

College Planning Handbook

Class of 2018



**American International School in Egypt
West Campus**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction Letter	1
<u>Students’ Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admission Process</u>	2
<u>Responsibilities (Student, Parent, and School/Counselor)</u>	4
<u>School Curriculum and University Requirements</u>	7
<u>Naviance</u>	8
<u>Choosing a Country</u>	9
<u>Finding a Range of Appropriate Schools</u>	11
<u>Senior Year Calendar</u>	13
<u>College Admissions Tests</u>	16
<u>The College’s Review Process</u>	19
<u>What Universities Look For in Completing a Class</u>	24
<u>Types of College Applications</u>	25
<u>Decisions: Acceptance and Denial</u>	27
<u>Applying to the UK</u>	29
<u>UK Application Timeline</u>	32
Appendix	33
— <u>Class 2018 Senior Personal Profile</u>	
— <u>Teacher Letter of Recommendation Worksheet</u>	

Dear Student and Parent/Guardian,

It is with pleasure and enthusiasm that we officially begin the college search process with you. I have created this handbook as a resource for you to use during the college search and application process. I hope that the college selection and application process is a smooth one for you and your child, and this handbook becomes a valuable resource. The selection process can be a very stressful, yet exciting time. Many of the answers to questions you have, can be found in this handbook. This handbook should be utilized as a guide, referring to the appropriate sections as you go through the process: of investigating schools, gathering information, interviewing, writing essays and resumes, filing applications, and finally deciding on the appropriate college or university to attend.

Selecting a college today is not an easy under-taking. There are more than 3,000 accredited colleges and universities in the United States alone. You will find that each school has pros and cons relative to a student's interests. It is now time for you to assess your own interests, as well as your strengths and weaknesses, and to discuss your plans with your parents/guardians, counselor and teachers. If the approach towards the college exploration and selection process is performed in a thorough and thoughtful manner, you will go off to a college or university with peace of mind, knowing that you have made an informed decision based on a careful analysis of all of your options.

I look forward to working with you in this endeavor.

Respectfully Yours,



Ms. Guillen

AIS West High School and College Counselor

STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS IN THE USA

As published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling

When You Apply to Colleges and Universities, You Have Rights Before you Apply:

- You have the right to receive full information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial aid, scholarship, and housing policies. If you consider applying under an early decision plan, you have a right to complete information from the college about its process and policy.

When you are offered admission:

- You have the right to wait to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until May 1.
- Colleges that request commitments to offers of admission, financial aid, and/or housing prior to May 1 must clearly offer you the opportunity to request (in writing) an extension until May 1. They must grant you this extension, and your request may not jeopardize your status for housing and/or financial aid. (This right does not apply to candidates admitted under an early decision program.)

If you are placed on a wait-list or alternative list:

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait-list, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Students should contact the colleges by phone to emphasize their continued interest in the school.
- Colleges may not require a deposit or written commitment, as a condition of remaining on the wait-list.
- Colleges are expected to notify you regarding the resolution of your wait-list status by August 1, at the latest.

When You Apply to Colleges/Universities, You Have Responsibilities Before you Apply:

- You have a responsibility to research and understand the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll.

As you apply:

- You must complete all the material that is required for application, and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the SOLE author of your applications.
- You should seek out the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

As you receive your admissions decisions:

- You must notify each college or university that accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college you wish to attend, but no later than May 1.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only ONE college or university. The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify the college or university at which you had previously indicated your intention to enroll.

If you think your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of the reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association of College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to: Executive Director, NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2812.

The information presented here is consistent with changes to the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice, revised in September 2016.

STUDENT, PARENT & COUNSELOR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important to understand the student's role and your counselor's role in the college admissions process so that you can do what is necessary to enable your counselor to be the most helpful to you. There are many resources available to help you choose the best college, but you must take the initiative to use them. It is your future! First and foremost, your counselor is your advocate who hopes to see you often during your senior year. Your counselor wants to work closely with you to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses, set realistic goals, and plan carefully for life after high school. It is to your advantage to participate actively in this cooperative venture. Your counselor will rely on you to complete a number of tasks efficiently and punctually. Therefore, it is important for you to understand your responsibilities.

Students are encouraged to visit schools and have admissions interviews at the places in which they are most interested. Your counselor is an excellent resource for students searching for the right college.

Students are encouraged to refine their search using a variety of criteria, including: *course major, enrollment size, location, sports and extracurricular activities, costs*, etc. There are many programs available that provide direct links to college and university websites. We especially recommend that students use Naviance. This website offers access to just about every college and university in the United States, as well as around the globe. You should also visit www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org where you can obtain applications deadlines, scholarship information, and major and career exploration tools. In addition, in the coming months, there will be college fairs with representatives from various colleges and universities, on our campus. These representatives will be able to explain the opportunities available at their respective institutions in more detail and provide applications and acceptance criteria information.

Students are responsible for sending their own applications to colleges and universities. Students are also responsible for asking their teachers for letters of recommendation, by completing the Teacher Recommendation Worksheet.

Applications

Deadlines are an important part of the application process. You want to be careful that you do not eliminate any college opportunities because you missed a deadline. You must be mindful of application deadlines and follow all of the necessary steps in the admissions process. Your counselor is more than willing to answer questions, but you **SHOULD NOT** assume that your counselor is aware of every detail concerning your applications. When in doubt, please ask your counselor.

Recommendations/References

When your teachers, and/or counselor write your recommendations, he/she wants to paint you in the best possible light to enhance your chances of acceptance. Your counselor wants to be your advocate and can best assist you when she is well informed of your future plans and career goals. It

is imperative that your counselor be informed of all of your in and out-of-school activities. If your counselor is well informed about your extracurricular activities, she can include this information in your letter. Providing the counselor with the *Senior Profile* is imperative to writing a personal letter for you.

On occasion, teachers may ask to see a list of your extracurricular activities. Please do not provide a list of activities to the teachers. Colleges and universities really want to read about what the teacher has to say about you in their classroom. For this reason, we ask you to ask your teachers to base their recommendations on what you have accomplished in class and what you have written on your *Teacher Recommendation Worksheet*.

Transcripts

Each college will require a copy of your official transcript at the time of application, as well as a senior year first semester, and lastly your final grades. Make sure to provide the name of the university you plan to attend on your NAVIANCE account, so that we may send the final transcript.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT?

As a college-preparatory school, AIS West has a responsibility to provide effective guidance and counseling in the college admissions process. Our faculty is eager to support you in your desire to find a good match at a college of your choice. While we cannot get you into a specific school (this is your responsibility), we can assist you in meeting the demands of a very strenuous and time-consuming task. You will need to invest an ample amount of thought, planning, time, and hard work in seeing the task to completion. The process works effectively when students, parents, and your school, understand their respective roles and cooperate in the venture.

Student Responsibilities

- Engage in thoughtful, honest reflection and analysis of your aspirations, goals, hopes, strengths, and weaknesses and apply this knowledge of yourself to your college search process.
- Give 100% effort to your academics throughout high school.
- Do the research it takes to find and apply to a variety of colleges you'd be happy to attend.
- BE AWARE OF ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE/UNIVERSITY YOU ARE APPLYING TO.
- Take control of the admission process rather than be dragged or coerced through it.
- Complete applications with care. Write the required essays with thought and honesty.
- BE AWARE OF ALL DEADLINES.
- STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SENDING TEST SCORES to colleges.
- Keep your counselor informed as your interests and priorities may change.
- Abide by the Maximum University Application Policy. *
- In summary, the responsibility for applying to college is YOURS.

Parent Responsibilities

- Talk honestly about issues such as financial limitations and geographic considerations that will impact student choice;
- Set up visits to college campuses;
- Listen attentively to your child's reactions and share your own;
- Attend scheduled meetings about college planning;
- Visit, call, or E-mail the counselor with questions and concerns;
- Read counselor e-mails and Newsletters;
- Follow your son's or daughter's progress in the search and application process;
- If you have concerns about any schools on the list, contact the counselor immediately;
- Be sensitive to your child's individual needs;
- Realize that as a Senior, your child needs loving attention while he or she is simultaneously excited about the mystique of college, overwhelmed by difficulties and decision-making, and anxious about acceptance and rejection;
- Encourage successful completion of the Senior Year.
- Support the Maximum University Application Policy. *

School/Counselor Responsibilities

- Get to know you well enough to be able to advise you as to colleges and programs, which might be suitable for you;
- Present your transcript and official high school recommendations to the colleges;
- Act as your advocate to the extent that your credentials allow;
- Offer counsel, advice, and support throughout the college admission process;
- In addition to these specifics, we will devote our full energy to aiding you in any possible ethical way we can;
- Inform students of visits to campus from college representatives;
- Remind students of important test registration deadlines and provide necessary registration materials;
- Assist students with the procurement and completion of application materials;
- Be sure that the necessary documents (counselor recommendation, official high school transcript, and midyear reports) are provided to the institution to which the student applies;
- Support the student's candidacy at the colleges to which application is made, primarily through a thorough, positive, yet credible and honest recommendation.

***Seniors are limited to a maximum of TEN (10) university applications.** We want universities who receive applications from an AIS Egypt student, to be assured that the application was intentional and thoughtfully considered.

The Importance of the High School Curriculum

Your high school curriculum is crucial to you as you focus on finding the best match in a college. It is also a key factor for college admission departments when they evaluate candidates.

Criteria for college admission vary greatly; however, all colleges focus on the rigor and quality of your high school curriculum. Admission personnel judge “rigor” and “quality” by evaluating the importance of the academic subject matter in your courses, the grades you earn in those courses, the level of difficulty of your courses, and the rank in class that results from the grades you have achieved and the program you have taken.

As an AIS high school graduate, your high school courses will be considered as College Preparatory courses. Different types of institutions of higher education have general requirements unique to their classification. Useful classifications include public universities, private four-year colleges, highly selective colleges, two -year colleges, and community colleges. The more selective a college or university is, the more that institution can demand in academic achievement.

Minimum course requirements for entrance into different types of colleges are shown in the following list. Use the academic prerequisites only as general minimum guidelines. Many colleges look for applicants who take more rigorous classes and with high academic grades. Because college expectations may change from year to year, obtain specific information directly from the college or from your counselor.

Minimum Course Requirements for College/University Admission

Public Universities:	Private 4-Year Colleges:	Highly Selective Colleges:
English 4 years	English4 years	English4 years
Mathematics..... 3-4 years	Mathematics.....3-4 years	Mathematics.....4 years
Foreign Language...3 years	Foreign Language ...3 years	Foreign Language4 years
Science..... 3 years	Science.....3 years	Lab Science4 years
Social Studies..... 2-3 years	Social Studies2-3 years	Social Studies4 years
Electives 2 years (Art, Foreign Language, Music)	Electives2 years (Art, Foreign Language, Music)	Electives2 years (Art, Foreign Language, Music)

*Schools that require foreign language for admission will require at least two years of the same foreign language.
ALWAYS CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUAL COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES FOR THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.

AIS WEST Graduation Requirements	
(One credit equals one year)	
English	4 Credits
Mathematics.....	4 Credits
Foreign Language.....	4 Credits
Science.....	4 Credits
Social Studies.....	4 Credits
Electives	6 Credits
Total: 26 Credits.	

Family Connection

Naviance Family Connection is a web-based service designed especially for students and parents. Naviance Family Connection is a comprehensive website that you can use as a tool to help you in making decisions about colleges, scholarships and careers. Naviance's *Family Connection* is linked with Naviance's *Counselor's Office*, providing a service that is used to track and analyze data about college and career plans. It provides up-to-date information that is specific to your school.

Naviance will allow students and parents to: Get involved in the planning and advising process; complete on-line surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers;

Build a Resume – To make the college application process as easy as possible, beginning in 9th grade, use Naviance to track work experience, honors, awards, community service, extra-curricular hours, leadership experiences, and more.

Research Careers – Naviance offers the "Career Interest Profiler" as a career interest assessment for students based on Holland's Interest codes. Students may also link directly to the college database to find colleges that offer an educational path to each career.

Take a Personality Profile "Do What You Are" – The feature begins with a personality inventory and concludes with a report describing the student's personality type, potential careers, and related majors. The results link students directly to detailed career profiles, which include educational requirements, salary data, and in some cases even multimedia presentations.

Research Colleges/Universities – Compare your GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from our school for students who have applied and been admitted in the past.

Use Scattergrams® to See How You Compare – Using the scattergrams feature is a great way to see how you compare with other students who have applied to the schools you are interested in. Scattergrams is unique in that it compares you with past AIS students, which gives you a much more accurate picture of your chances.

Sign Up for College Visits – Find out which colleges or universities are visiting our school and sign up to attend those sessions.

Communicate with your Counselor – You can use the site to send your counselor an e-mail message. If you have further questions about Naviance Family Connection, please contact your Counselor.

Choosing a Country

Having studied at American International School in Egypt - West, has probably made you realize there is a world of opportunity waiting for you. In fact, you have so many choices; it's often difficult to know where to begin. While the majority of AIS graduates matriculate to the UK, more and more are heading to the US, while others go to Canada, or stay in Egypt. The following provides a brief overview of universities in these countries.

USA Universities

As you may have noticed, the words "college" and "university" are used interchangeably when referring to institutions in the USA. To be precise, college usually refers to an institution devoted primarily to undergraduate education. You are an undergraduate until you graduate with a degree (called a Bachelor's Degree). A university, on the other hand, is usually a larger institution offering a combination of undergraduate and graduate (Master's or Doctorate) degrees. Universities are frequently committed to research, as well as teaching. One is not better than the other; they both offer four-year Bachelors Degrees.

So you're not sure which major to choose? No problem. The majority of students who begin college in the USA, do not declare a major. There is latitude to try different courses in the first two years and choose a major later. Many students apply as "undecided," waiting until after their sophomore year to declare a major. Except for certain majors, such as engineering, most students take a variety of courses during this time. General education or "core" requirements help insure all students have a breadth of knowledge when they graduate, in addition to their specialized area.

The flexibility of changing majors also allows students to transfer between different institutions. If a student chooses to transfer at the end of sophomore year, for example, the new school may accept almost all earned credits. Transfer acceptance decisions are usually based on grades earned in college.

In the USA, colleges and universities each set their own criteria for determining who gets admitted. Each one designs its own application, asks different questions, has a variety of deadlines, and sets its own policies. This can become rather complicated as you attempt to keep track of what each school wants. Even schools accepting the "Common Application" usually ask for individualized supplements specific to the college.

Universities in the USA think the best predictor of college success is high school performance. Therefore, grades earned and high school courses taken and the rigor of these courses are the most important factors considered. Standardized test scores, if the college requires them (some don't - a list is at www.fairtest.org), are always considered less important than your transcript.

UK Universities

There are several major differences between the UK and USA university systems. The majority of degree programs in the UK (except for Scotland) take three years to complete, and students focus solely on the one or two subjects they have chosen to study. Thus, there are no general education requirements in university as there are in the USA. If you are someone who is certain of the subject

you want to study in college, a UK university could be a good choice for you. Particularly if you are someone who loves one or two subjects, but doesn't ever want to take another class in some other area, the UK system would provide you with that very specific type of education. If you are undecided about your major, be aware that in order to apply to the UK, you would have to make a decision about what to study, and that transferring to a different subject usually entails starting your degree over from the beginning.

In Scotland, degrees generally take four years to complete, and can be more general – for example, a student can study humanities or social sciences, rather than needing to focus on a specific field such as psychology. The cost of attending university for a year in the UK is evolving upward – although one less year is required to obtain a degree.

Generally, students would only be admitted if they have earned good scores in their IB exams by the end of high school. Students without these scores can apply to a one-year foundation course in order to qualify later for entry to a degree program.

Canadian Universities

In Canada, there is a very real distinction between a university and a college. Institutions granting bachelors and advanced degrees are universities. Colleges only focus on vocational and technical training. To make it just a little more confusing, a school within a Canadian university (such as arts, science, or commerce) is called a faculty or a college, similar to the system in the USA and UK universities.

Each university in Canada has a general minimum admission standard based on Canadian grading standards. These minimum GPA and course requirements vary from faculty to faculty. If you are interested in being admitted to an engineering program, you may read you're required to earn a particular grade in specific courses like science and Pre-Calculus. Note that the Canadian percent scale is different than the US grade scale. Since you are from an American school you should always check the requirements for an American school educated student regardless of your citizenship.

If you're considering a Canadian university, it's important to look at the university's website to understand application requirements. Many courses will specify what IB courses are necessary for admission.

After applying, each university will send an e-mail, or acknowledging receipt of your application, requesting transcripts and other documents. That letter will contain your personal student number. It may be necessary to send transcript updates at the end of your third quarter senior year and, in some cases, after graduation, so be sure to keep your grades up throughout your senior year!

Gap Year

Are you ready to begin university immediately after high school? If you are not sure, doing something different for a year gives you time to think things over. Of course, this can have its negative side. You fall a year behind your classmates and you could wind up wasting the entire year (but then, you might have wasted your first year at college, too).

Even if you plan to take a year off, it is recommended that you apply to colleges or universities during your senior year. Take the required tests, request recommendations, and explore school choices

while in school. Once you have been admitted, defer the starting date for a year. Almost all colleges will allow deferment if you write a letter of explanation and give them proper notice (usually by May 1). The only stipulation is that you cannot attend another college during your year off.

FINDING A RANGE

While it's not unusual for students to talk of their "first choice" college, it is rare that there is only one single, best college. Even if, after thorough research, you decide on a first choice, the final list should include a number of colleges, any one you'd be happy to attend if admitted.

Once your senior year begins, you'll have to narrow your list of potential colleges down to a manageable number of seven or eight, but no more than ten. With this number, you can do a thorough job on each application, instead of being overextended trying to complete too many. With each application fee of approximately US\$50 to \$100, plus costs of sending ACT/SAT and TOEFL scores, applying to a larger number schools will quickly add up and can consume your senior year. To make certain you're admitted to at least two, you need to make certain you apply to a range of safety, possible/likely and reach schools.

Safety, Likely/Possible, and Reach

The following is a rough guideline to categorize your college choices: Apply to one to two "reach" schools – colleges/universities that normally accept students with GPAs and test scores slightly higher than yours; three to five "likely or ideal" schools – those that generally accept students with profiles similar to yours; and two or three "safety" – colleges for which you are an extremely strong candidate. Be certain your likely schools are those you wouldn't mind attending. Just because you're likely to be admitted doesn't mean the college should be thought of as a "lower status" college in your mind. Also, remember what may be a likely school for you might be a reach for one of your friends, because these categories vary for each student.

You must understand only the most exceptional students are accepted at Harvard, Stanford, and other very selective universities. Harvard, for example, has approximately 2,100 slots for the more than 35,000 applicants. These kinds of schools can often fill their entire freshman class with students who earn all A's and have perfect ACT/SAT's. Harvard denies 94% of their applicants. Be realistic about your grades, test scores, and your chances of entering the Ivy League.

A truly exceptional student with a realistic chance at the highly selective universities can choose to apply to more "reach" schools, as long as there are at least a couple of truly likely schools. 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. If you are an "A" student with top scores applying to Ivy League-type schools, you may want to complete up to the maximum of ten colleges.

There are few guarantees in the admission process. Each year a few students are admitted to places where the odds seemed impossible. The opposite occasionally occurs as well. A college looked like a safe bet, but a letter of rejection arrived anyway. Using the method of applying to some likely, some possible, and some reach schools is the best way to keep from being shut out in April. So how do you decide which school is at which level?

Look at Naviance

You have access to data on the acceptances and rejections of AIS students who applied to colleges all over the world. This data is in Family Connection and generates scattergrams, which list acceptance and denial information by college. The chart plots the AIS seventh semester cumulative

GPA, best SAT score, and (most importantly) whether the applicant was admitted or denied. The name of the student is not provided. If previous AIS students have applied to a school you are interested in, by using the scattergrams, you can see how a student with similar grades and scores fared with his or her application. Although the data is sometimes contradictory (i.e., students with lower grades or scores were sometimes admitted while students with higher numbers were denied), it can approximate your chances of admission. Contradictions occur mainly because applications are more than just grades and test scores. One student may have taken harder courses, been a student leader, or had outstanding recommendations, while another student did little except come to school each day and make good grades. The scattergrams help to identify which schools are reach, possible, and safety based on your numbers. Once you find a school that seems to be a good match, click the "Add to List" button. That college will appear on your "colleges I'm thinking about" list.

Check the Percent Accepted

If there is no information in Naviance, you can make a guess on your chances of admission by finding out how many students are usually admitted in a given year. The most selective schools only admit 5 to 15 percent of the applicants. Certainly your chances of getting into that kind of school are less than one that admits 60 to 70 percent of the students. The percent of accepted students is found on college's websites.

Each year there are a few "hot" schools to which everyone seems to apply. As a result, they attract a huge number of applications and become much more selective than they used to be. Northwestern, Duke and NYU, for example, are schools that have recently become very hot. This situation creates a vicious circle. When a student hears about a hot school, the reaction is often, "Hey, I'd better apply too!" But the more people apply, the more people are rejected. That doesn't mean you shouldn't apply to a hot school. It just means that even if your grades and test scores appear to make you a strong contender, you might not be admitted. Scattergrams list a four-year summary of admission so if things have recently changed, they can be misleading.

If you decide to apply to a certain college because you read an interesting article about it in US News & World Reports College Rankings, remember several million other people will have read about it too. Some colleges accept students for second semester (January) admission who might ordinarily be denied. If you are sold on a "reach" college, check on alternate admission seasons. Also, check if there is a greater possibility of acceptance in a second choice major. For example, computer engineering might be extremely selective, while other engineering majors could be somewhat more accessible. However, if you truly want to study science, don't apply for a major in classics just to gain admission to a college – it's not always possible to switch majors.

Compare SAT/ACT Scores

Most colleges now provide SAT scores in middle fifty percentile bands. If a school reports their freshman class had Critical Reading SAT scores from 550-640, it means half of the admitted students had scores within that range. Twenty-five percent of the students had scores below 550 and twenty-five percent of the students had scores over 640. You may be tempted to automatically eliminate schools if you do not have scores in that middle fifty percent band. That is a mistake. Don't do it. If you are not far off the bottom of the range and have grades that are strong, go for it.

A problem with SAT averages is colleges use their own techniques for determining average scores. They may manipulate the numbers to make them look better than they perhaps are, because most

colleges want to look selective and improve their US News & World Reports rating. Sometimes this is done by eliminating the scores of minorities or athletes, who, as a group, do worse on admissions tests than others. It may be easier to get into a school than the scores suggest, depending upon whether and how the school has manipulated the scores. They don't lie, but they stretch things sometimes.

If you've only taken the PSAT so far, comparing your scores with SAT averages can be misleading and disappointing since most students' SAT scores are higher than their PSAT scores. Your grades are still the most important factor.

Senior Year College Application Calendar

September

Students:

- Register for the September ACT if appropriate (check [ACT dates](#)).
- Come up with a preliminary list of colleges that includes [reach](#), [likely/possible](#) and [safety](#) schools.
- Explore the websites of the colleges that interest you to learn about admissions requirements.
- Check your senior year class schedule to make sure you're taking the English, math, social science, science, and foreign language classes you'll need for your top-choice colleges.
- Look over the Common Application and begin thinking about potential topics for your [personal essay](#).
- Follow up with teachers who you've requested [letters of recommendation \(LOR\)](#) from, especially if you are applying early.
- Request LOR through Naviance.
- Register for October or November SAT exams (check [SAT dates](#)).
- Finalize your college list and update "Colleges I'm Applying To" on Naviance. Pay close attention to admission deadlines (early action, early decision, regular). Create a calendar or timeline to stay on target.
- Meet with counselor to discuss the schools to which you're thinking of applying.
- Create a chart of deadlines. Pay particular attention to early decision, early action, and preferred application deadlines.
- Work on your [college essays](#).
- Try to assume a leadership position in an extracurricular activity.
- Keep your grades up.
- Continuing drafting your college essays.
- Begin completing college applications, if applying early.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Attend College Admissions Orientation with your student
- Review the college application timeline your student has created to help them meet the deadlines.

October

Students:

- Take the SAT Reasoning and/or SAT Subject, as necessary.
- Attend college fairs and visits.
- Complete your applications online, if you are applying early.
- Research financial aid and scholarships.
- Get your college essay in shape. Get feedback on your writing from your counselor.
- Keep track of all application components and deadlines: applications, test scores, letters of recommendation, and financial aid materials. An incomplete application will ruin your chances for admission.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Offer to look over your student's college applications. Remember, this is your student's work, so remain in the role of advisor and proofreader and respect his/her voice

November

Students:

- Register for the December SAT or ACT if appropriate.
- Take the November SAT if appropriate.
- Don't let your grades drop. It's easy to be distracted from schoolwork when working on applications. Senior slump can be disastrous for your admissions chances.
- Make sure you've submitted all components of your applications if you are applying to colleges with November deadlines for early decision or preferred application.
- Put the final touches on your application essays, and get feedback on your essays from your counselor.
- Continue to research scholarships.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Begin preparing for financial aid by applying for your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Personal ID Number (PIN).

December – January

Students:

- Submit your applications for regular admissions.
- Make sure you've had your test scores sent to all colleges that require them.
- Confirm that your letters of recommendation have been sent.
- Submit the [FAFSA](#) (Free Application for Financial Aid) (For US residents/citizens only).
- If you are accepted to a school through early decision, be sure to follow directions carefully. Submit required forms, and notify the other schools you are withdrawing your application.
- Continue to focus on your grades and extracurricular involvement.
- Have midyear grades sent to colleges.
- Continue to keep track of all deadlines and application components.
- Continue to research scholarships. Apply for scholarships well in advance of deadlines.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Be prepared to have your tax information ready in early February in order to submit the FAFSA as quickly as possible. College/university financial aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

February – March

Students:

- If you submitted the FAFSA, you should receive the [Student Aid Report](#) (SAR). Carefully look it over for accuracy. Errors can cost you thousands of dollars.
- Contact colleges that didn't send you a confirmation receipt for your application.
- Don't put off applying to schools with rolling admissions or late deadlines -- the available spaces can fill up.
- Keep up your grades. Colleges can revoke offers of admission if your grades drop senior year.
- Some acceptance letters may arrive. Compare financial aid offers and visit campus before making a decision.
- If there are changes in your academic courses or extracurricular program since your initial application, notify your colleges.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Prepare and submit the FAFSA, available January 1.
- Help your student process college responses and make a decision where to attend.

April

Students:

- Keep track of all acceptances, rejections, and waitlists.
- If waitlisted, [learn more about waitlists](#) and move ahead with other plans. You can always change your plans if you get off a waitlist.
- Keep your grades up.
- If you have ruled out any colleges that accepted you, notify them. This is a courtesy to other applicants, and it will help the colleges manage their waitlists and extend the correct number of acceptance letters.
- A couple circumstances may warrant an [appeal of a college rejection](#). Speak to your counselor if you are thinking about appealing.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Help your student complete the paper work to accept a college's offer of admission, submit tuition deposit, and other required paperwork.

May – June

Students:

- Avoid senioritis (the disorder of not wanting to do any more academic work because you already have a place at college or university)! An acceptance letter doesn't mean you can stop doing your best in high school.
- Make your final decisions. Most schools have a deposit deadline of May 1. Don't be late! If needed, you may be able to request an extension.
- Prepare for and take IB exams. Most colleges offer course credit for higher level IB scores; this gives you more academic options when you get to college.
- Request your final transcript with your counselor.
- Complete your "Senior Exit Survey" on Naviance.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- Finalize housing arrangements and pay deposit, if applicable.

July – August**Students:**

- Read all mailings from your college/university carefully. Often important registration and [housing](#) material is sent in the summer.
- Register for your classes as soon as possible. Classes often fill quickly, and registration is usually on a first-come, first-served basis.
- If you get your housing assignment, take advantage of the summer to get to know your roommate (e-mail, Facebook, the phone, etc.). Figure out who will bring what. You don't need two TVs and two microwaves in your tiny room.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

“Try” not to be too emotional. Your child will mimic how you feel about College/University. If you act like you are a little sad but pleased for them, they will feel good about leaving. If you act like it’s the end of the world, your child will be very anxious about leaving

Admission Tests

When applying to college, test scores may be the first thing to come to mind (even though they are rarely the first thing that an admission officer will look at). As explained earlier, test scores are the primary acceptance factor for European universities. For applicants to Egyptian universities, exam results either get them in or keep them out. For students applying to the USA, however, the answer to “How important are the SATs or ACTs?” is a complex one. If you ask an admissions officer from a selective university if scores are the most important part of an application, the answer will be “no.” Instead, you may hear, “test scores are one factor, but grades and the strength of course work are more important.” What that means is that there is no one thing that can get a student into a particular university.

However, when that same admissions officer begins sifting through stacks of applications to decide which fifty percent to admit or reject, test scores do become important. Many applicants will have roughly the same grades, the same positive recommendations, and the same well written essays. In these cases, a high ACT or SAT can break the ties. Some schools will take IB predicted scores in lieu of SAT or ACT scores. Check each school’s requirement.

Regardless of what an admission officer may say, most still put considerable weight on test scores. While many believe there are better ways to measure college preparation (which there are), they still see the ACT or SAT as a measure of predicted ability. The more selective the university, the more important the scores seem to become. Test scores are probably more important than admission officers say, but less important than you think. The following is an explanation of the major entrance exams.

PSAT/NMSQT

The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is given to all AIS sophomores and juniors each October. The test follows the SAT format (with verbal, math, and writing sections) and can give an early indication of likely SAT scores. Test scores range from 20 to 80 on each subtest and correlate with the 200 to 800 SAT scale.

Do not get upset about low PSAT scores. AIS administrators purposely require all students to take the PSAT as practice for taking a college entrance exam. Most students earn lower PSAT scores than SAT scores. Colleges will never receive your PSAT scores; only you, your parents and the AIS counseling office will be able to view them.

PSAT/NMSQT scores are used by the USA-based National Merit Scholarship Corporation to determine who is eligible to enter the National Merit Scholar Competition. USA citizens who perform exceptionally well on the PSAT/NMSQT are identified as “Commended” or National Merit “Semi-Finalists.” Semi-Finalists with extremely high SAT scores, good grades, and positive recommendations may be named as “National Merit Scholars” and could win scholarships.

The SAT

Most colleges or universities require SAT scores because the results are the only common comparison they have between students coming from a variety of schools and backgrounds. For students going to the USA, SATs (or the similar ACT test) are required by many universities. Non-USA students applying from schools such as AIS may be required to submit SAT scores if applying to universities in their home countries.

Prior to May 2009, students who took the SAT more than once had to send all scores to colleges. "Score Choice" was announced by the College Board in 2008 with the goal of "reducing student stress." Score Choice permits students to send only their best overall score from a given test date. So students can take tests repeatedly with no apparent penalty.

There's one catch. Schools can choose to opt out of Score Choice and require applicants to report every SAT score. Currently Stanford, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, Pomona, and the University of Pennsylvania are just a few of the colleges requiring students to report all scores. Other selective schools, including Harvard, Princeton and the University of Chicago, honor Score Choice. Several colleges say Score Choice is irrelevant because they already pick the highest individual math, verbal and reading scores from among multiple tests (often called "super scoring").

In the past we have found that sometimes students (often encouraged by their parents) take the SAT as early as freshman or sophomore year. This is a bad idea. The more high school math, science, social studies, and English courses completed, the better the score will be. Scores earned early in high school will be lower than those earned in junior or early senior year. Since all SAT scores taken since ninth grade may be required by some colleges and low scores earned early don't help, students are advised to continue to put off the SAT until later the second semester of the junior year. Use the PSAT as it was intended, as a practice SAT.

SAT Reasoning Test Beginning May 2016

When people talk about "the SAT," they are talking about the SAT Reasoning Test, formerly called the SAT I. The current SAT Reasoning Test has ten sections and takes just under four hours to complete. The two areas, Evidence-Based Reading and Writing AND Math, are scored separately, with scores ranging from 200 to 800 in each area, for a total score of 1600. AIS administers the SAT several times a year, but the best time to take it initially is in January of your junior year. You can continue to retake the SAT again in the fall of your senior year.

SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject Tests used to be called the SAT II's. They are one-hour tests on subjects studied in high school and are only required by fewer than 50 US colleges (the more selective ones). The majority of colleges do not require students to take any SAT subject tests nor do they use them. For those schools that do require them, generally math and a second exam of your choice are required. Only a very small number of colleges (less than 5) recommend a third exam so taking more exams isn't particularly helpful. On any SAT test date, you can choose to take exams in one, two, or three subjects. You cannot, however, take both the SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Tests on the same day.

Most subjects are offered on each SAT test date. The notable exceptions are the Foreign Language with Listening Tests. These tests are offered only in November. Take your SAT Subject Tests in May or June of your junior year and then again in October or November. If you will be applying to colleges requiring the SAT Subject Tests, you should probably take Math level 2 and one or two other tests of your choice.

SAT Scores

SAT scores are on a scale from 200 to 800. Approximately half of college-bound juniors earn combined scores above 1000 (two sections with an average score of 500). The easiest way to

determine how you did on the SAT Reasoning Test is to check your percentile score. A percentile score judges your performance relative to other students who took the test. If you earn an SAT score at the 50th percentile, it means you scored better than 50 out of 100 typical college-bound students who took the test. In other words, if you lined up 99 students from the lowest (1) to the highest (99) scores, you would be number 50 if your score was at the 50th percentile. Don't confuse percents with percentiles. Percentiles compare you to other test takers.

Students often ask how many times to take the SAT. Generally, the answer is three. Most students show score improvement the second time, averaging 15-20 points on each section. Taking the SAT more than three times will rarely increase scores further. Since AIS students take the PSAT twice, by the second SAT, it's really the fourth time an SAT-type of test has been taken.

SAT Prep Programs

There are an array of books and computer programs available to help prepare for the SAT Reasoning Test. As long as they don't take away from homework or other activities, using one makes sense. Unless you already are making straight As, don't spend a large amount of time taking a prep course, especially during the school year. Remember, admission officers say courses and grades are the most important factor considered when making an admission decision. Therefore, AIS can not recommend lengthy coaching courses, especially if they require a lot of time and effort better spent on schoolwork or other worthwhile activities.

There are, of course, valuable test-taking tips and strategies. For example, if an answer to a question near the beginning of a test section seems obviously right, it probably is; later in the section, as the questions get more complex, beware. But, don't spend lots of money on a test prep course to learn the tricks.

If you are willing to spend some time preparing for the SAT, there are some free web-based SAT prep programs. Khan academy has partnered with CollegeBoard to provide free tutoring. If you do wish to take a course, research on the SAT shows 20 hours of quality prep time will result in about the same improvement as considerably longer programs. Putting more time into a prep course will detract from important activities such as homework and extracurricular activities. While a test prep company will never tell you this, research has shown that you will get just as much improvement by buying (and using) an SAT prep book than you will by going to a course. Remember, a change in your SAT Reasoning Test scores may help distinguish you from other applicants; but so will success in an especially rigorous course load, involvement in school or community activities, or demonstrating an outstanding talent.

Registering for Admission Tests

Registration for the SAT Reasoning and Subjects Tests is done online and links are on the website. One thing the tests have in common is the high school "College Entrance Examination Board" (or CEEB) code. The AIS West **CEEB code is 648090**.

You will be asked to register with a user name and password and you will use this same login each time you want to register for a test. You will also log on to the site to get your scores so don't lose your login or password! AIS-West students wanting to take the SAT must make sure you register your account with the exact name on your passport. On the test date bring your passport, calculator, and sharpened pencils. If your ID name does not match with the name you registered, you will be

turned away and not allowed to take the exam. The cost of the SAT is USD\$53.50 plus the international fee of USD\$47. The cost for each SAT subject is USD\$26.

Sending your Official Scores

When you take any SAT exam, you are the person who receives and “owns” the scores. Colleges require you to ask the testing agency to send your scores to them. You can do this at the time you register for the test by logging on to the testing website and paying to have your scores sent. Only you can send your official scores, your counselor can’t. Almost all colleges require an official copy of your SAT scores. When registering for an SAT, you can send your official scores automatically to four colleges at no additional charge. Once the test is scored, they will send the new results, plus all previous SAT scores, to the listed colleges. You can opt to send official scores later— and you must at some point have your official scores sent—but it costs US\$11.25 for each report sent.

The College's Review Process: How They Decide

How does a college or university decide who gets admitted? For UK universities, the decision is based primarily on exam scores, like IB or other exams related to what you want to study. For US colleges, however, it's much more complicated. Each college asks for a different set of information and each one weighs application components differently. Below is a list of most schools' decision-making criteria. No single factor is considered in isolation. All documents and forms are reviewed together.

Your Grades and Transcript

Admission officers are interested in many things, but they're most interested making sure the freshmen they admit will finish and graduate. All colleges want to fill their classes with students capable of doing the work. No college wants to traumatize its freshmen by having them in a situation they aren't equipped to handle.

The best indication colleges have of how well you'll do in college is how well you've done in high school. High school grades are the best predictors of college success, much better than SAT scores. As a result, US colleges pay attention to grades earned since ninth grade. The more academically successful you've been in high school, the better your chances of admission will be.

As your transcript is examined, each year will be seen as more important than the previous one. Colleges look for steadily improving grades—unless of course you've earned straight "A"s each year. Grades from the junior and the first half of the senior year are most important. If you really didn't do well in your freshman year, don't despair. Admission officers are pretty good about discounting isolated problems, as long as they happened early in high school. If you wasted your entire ninth grade year but then pulled yourself together for the rest of high school, most admission officers won't be overly concerned. Some schools, especially those in California, don't consider your freshman year grades when making an admission decision.

The GPA calculated by AIS might not be the GPA used by a college or university reviewing your application. Since each high school uses a different set of grade weightings, most colleges recalculate each student's GPA. They may drop the weightings, eliminate PE and art classes, or discount freshman grades completely. Rather than focusing on GPA, most admission officers review an entire transcript to see the overall number of "A"s, "B"s and "C"s, while carefully considering the course load.

Courses You've Taken

"Is there anything wrong with the courses I've been taking?" you ask. Probably not, but the "A" earned in PE is not as impressive as the "A" earned in IB Chemistry. All "A"s are not created equal. Anybody can inflate a GPA by taking easy electives that don't require much academic work. You (and your parents) may enjoy seeing "A"s on your report card, but don't expect college admission officers to be as impressed with an easy course load. The names of the courses are printed next to the grades earned.

College admission officers and high school counselors are always asked, "Is a "B" in a hard course better than an "A" in an easy course?" Here's what Stanford once said: "Be careful not to assume that the world is divided between students who take difficult courses and get "B"s and the students who take easy courses and get "A"s. Most of our applicants are able to take difficult courses and

receive “A”s.”

Of course, most students can’t make all “A”s. But the general principle still applies. If you can successfully accomplish the work in advanced courses, take them. If your transcript reveals you are taking a lighter load than you can handle, admission officers will wonder about your motivation. They will be especially concerned if the difficulty of your course load drops off noticeably senior year. On the other hand, continuing to make good grades in five or six solid academic courses is more impressive than a mediocre performance in seven. Don’t get in over your head, because earning a “D” in an IB Biology course is never impressive. Don’t fill your schedule with easier courses as soon as you’ve fulfilled the minimum graduation requirements. Continue taking as many advanced courses as you can while still doing well.

Likewise, taking only six courses in junior and senior year won’t impress admissions officers of selective colleges. Unless you are heavily committed to extracurricular activities, enroll in seven courses. More important than increasing your attractiveness to admission officers, you’ll be getting a better education.

Senior Grades Count

Although you apply to college in the fall of senior year (before your first semester grades are available), almost all colleges require an updated seventh semester transcript be sent in the middle of your senior year. If your grades start dropping during the first semester senior year or you drop hard courses midyear, you can ruin the chances of being admitted to a selective college. Colleges really do care about senior grades, and require a final year-end transcript for all students planning to attend. There have been cases of students having acceptances withdrawn due to poor senior grades.

Relationship between Tests and Grades

Because grading systems in different schools and countries vary, colleges use test scores to provide a standardized measure of comparison. If something seems out of line, the question becomes, “What’s going on?” For example, if a student has 2100+ SATs or 32 ACT, but B and C grades, a flag is raised. Comments regarding motivation are looked for in the recommendation letters. The word “lazy” will probably come to mind, and evidence to support or discount this “laziness theory” will be reviewed.

Test Optional Schools

There are more than 800 four-year colleges who no longer require the SAT or ACT. These schools have conducted studies on what best predicts success at their institutions. Since high school grades are often the best predictor, some have stopped requiring admission tests and instead base their decision on grades and the other application information. For a student with good grades and low scores, for “test-optional” colleges, it is to your advantage to not send them. Be aware, however, that more emphasis will be placed on your transcript. If you are taking the IB diploma, many schools will substitute predicted IB scores for standardized tests.

A Holistic Approach

Admission officers look for more than just students capable of earning good grades. They want engaging students who bring a spark to class discussions, take initiative on campus, sing in an A-Capella group, or can make the residence hall a better place to live. That’s why the essay is so

important, because it brings your application to life and helps paint a clearer picture of who you really are, besides your grades and test scores.

Essay

Colleges use the essay to determine who you are, how you write, and what distinguishes you. What kind of person are you? What is something significant about your experience? What is important to you? Colleges want to know what makes you unique and interesting.

Do not write what you think the college wants to hear or what they already know about their institution. There is no perfect or correct essay. Essay topics are purposely chosen to result in many different responses, so the admissions staff won't have to read the same thing over and over. Your essay should be one that only you could write. The most effective essays seize a topic with confidence and imagination. Relax and try not to guess what the admissions committee wants to read. An honest, personal essay built around an illustrative story is much more effective than an essay that recites a list of high school achievements (which are already listed elsewhere on the application anyway). A good topic is one you want to write about, that comes from your heart, not one you think you ought to write about. A good test of whether the essay is authentic, is if you can substitute another student's name in place of yours. If you can, that means it is a generic essay and does not show how unique you are

Please note, when an essay topic asks to describe an experience, person, or book that has influenced you, the admission reader is interested in what the influence has been. Most of the essay should discuss this impact, not just who what influenced you, but WHY and HOW.

Extracurricular Involvement

A college's interest is not only confined to what you do in class. They are also looking for students who are members of a learning community and who contribute outside the classroom. Extracurricular activities play a big part in distinguishing you. Quality and commitment are much more important than quantity. Colleges are pleased to see you're committed to a few activities for which you have an aptitude/passion and in which you plan to remain involved. Leadership positions demonstrate commitment, so, just as upward grade trends are important, so are increasing levels of responsibility in your chosen activities. It is better to take three years of French than to take one year each of French, Chinese, and Japanese; it is better to spend three years rising to a position of importance in the SAME club than it is to join a dozen organizations the school has to offer.

I have heard many university representatives clarifying that university admissions officers are not really looking for each student to be 'well-rounded,' they are looking for a well-rounded freshman class." Involvement in high school activities tells the admission officer how much you'll contribute to their school.

Extracurricular activities do not make up for less than stellar grades. Students highly involved with extracurricular activities may find their grades suffer as a result. No list of activities will make up for mediocre grades. If you want to attend a top school, understand many high school students demonstrate leadership and also make straight "A"s and get high SAT scores. Don't overextend yourself to the point your grades suffer.

Awards and Honors

If you have been an impressive student, you may have won an award or two. Almost all applications contain a section for listing academic awards and honors. Most students don't have too much to add here. Induction into an honor society, an academic achievement award, an art or writing award, and a sports or musical award is usually all a student can list. Don't worry about not being able to completely fill in this section. The majority of students have only a few things to add here.

Your Recommendations

Choosing whom to ask to write recommendations is important and is one of the things you will discuss with your counselor. At AIS, teachers will only agree to write a recommendation if they can truthfully say something positive. These are academic recommendations in which teachers address what they have seen in class and how that predicts future college success. Some colleges give you specific instructors to ask. They may ask for a recommendation from an English, math or science teacher, or someone who has taught you in the last year. If there are no specific instructions, consult with your counselor. If you know you will be majoring in a particular area, ask a teacher in that subject area to write for you. It is best to ask teachers you have had in your junior year, but it's not necessary to choose teachers in courses where you earned As. In fact, it's often those courses in which you earned "B"s and "C"s that admission officers wonder about and can be explained by the recommendation writer.

Waive Your Rights

In the USA, you have the legal right to read what colleges have in their files about you. Virtually all recommendation forms request you waive this right by signing your name. AIS students are required to waive your right to read a letter of recommendation. If you don't, an AIS teacher or counselor won't write a letter. Colleges only value confidential letters. Remember, we are your advocates. Your counselor and teachers seek to highlight an accurate picture of you that paints you in the best light possible.

Teacher Recommendation

Teachers have a lot to do without also writing recommendations. Some teachers who teach only juniors and seniors may be asked to write recommendations for twenty or more students. Because writing these letters takes a lot of time, give teachers plenty of advance notice and be sure to request one recommendation in the final quarter of your junior year.

If you ask a teacher to write a recommendation one day before the deadline, don't expect the teacher to write positively about organizational skills, if he or she is willing to write it all. Ask teachers who know you, respect you, and will write positive things. If you feel a teacher has little to say other than the grades you earned, pick someone else. Also, ask the teacher in a way that he or she can politely decline. You might say, "I don't want to put you on the spot, if you'd prefer not to." If your teacher replies, "I'd like to help you, but maybe someone else knows you better," take the hint and ask someone else.

Do not ask several teachers to write recommendations and expect your counselor to "choose the best one." Teachers are too busy to spend time writing recommendations that will never be used. Most students need two teacher recommendations in addition to the counselor recommendation. It's best to ask one from either your English teacher or social science, and then a second from either your math or science teacher.

Counselor Recommendation

Over the years, counselors have met many admission officers. The admission officers take into account what counselors say since they know we can lose credibility by writing an inaccurate recommendation. If a counselor writes, “this student is brilliant and will do great,” but then the student fails classes after one semester, all future recommendations will be suspect. Therefore, expect your recommendation to be positive, yet honest.

Most applications have something called a “Secondary School Report” or “Counselor’s Report.” Your counselor is usually asked for an assessment of your motivation, academic promise, and integrity. An official copy of your transcript, along with a profile describing AIS, will also be sent to the college.

You must complete the “Senior Personal Profile” form. This document includes a set of questions you must answer to help your counselor write your recommendation and insures that nothing important is left out. It also makes the recommendation accurate and easier to write. For example, many recommendations ask the counselor to write the first three words that come to mind when thinking about you. Having you list three words to describe yourself can be very helpful to your counselor to start the creative juices flowing.

A counselor recommendation is included with each application that requires one. The counselor’s recommendation can be used to explain weaknesses in your application, to highlight your strengths, and to explain any situation that has negatively affected your grades.

UK Reference

The above information primarily applies to US institutions. Since you apply for a particular course of study when applying to UK universities, the academic reference is written differently for UCAS. The reference page may be written by your counselor or a teacher and should specifically speak about whether you would be successful in the proposed course of study. Predicted exam results are also critical. AIS teachers will be asked to predict what scores you will likely earn on your IB exams. The UCAS instructions also specifically ask whether or not the candidate would be successful if admitted to the particular course of study. Talk to your counselor for individual advice if you are completing the UCAS form. Full details about UK applications and references are found later in this guide.

What Colleges/Universities Look For

Diversity

Many colleges look for students whose characteristics or accomplishments match their “institutional priorities.” For example, being an unusually talented athlete won’t guarantee admission, but can be the “hook” to help admissions officers distinguish among a number of equally qualified applicants. The accomplished violinist or trumpet player could also be an example of a performing arts “hook.”

Other students, not Olympic swimmers or violin players, also match a college’s admissions priorities. Almost every college is interested in its cultural and ethnic diversity. If you have a passport from a country not already represented in a student body, your chances of admission may be increased. If you have a common passport (American, Chinese, Indian, Korean), colleges are still interested because they’re trying to increase their overall percentage of international students. American students who have experienced life in another country are also thought to bring a helpful perspective to the life of the college.

Undersubscribed Majors

It sometimes seems most seniors plan to major in business, engineering, or pre-med. These “hot” majors mean colleges may have difficulty keeping their humanities programs viable. Since they need students in these areas as well, at some colleges, applicants, who list humanities as an intended major, may be more appealing. Before playing this “game,” find out what a humanities major is. Also, understand some universities make it difficult to transfer between a major in one college (College of Liberal Arts) and another (College of Engineering). Entering as “undecided” is perfectly acceptable if the college doesn’t require you to declare a specific major upon application. It’s especially good if you think you may declare a pre-med or pre-law major. You will decide later, based upon your college GPA. Some colleges actually prefer applicants who haven’t made up their minds on their majors or careers.

Full Paying Students

As college expenses go up each year, many institutions are having difficulty staying within their budgets. Most US colleges and universities have a high percentage of students who require some amount of financial aid. More US colleges are becoming “need aware,” which means that financial need is a factor in whether or not you will be admitted. Need aware schools should openly state their policy. Financial need awareness plays an admissions-decision role for those students just barely admissible. In the case of a tie, the admit decision will often go to the student who can pay.

For non-US citizens, many colleges clearly state, if the applicant can’t fund college expenses, don’t apply. Colleges are not trying to discriminate, but, because the majority of financial aid funds come from the US government, US taxpayers would not be happy spending tax dollars on international students when many US students do not get their needed financial aid. International students, do not request financial aid until you discuss it with your counselor first.

Application Options

Once your list is made of where to apply, visit each website to get on the school's mailing list. Feel free to contact more schools than you will apply to. Receiving materials or an application doesn't mean you have to actually apply. While you will probably not apply to more than ten schools, it is perfectly acceptable to contact ten or more schools.

There are several different versions of US application plans, each with own set of deadlines, procedures and obligations.

Regular Decision

A "Regular Decision" application has a set deadline for application submission and a standard date of acceptance/rejection notification, usually April 1.

Some schools, primarily large state universities, have rolling admissions, which means they tell you the admissions decision a few weeks after the application is sent. Admission officers keep accepting and rejecting students until the freshman class is filled. It is beneficial to get your application in early, because the longer you wait, the harder it is to get admitted. Applications for large state universities are brief, since they process thousands of applications. They may also emphasize numbers (GPA and test scores) in their decision process.

Priority or Early Response Deadline

Some colleges, such as the University of Illinois and University of Michigan, offer an early or priority deadline. For students whose completed applications submitted by their deadline (usually November 1), these colleges guarantee that a decision will be released in December. Students whose applications are complete after the Early Response deadline receive decisions on a rolling basis. If a college offers a way to find out decisions early, students should certainly use that option.

Early Decision

Early Decision (ED), an option offered by less than twenty percent of colleges, is an application program in which you specify that a school is your absolute first choice. The deadline for ED is usually November 1. Students who choose ED are usually notified about their acceptance around December 15.

If you are accepted, you must withdraw all other applications and agree to attend the Early Decision school. Your counselor is ethically required to hold you to your early decision and will not submit transcripts or applications to other schools if you are admitted ED. Only apply ED if you have an absolute first choice school.

If you choose to apply to a binding ED college or university, you are indicating that this institution is your first choice for all universities worldwide. No matter where else you may have applied, whether in the US or other countries, if you are admitted ED you must withdraw all other applications and enroll. AIS will not process additional requests for transcripts.

One ED advantage is that students who apply ED usually have a better chance of admission than those who apply regular decision. If you are not accepted, you will either be rejected or deferred. Some schools (e.g., Stanford and Northwestern) admit or deny the majority of ED applicants,

deferring very few. Those students, who still have a chance of being admitted, or who didn't get SAT scores sent in time but appear to be admissible, are usually deferred. Deferred students are reconsidered in the spring with the regular decision applicants.

A disadvantage to ED is the limited time to review all options, since you are committing to a school early in senior year. Also, if you have strong first semester grades, ED schools will not see them.

Some colleges now offer two rounds of Early Decision, with the first round due date in November and the second round due date in early to mid-January. It is recommended for students who feel their first semester senior year grades should be included in their applications. If you are rejected as an ED candidate, your application will not be reconsidered in the second-round or regular decision pools.

Early Action

Early Action (EA) schools allow you to apply early and receive early notification, but do not require you to withdraw other applications. Applications are usually due on November 1 and notification is made in mid-December. Accepted students don't have to decide to accept until the regular May 1 reply date.

Restrictive Early Action

Some colleges (Harvard, Princeton, Yale and Stanford, for example) are restrictive and do not allow their applicants to apply to any other early action or decision programs. Students are only allowed to apply to other colleges with a rolling, priority, or regular decision option. Restrictive Early Action is also called "Early Action Single Choice" by some colleges. If you are applying early to any school, read the rules carefully and see your counselor for clarification.

Admission Decisions

Once the college has reviewed your application, they will notify you about your acceptance. Colleges using “rolling admissions” usually notify applicants six to eight weeks from the time they have a completed application folder (with your test scores). Students applying in September sometimes hear in October. Colleges using a notification date (approximately April 1) send out decision letters on or about the same date.

Accept

These days you are likely to receive your decision online, either through an e-mail or through your account on the college’s website. Since e-mail decisions are sent in batches, it’s entirely possible that a decision email ends up in your spam folder. Around decision time, get into the habit of looking in your spam folder before you automatically delete all of the messages.

Defer

Students who apply Early Decision or Early Action sometimes get a letter of deferral, which means the college will wait until the regular decision cycle to decide whether or not to accept you. Deferrals can be due to the need to see your first semester senior grades, or because the admissions office is unsure of the strength of the rest of the applicants. A deferral is not necessarily a terrible thing. Some students who are deferred are admitted later. If you are deferred, you are released from any binding commitment. You can apply, be admitted, and choose to go to any college that accepts you.

Deny

Unfortunately, not everyone can be admitted everywhere. Admissions decisions have little to do with you, personally, and more to do with the other students who applied that year. You can do everything right, and still not get in. If you happen to be denied admission to a college you especially wanted to attend, never call the admission office to vent your anger. If you are contemplating transferring a year later, you don’t want to have had a bitter encounter with the admissions office.

Only in extraordinary circumstances is an “appeal” possible. Appeals are rarely successful unless the college has made an honest mistake, (perhaps they were unable to locate a part of your application) and denied you for that reason. If you think something like that has occurred, your counselor is the one who should intervene.

Wait-List

All colleges admit more students than they have room for in a freshman class, because they realize not all students they admit will choose to enroll. Hard to believe, perhaps, but even Harvard only gets approximately 80% of their accepted students to enroll. Guessing what the “yield” will be is a difficult task, especially as more students apply to more schools each year.

If a school underestimates the number of accepted candidates who enroll, there will be holes in the incoming freshman class, which are filled from the wait-list. Even so, the wait-list is usually a long shot. Final notification may not come until well into the summer so to be safe, accept an offer of admission from another school, even if it means sending in a non-refundable deposit. Some colleges wait-list almost as many students as they admit, so the chances of being admitted off the wait-list at

these institutions is minimal.

May 1 Reply Date

Once you have your acceptance letters, you must decide where to go. The US candidate reply date is May 1. If you don't inform a school that you're planning to attend in the fall, they can, and often do, withdraw your acceptance. Notify all other schools that accepted you of your decision not to attend. An email is a great way to do this. If you're sure you won't be attending, notify the college promptly so they might be able to open up other slots for other students.

Once you've made your choice, pay the nonrefundable enrollment deposit, which tells the school you are showing up in the fall. Also, check on housing arrangements. Read the materials you received with the acceptance letter to see how you should take care of these matters.

Thank all those who proofread your essays and wrote letters of recommendation. Your counselor and your teachers whom you asked to write your recommendations, feel hurt when seniors forget to say thank you or fail to tell them the outcome of the colleges' decisions.

Canadian University Decisions

Most universities in Canada have coordinated their decision period to coincide with the US. However, some still do not make decisions until after receiving final senior year grades, especially if a candidate is on the borderline between admit and deny. Final quarter of senior year is no time for "senioritis" if you are waiting to hear from Canadian universities. If you don't get a reply by late April, email or phone the admissions offices to check if all required documents were received.

Applying To 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 a quite 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 would have to begin your degree over from the beginning. For this reason, students who are not certain of their interests, are not a good match for studying in the UK.

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 and click on “Course Search.” You can then search by course or by university.

Once you’ve decided on a course, you should consult “Unistats,” a website that allows you to compare a particular course, for example, advertising, at all universities in the UK that offer it. You will find data there about the range of tariff points achieved by the admitted students, which is a rough way of determining selectivity, see your counselor for assistance with interpreting this relative to the IB. 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 Times and The Guardian to be very helpful.

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.

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 could be chosen at the same university (e.g., one course called Psychology and another called social psychology at University of Kent would make up two course choices). Each university is counted as one application toward the maximum of 10 allowed by an AIS senior.

Starting the Application

All AIS students, including current seniors and graduates considering a transfer, apply through our school's section of the UCAS website at www.ucas.com. Each year, AIS provides information about how to complete the UCAS application correctly. To make the process go as smoothly as possible, it is important that you register and apply as an AIS student.

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 report of completed and anticipated examinations (including SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests, and IB exams), and a one page personal statement which is described below. You pay the application fee online when you submit your form. After submission, your counselor checks and approves the data you entered and adds the reference letter, which will be written by your counselor or a selected teacher you have had in subjects related to your intended field of study. Your 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, your completed application must be submitted online no later than **December 1**, so the reference can be added and the form entered before school closes for the winter holiday. You may read that the deadline for international student applications is June 30. In fact, any application received after January 15 is considered a late application and is processed only after all other applications have been considered. We enforce a **December 1** deadline to ensure that you have your best chance of admission.

There are earlier deadlines for specific universities and courses. Students applying to Oxford or Cambridge must submit the UCAS form plus a supplemental paper application by mid-September in order to be eligible for the required interviews and exams held in late October. If you think you might apply to Oxford or Cambridge, you must discuss this with your counselor in the spring of grade 11 in order to begin planning for submission of the work samples that are often required by those two institutions. Students applying for medical, dental, or veterinary courses, or those applying to Oxford or Cambridge must submit applications to their counselor by **September 15** in order for the form to reach UCAS by the October 15 deadline. Interviews are almost always required for clinical courses. All students not holding an EU passport must apply for a student visa. In order to be approved, students must submit their **IELTS UKVI Academic Test** reference number in the UCAS application. If a student is pursuing a foundation year, they can take the **IELTS UKVI General Test**.

Personal Statement

A UCAS personal statement is very different than what is expected by USA colleges. A UCAS

statement allows you to make a convincing case for admission to the course of study you have selected.

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. This is not a place to show off every last extracurricular activity that you have joined, but rather to discuss how any particular activity might have helped to prepare you to study your subject.

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. Readers will be carefully considering your level of motivation to study your chosen course.

Reference

Since you apply for a particular course of study at UK universities, the UCAS reference is very different from a recommendation letter to a USA university. The 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.

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/.

Instead of an outright acceptance, UK universities give "offers of admission", which are usually contingent upon meeting specific conditions. A typical offer requires certain IB test scores. The more popular the course of study, the higher examination scores needed. Outright denial occurs if you do not complete the specifically required exams or if your exam scores to date are weak. On the other hand, a particularly well-qualified student may receive an unconditional offer, which is an outright offer of admission. Some universities will make an offer contingent upon exam scores in particular subjects. For example, if you apply for a chemistry course, you would need to be taking IB Chemistry HL and IB Math 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.

Because of the way UK admissions decisions are made, the AIS transcript is of less importance than exam scores. Once you've been assigned a UCAS number, if you wish, you can have your transcripts sent directly to the university admission tutor, especially if you've done well. The transcript may not carry a lot of weight, but a record showing you did well in high school will be helpful.

Don't respond to any offers until you get the last one. When the last decision is posted, speak with your 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 won't 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 called "Extra" in which you can apply one at a time to additional courses until you receive an offer. See your 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.

UK Timeline

- August 1 – Online application form available. AIS West will have our own "**buzzword**", which will be available beginning August 1. Students use this buzzword to gain access to AIS West profile, including teacher references.
- September 15 – UCAS application processing begins. Any exams needed must be completed by the October 15 deadline.
- October 15 – Applications must be received by Oxford or Cambridge University as well as for all students who wish to study medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine courses at ALL universities.
- December 1 – AIS deadline for submitting all REGULAR UCAS applications. Although the UCAS deadline is January 15, due to winter holidays, students must complete UCAS applications by December 1.
- March – Universities expected to have sent all decisions by this date.
- May – Indicate your *firm*, *insurance*, and *declined* choices on the Track website by this date.

UCAS Offers

Each time a UK university makes a decision on one of your applications, UCAS will notify you of the offer details. 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 won't have received the exam results, this can be a difficult decision. If you are confused about any offers, check with your counselor before submitting your offer. Once you have made a commitment to particular course you cannot change your mind.

Ask your counselor for advice regarding which offer to accept as your firm. UCAS asks for prompt replies and will provide a deadline in which you must make your decision.

If you don't get a place on your chosen university course, you can apply for other courses through "Clearing." If you did not receive any offers, you can participate in a process called "Extra" in which you can apply one at a time to additional courses until you receive an offer. See your counselor for

help with either of these processes.



SENIOR PERSONAL PROFILE



NAME: _____

DOB: _____

Your counselor will use this information as a basis for answering questions about you on college application forms or for letters of recommendation. Please take time completing this form and think carefully before answering. Be as thorough as possible.

List by grade schools attended:

Grade	School Name	Location	Language of Instruction
9 th			
10 th			
11 th			

The three qualities I like best about myself are:

What are three qualities your teachers would say they like best about you?

What are three weaknesses of yours?

What differentiates you from your peers?

What accomplishments, projects, papers or activities are you most proud of and why?

Describe how you have shown leadership skills both inside and outside of the classroom:

Is your high school transcript an accurate measure of your ability? Why or why not?

Please list all activities you have been involved in high school (in order of importance to you)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three most selective schools you are considering (in order of preference) and state why you want to go there:

- | | | |
|----|---------|------|
| 1. | Course: | Why: |
| 2. | Course: | Why: |
| 3. | Course: | Why: |

What is a hardship or problem you have had to overcome in your life? Tell me how you dealt with it and how it has changed you?

Full IB Diploma Candidate? **NO** **YES** **List IBHL classes you are taking** (If you have AP's from other schools list here):

Is there anything else you would like your counselor to know about you?

Place a check (✓) in the location that suits your level of the description:

Please rate yourself:	Below	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Academic motivation					
Academic creativity					
Academic self-discipline					
Academic growth potential					
Leadership					
Self-confidence					
Sense of humor					
Concern for others					
Energy					
Emotional maturity					
Initiative					
Reaction to setbacks					

College Personal Statement

US Bound Applicants:

Write a 200 - 300 word essay (no more than one double-spaced, type written page) in response to one of the following topics:

1. *Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.*
2. *The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?*
3. *Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?*
4. *Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.*
5. *Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.*

UK Bound Applicants:

You can write up to 4,000 characters of text and 47 line limits, which show you'd make a great candidate.

Why you are applying to your course? (your ambitions and what interests you about the subject, course providers and higher education) What makes you suitable? (any relevant skills, experience or achievements gained from education, work or other activities)

WORKSHEET FOR TEACHER RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Students:

Please speak directly with your teacher and respectfully ask them if they would be willing to write your letter of recommendation **BEFORE** completing this form, as they have every right to say “No”!

Student Name: _____ *Teacher/Class:* _____

Date submitted to write teacher: _____ *Teacher's Initials:* _____

I believe that the best piece of work (paper, lab, test, presentation, etc.) that I did for your class was:

The academic qualities/strengths that I developed in your class are:

What I found most challenging about your class was:

The particular experience that stretched me or made me grow the most in class was:

I have shown the most improvement in what topic or skill? Explain.

Did the class/subject influence your choice of college major or inspire you in any way? Explain.

Most Selective Colleges to which I am Applying:

	Name	Specific Program (if any)
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

Self Evaluation

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Below Average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good (Top 25%)</i>	<i>Very Good (Top 15%)</i>	<i>Excellent (Top 10%)</i>	<i>Outstanding (Top 5%)</i>
Intellectual Curiosity						
Quality of Writing						
Academic Motivation						
Leadership						
Emotional Maturity						
Integrity						
Reaction to Setbacks						
Respect Accorded by Faculty						
Self-Confidence						
Disciplined work habits						

Other activities/clubs I participated in, that you supervised?

.....

Teachers: Please upload completed recommendation letters to Naviance by:
October 1, 2017

☺ Thank you for your time and support ☺