



**COLLEGE
APPLICATION
GUIDE**

2020-21

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
TIMELINE	2
RESEARCHING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	3
BUILDING YOUR LIST	5
ADMISSIONS TEST (SAT, ACT, SUBJECT TESTS, ETC.)	6
APPLYING TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	7
United States of America	7
APPLYING TO UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE THE US	9
Australia	9
Canada	10
Japan	10
Singapore	11
South Korea	12
UK	12
SINGAPORE NATIONAL SERVICE	14
GAP YEAR	15
AFTER YOU APPLY	15
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	16
COLLEGE APPLICATION POLICIES	18

INTRODUCTION

At Singapore American School, each student and family has a different level of familiarity with colleges and how the college application process works. Some begin junior year with long lists of schools, while others have only vague notions about what they might want to study or where they might want to go. Some of our students are extremely ambitious, while others see college as a nebulous concept and are not yet sure what might come next. We also work with students who are planning to take gap years or who will spend their first two years after graduation in Singapore's mandatory National Service (NS). The role of a college counselor is to guide all SAS students, with their many different needs, perspectives, and interests, through a process that helps them to find schools at which they will be successful.

The SAS college counselors view a student's engagement in the college admissions cycle as an educational experience. Students need to learn to ask questions, to research institutions, and to reflect on their discoveries. They practice speaking, writing, and organizational skills. Most students will craft essays and take tests. So while the college process is not a formal class at SAS, it provides a learning experience for each student. And it is the college counselor's job to help guide and support each SAS student through this journey.

Ultimately, the college research and application experience should be about process as well as outcomes. The best outcome for each student will be both pedagogical and practical. And the college counselors will do their best to offer a positive process so that all students and families will conclude their SAS experience feeling supported and finding fit: colleges to which students are admissible, at which they will be happy and successful, and from which they will graduate. The college counselors are here to provide as much help as you need.

APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE US

Please note that, because most students at SAS apply to university in the US, this planning guide is focused on the US application process. If you are thinking about applying to universities in Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, South Korea or the UK, please see the section on "Applying to Colleges Outside the US." If you are thinking about applying to non-US universities in countries beyond this list, please talk to your college counselor.

TIMELINE

In order to ensure a thoughtful application process, the college counseling office recommends students follow this general timeline. This plan may vary with students' unique college plans, so make sure you discuss your personal timeline with your college counselor.

SECOND SEMESTER, JUNIOR YEAR

- Attend individual meeting with your college counselor.
- Attend family meeting with your college counselor once individual meeting has occurred.
- Update the Extracurricular Activities in Cialfo (under the Profile tab).
- We recommend that every junior take the ACT or SAT at least once in the second semester of junior year. Develop a testing plan and register for standardized tests (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, etc.).
- Secure at least one junior year teacher from a core academic area for a letter of recommendation. Many colleges will require two letters.
- After a teacher has verbally agreed to a letter of recommendation, fill out the appropriate "Teacher Rec Survey" and have it approved by your counselor.
- Keep a running list of colleges in Cialfo on the "Long List".
- Attend the SAS College Admissions Seminar in the spring.
- Attend the essay writing workshop.
- Meet with college admissions representatives who visit SAS in the spring.

SUMMER

- Visit campuses (if possible).
- Research schools of interest.
- Brainstorm responses to essay prompts.
- Complete the "Counselor Recommendation" questionnaire.
- Update the Extracurricular Activities in Cialfo (under the Profile tab).
- Prepared for fall testing (if needed)
- Relax.

SENIOR YEAR

August-November

- Meet with your college counselor.

- Update your list of colleges in Cialfo.
- Register for any additional standardized tests you would like to take in the fall of senior year.
- Explore admissions websites for the schools you are considering and check their requirements.
- Read our guides to the Common App and UCAS.
- Create application accounts (such as the Common Application, UCAS, school-specific applications, etc.) and begin working on your applications.
- If you are using the Common Application, match your Common Application and Cialfo accounts.
- If you will be applying to Oxford, Cambridge, or medical/dental/veterinary programs in the UK, submit your UCAS applications and supplements by October 15.
- Draft college essays.
- By mid-September notify your counselor if you will be applying to an Early Decision (ED), Early Action (EA), or other colleges with October 1–November 15 deadlines.
- Submit Document Request Forms (DRFs) to the college counseling secretary by the appropriate deadlines.
- Check the counseling website, the Daily Bulletin, and the counseling office screens for the list of college representatives that will be visiting campus, and meet with those representatives when they are here.
- Keep your college counselor up-to-date on your college plans.
- Consult financial aid requirements and deadlines for each school to which you are considering applying. These deadlines may differ from college application deadlines.
- Complete applications.

December, January, and February:

- Complete Applications for all deadlines through January.
- If you have been accepted Early Action (EA) or Early Decision (ED), please let your college counselor know. If you have been accepted ED, you must immediately cancel any applications you have submitted to other schools.
- If your application has been deferred by a college, please talk with your college counselor about next steps.
- Mid-year transcripts will be automatically sent to all US and Canadian colleges in late December.

March and April:

- As you receive each decision, please notify your college counselor.
- For US universities, you have until May 1 to make your final decision (except in the case of an ED acceptance). You must pay the enrollment deposit by May 1 to hold your enrollment.
- If you are placed on a waitlist, see your counselor to review your options.
- Once you've made your decision, notify other schools you will not be enrolling.
- Keep your grades up. Your acceptance is contingent upon the successful completion of your senior year. If your grades drop, your acceptance could be withdrawn.
- If you are applying to colleges in Australia, Japan, or South Korea, you will likely be completing your applications for those schools during this time period.
- If you will be entering Singapore's NS, attend the SAS NS luncheon.
- If you will be attending college in the US and are not a US passport holder, attend the SAS Visa workshop.

RESEARCHING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Deciding where to apply is a highly individual decision. Your choices will be influenced by where you want to study, what you want to study, and your high school grades earned so far. It will also be influenced by personal factors including everything from location to class size, from available activities to cost of attending, and it's completely normal to change your mind about your priorities several times during this decision-making process! For almost every student, there are dozens of institutions where you would be happy and successful. This guide is one resource among many for you to utilize in the college search process.

WEB RESOURCES

In Cialfo, students can create a list of prospective colleges based on a variety of factors, look at graphs (called "scattergrams") to predict their chances of admission, and follow the progress of submitted applications. If you are unsure how to access Cialfo, see your counselor.

The college counseling department's extensive website is full of information about the college application process. Spend time browsing pages and links. It contains nearly everything you could possibly want to know about selecting and applying to college.

Facebook is another way in which you can keep up with news about SAS college counseling and college admission. It is a private group, so you will need to go to Facebook, search for "SAS College Counseling" and request to join.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

The SAS high school library has an up-to-date collection of independent college handbooks. You will also find some of the more popular print references on the bookshelves in the back of the college counseling center—feel free to come sit on our couches and browse!

One of the best independent guides is the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, which is easy to read, interesting, and accurate. Fiske is one of the few resources to utilize feedback from current students and faculty members. Additional useful print resources include *Colleges that Change Lives*, *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance*, the *Heap Guides* (UK), and the *Good University Guide* (UK).

Regarding rankings: each year, the US News & World Report, and several other publications rate colleges. Each publication uses a different methodology to create its list, and each methodology is highly subjective. Some draw in large part from third-party websites like College Prowler or ratemyprofessor.com, and some poll professors, administrators, and high school counselors about their opinions regarding other institutions.

Please view rankings with a skeptical eye. Directly comparing a school such as UC Berkeley (with 29,000 students) to Tufts (with 6,000 students) is problematic. Yet, that is exactly what these rating guides attempt to do. And few guides (let alone rankings) take student feedback into account. Just because a for-profit publishing company has assigned a rank to a school does not mean that the ranking is in any way reliable. If you do use a ranking list, please use it only as a guide, not as a reliable reference.

ADMISSION OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES

Each year SAS hosts over 250 college representatives, who come to our school to meet with students and members of the college counseling team. Take advantage of these visits. Even if you're not particularly interested in a school, the more information gathered about different types of schools, the easier it will be to make a thoughtful college list. These meetings also provide a chance for you to demonstrate interest in the college, which can be a factor in some colleges' decision-making processes.

Even though admissions representatives are here to "sell" their schools and recruit students, talking with them provides the opportunity to learn about a college and to interact with a member of the admissions staff. If you decide to apply, the chance to talk one-to-one might make a lasting impression, which the admissions representative might remember when reading applications. You will also have a contact name if you have a question about your application.

Uncertain what to ask when the college representatives come to visit? Here are some ideas:

- Oftentimes, general questions like "Tell me about your college" may elicit general answers that are too vague to be useful. A good way to get specific answers is to be specific about yourself. For example, you might say: "I'm planning to study technical theater, and I also hope to play soccer in college. Can you tell me about theater and athletics at your school?"
- If you don't know what you want to study or get involved with at college, what else are you interested in knowing? Other specific questions can yield interesting information, such as: "Tell me about the political/social climate of the campus," "What is residence life like at your school?," or "How do students usually spend their time on and off campus?"
- Ask about scholarships or financial aid. It may be difficult to get in-depth answers in a short lunchtime visit, but this is a good time to start a conversation.
- Ask for a direct email address for an admissions counselor. Be sure to pick up a business card.

CAMPUS VISITS

If at all possible, try to visit college campuses. This is an excellent way to help narrow your college choices. You may find a rural campus more appealing than an urban setting, or learn that you prefer small schools to larger ones. It is great to have an opportunity to assess both what you like about colleges generally, and then what you like about particular colleges specifically.

Any time you visit a college, if you are able, take a formal tour. Other aspects of a visit may include sitting in on information sessions with admissions staff, sitting in on classes, an admissions interview, a meal on campus, or even an overnight. Try to connect with the admission representative for SAS. Each school will have different offerings and different policies. Check their websites for more information. Whatever you do when you visit, make sure the admissions office knows that you're there!

CONSIDERING COST

For each of our families, cost of attendance at colleges plays a different role. If cost will play a factor in your college choices, there are several things to keep in mind when conducting your search. First, make sure that you understand how your financial need status will be viewed at different colleges. US universities typically have different funds available to citizens versus non-citizens. Additionally, public institutions in the US have different costs for state residents. If you are a citizen questioning whether you have residency in your "home" state, please review the state guidelines, as they vary greatly.

Second, for US universities, all institutions are required to include something called the Net Price Calculator on their website that estimates what a family may pay according to various criteria. This is always an estimate because many more factors determine financial assistance than what is considered on the calculator. Additionally, read the fine print: most are only for US students.

Third, the US is the most expensive country for college tuition. If cost is a factor, it may be worth considering other countries as well. Some less expensive countries include Australia, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Lastly, it is worth thinking about scholarships. Many US universities offer merit based scholarships without an application. Please note, these are not always available to non-US citizens. Most colleges consider you for scholarships automatically based largely on your academic qualifications. Some colleges require an additional application for merit scholarships. Please check individual college websites—either on the admission or financial aid webpages—for more information.

An additional source of financial assistance may be private scholarships. Applying for these scholarships is an additional process that requires research and time. Two scholarship databases you may wish to utilize are scholarships.com and fastweb.com.

Making sure to consider the cost of an institution while building your list will ensure that you're not surprised by any deadlines or expectations.

If cost is a factor, make sure to address this with your college counselor.

BUILDING YOUR LIST

There are likely tens, maybe even hundreds of colleges at which each SAS student would be happy. So while you may hear students talking about their "first choice" colleges, it is rare that there is only one single, best college for a particular individual. You should be working to build a list that includes a number of colleges, any of which you'd be happy to attend if admitted.

If you're not sure what major might interest you, that's not a problem. The majority of students who begin college in the US do not declare a major. There is latitude to try different courses in the first year or two and choose a major later. Many students apply as "undecided," waiting until sophomore year to declare a major. Except for a few select majors—such as engineering and nursing—most students take a variety of courses during this time.

You should consider whether any particular skills or interests—such as visual arts, athletics, theater, music, dance, or scientific research—might be a part of your college search. If you know that certain areas matter to you, please share these with your college counselor.

It is important to consider your chances of admissibility in creating your list. US universities 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. Please note that your grades in core academic courses are far more important than your cumulative GPA. Standardized test scores, if the college requires them (you may find a list of those that do not at www.fairtest.org), are also an important consideration.

In building your list, Cialfo is invaluable in two ways. First, it allows you to maintain a list of schools as extensive as you choose in the section "Long List." This is a quick way to keep track of colleges you've researched or considered. Additionally, Cialfo has useful data on each college that will help you assess whether your admission to that school will be "Likely," "Target," or a "Reach." We define "likely," "target," and "reach" as follows:

- A "likely" school is a college for which you are an extremely strong candidate. Using the scattergrams, you will be able to find "likely" schools if you see that your grades and test scores are on the high end of what the college accepts.
- A "target" school is one that generally accepts students with profiles similar to yours. The scattergram will show your scores firmly in the accept range.
- "Reach" schools are colleges that normally accept students with GPAs and test scores higher than yours. On the scattergram, there will be few to no accepted students at that school that have a similar profile.

When you enter your senior year, you will need to finalize your list. SAS has a 10 application limit (see the policy at the end of this guide). If your list has more than 10 applications, your counselor will work with you to reduce it to 10 or fewer. It is important that the list is well-researched and balanced. **Every student should have two or more "likely" schools.** Beyond that, there should be an appropriate mix of "likely," "target," and "reach" schools for your academic profile and preparedness. Please note that the 10 application limit is both worldwide and lifetime. This means that if a student does not follow our recommendations on the balance of their college list, applies to 10 schools, and does not receive an offer of admission, we will not support additional applications.

ADMISSION TESTS (SAT, ACT, SUBJECT TESTS, ETC.)

Nothing seems to cause more confusion, stress, and anxiety in high school students than the SAT and ACT. But how important is your score? If a college requires them, then they are significant. However, your grades are far more important. And there are many US colleges that do not require test scores at all (see www.fairtest.org for a complete list).

TO SAT OR ACT...THAT IS THE QUESTION

The SAT and ACT are used equally by US colleges. Many—but not all—will want to see either the SAT or ACT. A college will never require both. Most students will perform similarly on both tests, although a few students prefer one or the other. In general, if you are happy with your PSAT score, then you should prepare and take the SAT in December or March of your junior year. If you feel your PSAT score is not a good indicator of your ability, then we would recommend that you take a diagnostic ACT and compare your scores.

Please note that the ACT has moved to a computer-based format (CBT) as of August 2018. SAS is no longer an ACT test center. We remain an SAT test center.

You can find instructions on how to register for the ACT on their website. We have sent registration instructions for the SAT by email.

WHEN TO TAKE THE TEST

As the tests primarily measure your reading comprehension and math skills, the further into high school you are, the better you may do on the test. We, therefore, encourage students to take the test for the first time in December or March of their junior year, so they have the option of taking the test again later in the spring or early in senior year. If you are considering applying early action or early decision, you should complete all testing before October of senior year; for regular decision applications, you can take retake the SAT as late as December of your senior year.

PREPARING FOR THE SAT OR ACT

Like you would for any test, you should prepare for the SAT or ACT. You can prepare using books or free websites (such as Khan Academy for the SAT). Please do not start test preparation more than eight to 10 weeks before the test itself; there is no data to show that earlier preparation leads to higher results.

While you may wish to enroll in a test preparation course, we recommend that you limit your time in such a program. Grades are by far the most important factor in college admissions, so we do not recommend students take lengthy coaching courses that distract from school work and extracurricular activities. Keep in mind that research has shown that 20 quality hours of prep will result in the same improvement as a lengthy preparation course.

SUBJECT TESTS

Subject tests are one-hour tests administered by the College Board that cover specific content areas (e.g., Literature, Physics, French). The vast majority of US colleges do not require Subject Tests. Please talk with your college counselor about whether you should sign up to take Subject Tests. If you do take subject Subject Tests, we recommend you take your Subject Tests in May or June of this year.

TOEFL AND IELTS

If English is not your native language, or you are from a country where English is not the official language, you may need to take the TOEFL (or IELTS, see below). The TOEFL is designed to test your English language skills. Since SAS students listen, read, write and speak in English every day at school, they usually perform well. Talk to your college counselor and check individual college websites to see if taking the TOEFL makes sense for you. Your TOEFL score is valid for only two years, so don't take it too early.

Be aware that if you plan to apply to the UK, you must take the IELTS instead of the TOEFL. The International English Language Testing System

(IELTS) is a UK English language test that has gained some currency with North American admissions offices. As such, students are at liberty to take the IELTS instead of the TOEFL if they wish, especially if scheduling the TOEFL proves difficult. In Singapore the IELTS is offered more often. Test sites include the British Council and IDP.

AP EXAMINATIONS

If you are enrolled in an AP class, you will likely sit for an AP exam at the end of that class. You may also choose to take an AP exam if you are taking certain AT (Advanced Topic) courses. AP exams are always tied to coursework in a particular class. AP exams are content-specific and take place on one assigned school day in May each year.

Most UK universities require at least three AP exam results for acceptance or they may receive predicted scores and give you a conditional offer. US schools may take AP exam scores into consideration, but no US schools require AP scores as a part of the admissions process.

You may list your junior year AP scores on your US applications, but don't spend money asking AP to send an official score, since these reports are automatically sent to the registrar's office once you matriculate rather than to the admissions office. Note that AP exams completed in the senior year are not available until July, long after US admission decisions are made.

APPLYING TO SCHOOLS

Applying to colleges can be a complex process. The bulk of the responsibilities for this process belong to the student, but the college counseling team also has a part to play. The most significant role of our office is to provide students with good counsel and support. We also have a responsibility to submit student transcripts and supporting documents to colleges. For this reason, we require every student to submit a Document Request Form (DRF) for each institution to which they are applying. It is important to follow the deadlines laid out by the college counseling office regarding submission of DRFs. If a DRF is not submitted by the deadlines set by our office, we will not be able to support the application.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the US, colleges and universities set their own individual criteria for determining who gets admitted—and how. 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” often ask for individualized supplements specific to their college.

Completing college applications may seem daunting, so you will want to be sure that you give yourself plenty of time to fill them out thoughtfully. **Admissions requirements and deadlines will vary from school to school and year to year so you need to check carefully to ensure you have completed all the necessary requirements.** Your college counselor is available to answer any questions that you might have at any point in the process.

Essays

Essay topics for colleges will typically be released in the spring or summer before your senior year, and may change year-to-year. While specific directions vary from college to college, all will ask some variation of: “tell us about yourself.” No matter the prompt, the purpose of the essay is for the admissions officer to learn more about you. The person reading your essay should be able to draw some conclusions about how you think and process information, your ethics and/or value system, your sense of humor, and/or your intellectual curiosity. This is very different writing than the five paragraph expository essay you may be used to.

SAS offers essay writing workshops in the spring of junior year, and your college counselor can help you brainstorm potential essay topics and give you feedback along the way.

Many schools will require one large essay and smaller, supplemental essays. Make sure you check the requirements so you are aware of the expectations of each college.

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges will give you the opportunity to report your extracurricular activities and interests. Concentrate on your important activities and list them in the order of what is most meaningful to you. Under the “Profile” tab in Cialfo is a section called “Extracurricular Activities” that allows you to track your involvements including clubs, service, athletics, work experience, and other out of school activities. Keeping this document up to date can really assist you with completing this section of your applications.

Sending your Official Test Scores

When you take an SAT, ACT, Subject Test, TOEFL, or IELTS, you are the person who receives and “owns” the scores. Colleges will require you to send them your scores directly and officially from the testing agency (e.g., College Board, ACT). You should send your scores at least two weeks before a college’s application deadline.

Counselor Recommendation

Most applications require a counselor recommendation. This is the letter that will provide information about your academic performance, extracurricular activities, and your character and values. You must complete the “Counselor Rec” survey. This survey is a set of questions you must answer that will help you inform your counselor’s letter of recommendation.

Teacher Recommendations

Teacher recommendation letters focus on academics; teachers address what they have seen in class and in your coursework. Most SAS students applying to US schools will request two teacher letters of recommendation. The personal reference used for UK applications is a collaborative effort that the college counselor oversees and submits, with your teachers giving abridged/short narrative information about why you are fit to study your chosen course.

Choosing whom to ask to write a recommendation is important and one of the things you will discuss with your college counselor. It is best to ask teachers you have had in your junior year, because they have taught you recently. Letters should come from a core subject teacher and/or a teacher in the discipline you plan to

pursue in college (if you know what you want to study). It’s not necessary to choose teachers in courses where you earned As. In fact, if you received a lower grade in a particular course, you may want to have this explained by the recommender.

You should plan on asking your teachers for a letter of recommendation in second semester junior year to give them plenty of advance notice.

After asking the teacher for a recommendation, you must respond to the “Teacher Rec” survey. Choose the appropriate subject area questionnaire and fill it out completely. This information helps a teacher to recall specifics about you, so please fill it out thoughtfully. Once you have finished the form, contact your college counselor.

Please note that letters of recommendation are confidential, and you will not be allowed to read any recommendations.

Additional Information

On the Common Application and often on other applications, there is an optional section asking if there is any additional information you wish to add. If, after looking at the entire application, there is something that you have not been able to include that is integral to a college’s understanding of you as an applicant, this is the place to write about it. This section is entirely optional, and best utilized to discuss exceptional circumstances (e.g., learning differences, prolonged illness, poor grades that are unlike anything else on your transcript, your Catalyst project, etc.). Speak to your college counselor if you are wondering what might be appropriate for this section.

Additional Recommendations or Materials

If you think that you might benefit from submitting one (and no more than one) supplemental recommendation, an art portfolio, or any other supporting materials, you should have a conversation with your college counselor. Please do not send extra materials without consulting your college counselor; colleges admissions representatives may become frustrated with files that have too much extra material.

Applications

The application platforms you will use will vary

with each college you apply to. It is likely that at least one college will require you to use the Common Application. This is an application that you can use to apply to more than one school. If the college gives you a choice of platforms, you can be assured that they do not prefer one over the other—but if the Common Application is an option, you must apply using the Common Application. Other types of applications include the Coalition Application, the Universal Application, and school-specific applications. Sometimes colleges will offer you the opportunity to bypass certain requirements by using their specific application. You’ll want to check with your college counselor to make sure this makes sense for you.

When to apply

Colleges in the US have a wide range of application deadlines, the earliest of which is October 15 (for only a handful of schools). Most SAS students will begin submitting applications in late October or November of senior year. Deadlines on a student’s list may vary widely, and students may be applying as late as February of their senior year. It is important to consult deadlines for colleges early, and to pay close attention to the college counseling office’s requirements for submitting Document Request Forms (DRFs).

Individual colleges typically offer multiple deadlines—usually early (Early Decision, Early Action, or Priority), and later (Early Decision II Regular Decision). Other colleges may offer Rolling Admission. Please consult the glossary of terms and college application policies at the end of this guide for more information.

APPLYING TO COLLEGES OUTSIDE THE US

AUSTRALIA

There are nearly 40 universities in Australia. When you apply, you must know what you want to study; your courses will all focus on that area of study. Most courses of study in Australia are three years long. Because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, the school year begins in February.

Most courses at most universities also have a mid-year intake in late June or early July.

If you want information about studying in Australia or have questions about the application process, you might want to contact International Development Program (IDP) Education Australia, an organization established by Australian universities and the government. IDP Education, <https://www.idp.com/singapore>, offers a range of services, from providing information about courses of study to assisting with visa applications.

Application Considerations

Most Australian universities only consider your SAT or ACT scores in making an admissions decision. A few Australian universities have programs that require two AP scores, and a couple may also ask to review your high school transcript. You can look at each university’s website for the program that you intend to study to see if you meet their standardized testing criteria for entry.

If your qualifications are not sufficient to gain admission, you may often enroll in a six- to twelve-month foundation year program at a school. Success in this program will usually earn you entry into that university.

Australian universities do not require letters of recommendation or personal essays for admission, though if you are applying to live in on-campus housing, you may need to submit supporting written materials from one or more character references.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Australia.

- **Non-Australian Passport Holders**—You will need to follow the application directions on each individual university’s website. Links to websites for all of the Australian universities may be found on the Universities Australia website, <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>.
- **Australian Passport Holders**—If you hold an Australian passport, you must apply through the tertiary admissions centre in each state. You can find links to each state’s admissions centre here: <http://www.tisc.edu.au/static/guide/interstate.tisc>.

When to Apply

For international students, Australian universities admit students on a rolling basis, so you may apply at any time within a year of your planned enrollment date. We generally recommend that you apply five or six months before you plan to start. This means that students who want to start at the beginning of the Australian school year, which is in February, usually apply in September following senior year. If you want to start university in Australia mid-year, in late June or July, you will usually apply in January or February.

If you are planning to enroll at the start of Australia's school year, in February, it is worth thinking about how you will use your time in the eight months between graduation and the start of school. This is a great opportunity to have a gap year experience.

Residential halls (or "colleges" in Australia) generally offer places on a first come, first serve basis, and have a separate application system. Therefore, you should submit this application as early as possible. While it may seem strange, you may need to apply to the residential college before you actually submit your university application. Be sure to contact each residential college directly to find out more details.

CANADA

There are almost 100 universities in Canada. In Canada, the term "college" generally refers to a two-year program or trade school, whereas "university" refers to a four-year institution. In Canada, while you may be asked to apply to a particular field of study in the application process, you generally have the ability to change your intended major within the first two years of a program.

Application Considerations

Most Canadian universities are mainly concerned with a student's academic results. They will primarily look at your grades in core academic areas (especially English, math, science, and social studies) in the last two years of high school.

Only a handful of Canadian universities require standardized test scores (SAT/ACT and/or Subject Tests). Other Canadian universities may consider standardized test scores, but high school academic grades will still be the most important factor in their decision-making process.

Some Canadian universities are moving to a more holistic review process for some programs. For a few universities and programs, students may be asked to write one or more short essays and/or provide a list of extracurricular activities. Letters of recommendation are rarely required.

How to Apply

The application process for Canadian universities is very straightforward. For most universities, it is simply a matter of completing the individual university's application and then sending in the high school transcript. Ontario universities have an online application form, OUAC, that allows students to apply to multiple universities and programs in that province using one application form.

When to Apply

Canadian universities tend to have later deadlines than some US colleges and universities. The deadlines vary between early January until the end of March. A few of the most selective universities have earlier deadlines; make sure to check deadlines on each school's website and talk with your college counselor if you have questions about this.

JAPAN

Most universities in Japan are liberal arts based, meaning that students usually spend their first two years pursuing a broad range of courses and then spend the final two years studying courses related to their major. Japan has both private and public universities. Most universities in Japan teach all of their courses in Japanese, but some offer a few select programs entirely in English. The English-speaking programs are generally very small and highly competitive.

For a comprehensive guide to studying in Japan, please visit <http://www.studyjapan.go.jp/en/>

Application Considerations

Japanese schools read applications holistically, just as US schools do, though Japanese schools place a much greater emphasis on SAT and ACT scores. The primary drivers in the Japanese application process are SAT or ACT scores (the SAT may be preferred over the ACT in some places) and your GPA. Every student will be required to submit a high school transcript. Students will also be asked to write an essay, usually about your fit with a particular school and intended major, and to submit recommendations. It is also possible that you will be invited to sit for an interview with a panel of professors.

SAS students who are Japanese citizens are usually classified as *kikokushijo*, or "returning students." For most programs at most of the Japanese universities, these students must travel to Japan to take centralized university examinations scheduled during the months of October, November, or December. You will need to read each school's application to see whether that school will consider you a returning student in the application process.

Programs that are taught entirely in English generally do not require that you take any Japanese language exams. You may be asked to take the TOEFL, an English language test, even if you are a native English speaker.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Japan. Most Japanese universities still operate on a paper-based application system, and it is important to read the detailed directions on each university's application website carefully as you complete your paperwork.

When to Apply

The universities in Japan do not have one single admissions deadline or intake date; some schools have multiple admissions rounds. Very generally, you can expect that intakes for Japanese-speaking programs will be in April (nearly a year after you graduate), and that intakes for English-speaking programs will be in September. You will need to check the admissions deadlines of each university individually. Some SAS students begin applying to schools in Japan as early as December or January of senior year, but most applications will be due in the spring or early summer.

Since our office will need to handle a great deal of paperwork for the Japanese schools, and since we must put everything physically in the mail, we ask that you give our office at least a month's notice before you apply.

SINGAPORE

There are many university options in Singapore. All courses are taught in English. The traditional public universities are extremely competitive, and you must know what you intend to study when you apply. Other options here in Singapore are the five public polytechnics, several foreign universities, art and design schools, and partnership institutions such as Yale-NUS.

Most degree-granting programs in Singapore take three years to complete. Students may instead pursue two- or three-year diploma courses, which do not end in a degree but which will likely be pathways to undergraduate degrees in Singapore and elsewhere.

Application Considerations

Public universities in Singapore want to see very high test scores. They will require SATs or ACTs and may also ask for Subject Test scores. They will expect to see a good number of high AP scores as well. Application requirements at other Singapore universities will vary widely from school to school.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Singapore. You will need to check each school's individual website and follow the instructions there on how to apply.

When to Apply

Each school in Singapore has its own application deadlines. Make sure to check the websites carefully for these deadlines (and pay careful attention to start dates to make sure that you are applying for the intake period that you want). You are most likely to apply at some point between December and February of senior year.

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has a wide range of universities, most of which offer their programs only in Korean. Currently, there are four private international universities and one public university that offer all of their degree-granting courses in English. There are three different application tracks for Korean nationals:

- **Domestic**—students who have never left South Korea or who have studied outside of South Korea for fewer than three years.
- **Overseas: “3 Years”**—students who have studied outside of South Korea for more than three years, but fewer than 12.
- **Overseas: “12 Years”**—students who have studied outside of South Korea for all twelve years of school.

In general, it is easiest to apply as a 12-Year student, because the Korean government places a quota on acceptance rates for Domestic and 3-Year students.

You may apply as an international student if you do not hold a Korean passport and you do not have Korean parentage. Please check university websites for specific details.

Application Considerations

Many schools in South Korea are moving toward a holistic review process, meaning that they will review high school transcripts, test scores, a list of extracurricular activities, recognized accomplishments, awards, letters of recommendation, and interviews as part of the admission process. You may also be asked to write several essays.

As with admission to several other countries, like the US, academic performance and test scores play a significant role in the admission decision.

If you are applying to a Korean-speaking program, you may be required to sit for the TOPIK, a Korean language test. International students applying to English-speaking programs may be asked to sit for an English-language test (IELTS or TOEFL).

How to Apply

Each university in South Korea has its own application process. Korean schools require an enormous amount of paperwork—even if you are

using an online application system. Each university will provide a list of documents they will need for the course which you are applying in their application guide. The process is complicated, and you must follow directions carefully. SAS will only send required documents directly to the universities.

You usually do not need to get any documents stamped at the embassy as part of the admissions process. You will, however, need to have documents stamped at the embassy when you plan to matriculate.

When to Apply

The timeline of applications in South Korea varies from school to school and from year to year. Please check deadlines carefully. In general, if you are applying to a university for entry into the first semester (which will usually start in March), you will apply sometime in June or July. Korean citizens may only matriculate in spring. Some students may choose to apply for a second semester intake; this semester will usually start in August or September.

Most students may apply to Korean universities in two separate rounds. This means that if you are not admitted to a university in the first round, you may be eligible to apply in the second round.

Since our office will need to handle a great deal of paperwork for the Korean schools, and since we must put everything physically in the mail, we ask that you give our office at least a month’s notice before you apply.

UK

The UK is home to over 125 different universities. Universities in the UK usually ask that students choose, apply to, and then focus on a single area of study (though you may also have the chance to combine two areas of study, such as French and History or Business and International Relations). 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. If you are undecided about your major, be aware that in order to apply to the UK, you will have to make a decision about what you will study. Note that transferring to a different subject will usually entail starting your degree over from the beginning.

Most degree programs in the UK take three years to complete; the notable exception to this is Scotland, where many degree programs are four years long.

Application Considerations

The primary factor that UK universities use in making admissions decisions will be your AP exam scores. Most UK universities are looking for three specific AP scores in areas related to your intended area of study. Only University College London and London School of Economics require—and Cambridge University recommends—that applicants sit for five AP exams related to their intended field of study. You can go to each university’s website, look up the program in which you are interested, and see whether you have qualifying AP scores. Fortunately, UK universities are very transparent in their requirements, so the results are more predictable than the US.

Some UK schools may also consider SAT, ACT, and/or Subject Test scores. You are required to submit all of your test scores if you are applying using the UCAS, a centralized application system. A few UK universities may request and review your high school transcript.

Students without qualifying test scores can often apply to a one-year foundation course in order to qualify later for entry to a degree program at a UK university.

Universities in the UK will ask you to write a personal statement about your interest in and commitment to your intended course of study. This may involve writing about relevant high school courses you have taken, internships or other work experiences, material you have watched or read, and/or pursuits you have engaged in outside of the classroom. Your college counselor will also write you a reference letter based on teacher comments about your demonstrated engagement with your field of interest.

Some courses of study may require you to take specialized admissions tests as part of the application process (e.g., the LNAT for law or the BMAT for medicine). Please look carefully at the requirements of each of the programs to which you are applying. Some universities may also require that you take the IELTS, an English language test. You may contact The British Council about registering for these tests.

How to Apply

Most UK universities use a nationwide system called the UCAS for their applications. UCAS is an online portal where you can search for programs and also apply to universities. UCAS only allows students to apply to a maximum of five programs, or courses, so students must select carefully. We will send all students interested in UK schools an extensive document on how to complete the UCAS at the beginning of senior year.

Check to see whether the UK universities to which you may be interested in applying use the UCAS. If they do not, you will need to follow each individual school’s application requirements, which can be found on their websites.

When to Apply

The UCAS has a deadline of January 15, but most international students apply earlier than this, because slots in UK programs are generally given out on a first-come, first-served basis to qualified applicants. We ask that all seniors applying to university in the UK let our office know by completing Document Request Forms (DRFs) no later than November 1. Please note that, unless you have submitted DRFs by that November 1 deadline, you may not start a UCAS application.

SINGAPORE NATIONAL SERVICE

If you are a male Singaporean citizen or Permanent Resident, you must complete National Service (NS) before beginning university. Regardless of whether you plan to apply to a few universities during your senior year and defer your start date, or if you plan to wait and apply to college while in NS, you must request your recommendations and complete standardized testing while in high school.

When to Apply

Young men in NS have the option of an extended college application timeline. You might submit applications:

- In your senior year; or
- In your first year of NS; or
- In your second year of NS; or
- In both senior year and while you are in NS.

Most students headed for NS will apply to just one or two schools in their senior year and then, if necessary, will apply to the bulk of their colleges during the second year of NS. You do have the option of applying during your first year of NS (or in the fall just before you enter), but very few young men apply at this time.

You will want to have conversations with your parents and your college counselor before you decide whether to apply to college during your senior year or to wait until after graduation (or some combination thereof).

Applying during senior year will keep you in step with your classmates and will—if you are accepted—provide you with more immediate gratification. Waiting to apply to college after enlistment in NS will give you all of grade 12 to focus on getting great grades, increasing your SAT/ACT, AP and Subject Test scores, and giving more thought to career and college pathways. US colleges also may have a preference for young men who apply during NS, because they are often more mature and thoughtful applicants. If you choose to apply to colleges in your senior year, we ask that you review the SAS 10-Application policy. That policy should factor into your decision of how many schools you decide to apply to.

Please note that, if you apply to college in your senior year and are accepted, you will have to ask the school for a two-year deferral. All universities

in Singapore permit two-year deferrals, and most US colleges do as well. UK and Canadian universities, on the other hand, rarely allow two-year deferrals, so you should plan to apply to universities in those countries only as your time in NS is drawing to a close.

If you are applying in your senior year, please make sure before you apply that the institution(s) to which you are submitting an application will allow you to request a two-year deferral should you decide to attend. When you make an enrollment deposit, you will again need to confirm with that university that you are requesting that your space to be held for two years. You should only hold a space at a university for two years if you are confident you will ultimately matriculate to that institution.

If you choose to pursue college applications after the time of high school graduation, the SAS college counselors will continue to assist you and your family with any questions that might arise. You will finalize your college list, write your essays, and complete and submit your applications during NS. We will be here to meet with you and to help with the submission of transcripts, and teacher/counselor recommendations, and other supporting materials.

TIMELINE: JUNIOR YEAR

Requirements:

- Meet individually with your college counselor, first individually and then with your family, to discuss your college application plan, process and timeline.
- Ensure that all enlistment requirements/tasks associated with National Service are completed in a timely manner.
- Attend all sessions mandated for the junior class (e.g., essay writing workshop).
- If you are planning to apply to college in senior year, complete all tasks assigned to juniors (e.g., securing teacher recommendations; taking SAT/ACT at least once).

Recommendations:

- Attend the NS session at the College Admissions Seminar hosted in the spring by the college counseling department.
- If you are not applying to college in senior year, secure at least one teacher letter of recommendation.
- Develop a standardized testing plan with your counselor.

- Attend luncheon for NS-bound juniors and seniors with NS alumni hosted at SAS.
- Register to attend an Open House visit to the Basic Military Training Centre to familiarize yourself with what the basic training phase of NS will be like.

TIMELINE: SENIOR YEAR

Requirements:

- Meet with your college counselor at the start of the year to either (1) begin finalizing your college list and working on essays, or (2) if you are not applying to college as a senior, confirm a timeline that will suit your specific needs.
- Ensure that all enlistment requirements/tasks associated with National Service enlistment are completed in a timely manner.
- Complete your standardized testing by graduation (in rare cases, students may plan to take some type of test while completing NS, but this can pose problems based on the scheduling demands of being in the field and the possibility that you may start to lose math and other academic skills when you are in NS).

Recommendations:

- Complete a Common Application (or a UCAS application for the UK) in order to familiarize yourself with the types of essays and other information that will be required of you at the time of application.
- Attend luncheon for NS-bound juniors and seniors with NS alumni hosted at SAS.
- Secure a second teacher recommendation if necessary.

GAP YEAR

Even if you are certain that college is in your future, a gap year can be a wonderful way to explore new experiences or new parts of the world. For most students, there is little downside to a productive gap year. This may involve working a full-time job, volunteering for an organization, or traveling. A gap year may allow you to become more independent, gain real world experience, and often times, focus on what you want to achieve in college.

If you plan to take a year off, we still recommend that you take part in the bulk of the application

process during your senior year. Take the required tests, request recommendations, and explore college choices while you are a senior here at SAS. If you apply and are admitted, at most colleges you can then defer the starting date for a year. Almost all US 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.

AFTER YOU APPLY

Once you apply, we suggest that you check your status with each college, making sure they have received and processed everything. Also, please allow your colleges a couple of weeks to update your information since they are processing documents simultaneously for thousands of applicants.

Once the college has reviewed your application, they will notify you about their decision. Students applying to colleges with “rolling admissions” usually receive notification six to eight weeks from the time they have a complete application. Students applying early decision or early action will typically hear by mid-December. Students applying regular decision will typically hear no later than April 1.

Most students receive one of two decisions from their colleges: acceptances or denials. But a few students may find themselves deferred or waitlisted.

Defer

Students who apply early decision or early action are sometimes deferred, 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 grades from senior year, or because the admissions office is unsure of the strength of the rest of the applicants. If you are deferred, you should talk with your college counselor about how to proceed.

A deferral is not necessarily a bad thing. Some students who are deferred are admitted later. If you are deferred from a school to which you applied early decision, you are released from any binding commitment. You can apply, be admitted, and choose to go to any college that accepts you.

Waitlist

You may find that, when you receive admissions decisions in March, you have been put on a “waitlist.” 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. Guessing the “yield” 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 class, which are filled from the waitlist. Even so, the waitlist is usually a long shot. Only choose to remain on a waitlist if you really plan to attend should you be admitted later.

If you are interested in remaining on a college’s waitlist, please contact your college counselor. Final notification may not come until well into the summer so, for safety sake, it’s important not to assume you will be accepted off the waitlist. Accept an offer of admission from another school.

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 tell a school by then that you’re coming in the fall, they can, and often do, withdraw your acceptance. You are not obligated to wait until May 1 if you make your choice sooner. Notify all other schools that accepted you of your decision not to attend. An email is a great (and simple) way to do this.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

There are many terms and abbreviations that are commonly used during the college research and application process. It is important that you understand what all these terms and abbreviations mean.

ADMISSION TERMS

Regular Decision (RD)—Candidates are required to submit their applications by a specific deadline (usually beginning January 1) and are notified of decisions in the spring. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Waitlist.”

Rolling Admission—Institutions review and make decisions on applications as application files are complete. Spaces are often awarded to eligible students on a first come first served basis. Typically, when applying to a college with “Rolling Admission”, the earlier in the academic year you apply, the better. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Waitlist.”

Early Action (EA)—This is one way for an applicant to receive early notification of a college decision. EA application deadlines are usually November 1 or November 15, and a decision/ notification is usually made prior to January 1. If admitted, the decision is non-binding. In most cases, a student may apply to more than one college EA. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Defer.”

Early Decision (ED)—This is another option for early notification of a college decision. ED deadlines are usually November 1, and a decision/ notification is usually made prior to January 1. If admitted, the decision is binding (see our policies on the next page). A student may only apply to only one college ED. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Defer.”

Early Decision II (ED II)—The same policies as ED, but the deadlines fall later in the academic year. Typically, ED II deadlines are January 1 or January 15. Students are typically notified mid-February.

Restrictive Early Action (REA)—The same non-binding policy as early action, but college policy dictates that generally a student may not apply to any other colleges EA or ED. Colleges and universities may offer specific conditions under which a student may apply through REA and these will vary from school to school. It is the student’s responsibility to check the policies of each school.

Candidates Reply Date—May 1 is the universal date to enroll to a university in the United States (except if a student is accepted ED). Students need to send in a non-refundable deposit to reserve a space at one college by this date.

Waitlist—When colleges have more students they want to admit than they have spaces for in the incoming class, they may choose to place some students on a waitlist. If admitted students decline their admission, the colleges may go to their waitlist to fill opened spots in the class. Students should not expect to hear about waitlist offers until after May 1 or later.

Common Application—A single application accepted by over 800 colleges and universities. Some of the schools that accept the Common App also require a school-specific supplement. The application and all instructions are available at www.commonapp.org.

UCAS Application—A single application accepted by universities in the UK, you can apply to up to 5 courses of study. Please note that the college counseling office has set deadlines for your submission of UCAS since your designated college counselor has to “approve” your qualifications and oversee the final submission. The college counseling team sends out a “buzzword” to all students to connect their personal account to the SAS UCAS Centre in order to later be approved. UCAS requires you to upload all test score results from your completed exams (SAT, ACT, SAT II, AP’s) and teachers provide a confidential predicted AP exam score for 12th grade AP exams.

GENERAL TERMS

Major—A subject or field of study chosen by a student to represent his or her principal interest and upon which a large share of his or her efforts are concentrated. Also called “course” or “programme” in some countries.

Liberal Arts—The academic course of instruction at a college intended to provide critical thinking and reasoning skills and general knowledge comprising the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, as opposed to professional or technical subjects.

College—In the US, an institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training. A college generally does not offer any graduate programs, so all students will be preparing for four-year bachelor’s degrees.

University— In the US, an institution of learning, having both undergraduate programs and a program of graduate studies. A university often also has several professional schools, such as theology, law, medicine, and engineering.



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