.

Other Resources:

[CAREER DAY](#) - ISP offers students the opportunity in grades 10, and 11 to participate in Career Day in order to learn more about a diverse range of professions. In the past three years, Career Day has presented speakers from the Arts, Fashion Design, Medicine, Business, NGOs, Media, government, law, and Humanitarian agencies.

[MY-Road](#) - An online American career counseling tool provided by Collegeboard is available for all students who take the PSAT.

[Stamford Test](#) - A free online questionnaire to match interests and aptitude with subject areas offered by UCAS, the U.K. university application system for applying to schools in the U.K.

**FutureWise** - A not-for-profit career counseling organization that students may subscribe to through ISP. A component of the service includes a psychometric test and a FutureWise profile of each student.

### What kind of financial assistance is available for students at universities?

At most universities throughout the world, there is financial assistance available in the form of scholarships and financial aid (funds which do not have to be paid back), bursaries (small funding, not repaid), and loans. Many countries also offer financial assistance to attend universities outside of the home country.

Some U.S. universities offer the most assistance through need-blind financial aid, which is also available to international students. Need-blind means that if a school accepts the student, it will meet all of the financial needs of the student based on the parent's economic needs. Schools indicate on their websites if they are need-blind. Schools may also offer merit-based scholarships if they are really interested in the student, regardless of the financial needs. Ivy Leagues and some highly selective schools in the U.S. provide full funding for accepted students (within a certain income range or not). Financial aid in the form of Federal loans is available to U.S. citizens applying to U.S. universities.

Canada, the U.K. and other European universities also offer some funding for Students (from their country as well as international and EU students). Scholarships for IB diploma students are also available.

### What are the PSAT's, SATs, ACTs and TOEFL? Are they always necessary for admission to U.S. universities?

These are all standardized tests used by U.S. universities that are meant to measure general aptitude and serve as a benchmark for differing academic systems.

PSAT – the preliminary SAT is available for students in grade 10, who would like to practice, and grade 11 who are interested in applying to U.S. schools. U.S. citizens who take the test in Grade 11 might qualify as National Merit Scholars.

SAT – the SAT test measures critical reading (800), Math (800), and writing (800) skills.  
SAT Subject Tests – One-hour tests in specific subject areas based on 800 points. Highly selective schools may require 2 and sometimes 3 subject tests.

ACT – American College Testing, is a more subject-based standardized test that is also accepted by U.S. universities. If students are interested in taking the ACT, they should take the ACT Plus Writing given in October, December, and April. Some schools may also require the SAT subject tests.

More and more U.S. universities are waiving the standardized test requirements. A list is available at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language is a standardized test for English language skills. If students have not been in an English speaking school for their academic career, if they don't take English HL, or if they score low on the SAT or ACT, the TOEFL may be required at English speaking universities. [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

### Can students study in English in a non-English speaking country?

Yes, many countries offer English speaking programs. There are excellent courses in the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Norway, and India as well as American Universities all over the world.

### Why doesn't the Counseling start college meetings with students in Grade 9?

ISP feels that during these years of Secondary School, students should concentrate on doing well in an appropriately challenging academic program, and should become involved in extracurricular community activities. The MYP provides an excellent preparation for the college admission process, developing students who are critical thinkers and independent learners. The school provides some initial career guidance in grade 10 and, when students begin the IBDP in grade 11, they will have the full range of university options open to them. They are at no disadvantage; on the contrary, they will be more mature and better equipped, intellectually and emotionally, to make decisions that are right for them.

### Shouldn't ISP provide class ranks?

No. Hardly any private college preparatory secondary school provides rank-in-class since to do so would put students at a disadvantage. Our grade level class sizes are small and therefore, ranking students is meaningless. In addition, the IB program does not really fit with the concept of ranking. Since there are such a large number of schools like ISP that do not report class ranks, even those universities that appear to "require" class ranks are able to evaluate our students' performances using other criteria.

### What does it mean to "send official test scores?"

Colleges require students to send their "official" SAT, ACT and/or TOEFL scores. A score is official if it is sent from the testing agency directly to the college. This can be done through the test company's website. ISP does not have and cannot send official scores for students.

### When should students begin taking the SAT/ACT?

Usually, students take the SAT or the ACT during the second half of grade 11. Grade 10 and 11 students interested in applying to the U.S. may take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) in October and the results are available in mid-December.





## Teacher Recommendation Questionnaire

*Students: Please complete this form for the teacher who will write a recommendation for you. In responding to the questions, provide as much detail as you can. You may have a maximum of two teacher recommendations; however, some colleges may require only one. Please check college requirements before requesting a second recommendation. Answering these questions fully can result in a more helpful recommendation and enhance your chances of admission.*

Teacher's Name

Date:

Student's Name:

Email:

I will be applying to an Early Decision or Early Action college.

yes

no

(Teachers are asked to have early recommendations finished by October 20<sup>th</sup> and all other letters completed by December 1<sup>st</sup> for January deadlines. Students must request recommendations at least three weeks prior to deadlines, not including school vacations.)

- 1. I tentatively plan to apply to the following colleges/universities:**
- 2. What subject areas do you think you will study in college?**
- 3. A teacher's recommendation usually concentrates on your academic performance. In general, how did you contribute to this class? More specifically, give two incidents or examples to illustrate your contributions.**
- 4. What out-of-class experiences have you had that are related to this subject area (e.g., summer courses, reading, activities, things you did but weren't required to do for the class, etc.)?**
- 5. Describe a project, paper or activity in this class you were proud of or especially enjoyed?**



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