

HOW TO APPLY TO UNIVERSITY



From the IB graduates at



Lanterna
education



Contents

- 3 What do you want to study?
- 4 Where do you want to study?
- 6 Applying to UK Universities
- 7 How to write a Personal Statement
- 10 Applying to US Universities
- 12 Applying to Canadian Universities
- 13 Applying to German Universities
- 14 Applying to Dutch Universities



As IB students, we always love to talk about points. We fear less than 24 and dream of achieving 40+. The truth is, however, that points don't matter unless they lead us to where we want to be after our high school education. For many IB students, the end goal of their diploma is being accepted into the university of their dreams. In this guide, the Lanterna team will provide you with all the guidance needed to select and apply using the knowledge of our top tutors! All of our team went through the same process and are now studying or are graduates of elite universities across the globe!

What do you want to study?

At this point in your IB you might have an idea of what you want to study at university! If so, great! If not, don't panic! Choosing the course you want to study at university can feel like a big decision but it should be an **exciting** one. Consider a cross-section of factors:

- *How do you learn best?*
- *What subject do you enjoy?*
- *What do you want to do after university?*

These seem like massive questions but don't get twisted about them. Know that your IB diploma will help you achieve whatever you want even if right now you're not entirely sure what you want to achieve!



It's also important to check whether you are eligible to study a particular subject. Some courses such as Medicine and Engineering require certain subjects taken at higher level so double check your IB is in the right shape if that's the direction you want to head! The easiest way to do this and get it right from the start is to talk to your IB co-ordinator or university counsellor who will be well-prepared to take questions about eligibility.



Where do you want to study?

As an IB student, you are tremendously lucky to have the world open up to you! You can study for a degree across any continent! In this guide, we'll explore the processes for applying to the popular destinations of the **UK, US, Canada, Germany** and the **Netherlands!** In all of these cases, the key to understanding where you want to study is **research!**

Online

Find out as much as you can about the course structure and content as well as the **entrance requirements**. As we will discuss later, some universities only require your IB grades but others need you to complete other tests. Seek out university forums, YouTube videos and blogs! These can be a fantastic way of looking through the eyes of current students! Could you see yourself in that city or campus? There is a tonne of useful information out there but take some of it with a pinch of salt - universities are required to 'sell' themselves to you! That's why it's also a good idea to seek out advice...

In Person

Talk to your teachers at school or perhaps the university counsellor if your school has one.

Many schools have an **alumni network** where you can reach out and ask about their experiences at the universities you are interested in. Rack their brains, ask for honesty. Although you'll get good information online from the universities, you'll only get fully accurate advice from people who have no incentive to 'sell' the university to you.

Open Days

If you can, attend university open days! You will never really get a feel for a university if you don't visit it. For example, you might think you'd love a city university, but then visit a campus-based university and find you love it! Equally, when it comes to getting the motivation to apply, meeting students in person, hearing about the course, student societies, the night life—all these things can propel you to apply! Make sure you ask as many questions as you



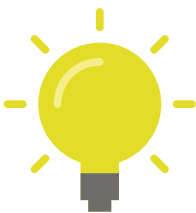
can and meet up with current students! You can inquire about how the course is structured, where you might live as well as tips for applying!

The best advice is to **make sure you reflect** on these open days. You could even have a special notebook devoted to writing down your thoughts surrounding university applications. How did you feel? Attempt to visualise what your day-to-day will look like. How are the dorms? How do the people seem? Try to not fall in love with small things, and always make sure you're thinking about the bigger picture. Could that be your home for the next 3 or 4 years?

Open days are obviously a good way to visit universities. If, however, you've missed some or you can't get there, don't panic. University admissions staff are usually more than happy to set up a little tour around campus for you. In some ways, this can be even better than visiting on an open day. There is nothing quite like visiting a university in the full flow of term to know whether you would fit in there.

Also, make use of the university admissions officers. Why not give them a ring? They're available to answer any questions you can throw at them and are a great resource if you find yourself confused about an admissions process.

Still unsure? We've got a number of [YouTube videos](#) on our channel that explore how you might come to a decision regarding where you want to study!



A small note...

Make sure you **double check the language requirements** for all universities that you are applying for. Some will require evidence of a certain level of proficiency sometimes measured through a test.



Applying to UK Universities

The crucial word when it comes to applying for UK universities is **UCAS**. You can choose five universities to apply to, and your whole application goes through the UCAS website.



Be sensible here. Don't over or underestimate your ability. It's sometimes worth sending an application to a school that you think is slightly above how you're working at this point in case you excel in your exams or if there is some flexibility on results day! At the same time, if you fail to reach your predicted grades, make sure you have applied to a university on the lower end of your likely grades.

A configuration we find works well is to apply to one university that may think is a little out of your reach, two or three which require your predicted grades, and one or two universities that require below this so you don't end up with nothing if you have ambitions of definitely heading into university straight after the IB. Another lovely thing about the IB is that the results come out a lot earlier than the UK equivalent (A Levels) which gives you time to talk to schools about your application if things go differently to how you expect!

On UCAS, you'll fill out one form and put down your predicted grades, upload a personal statement and include one reference. You don't need to worry about the reference - your teacher will complete that - but you do have to ask them to write it.

The personal statement, however, can make or break your application! In only 47 lines of text, or 4000 characters (around 500 words), you've got to 'sell' why you're a good fit on the course you want to study! Be aware: the same personal statement is sent to all the courses you are applying to. This means that you can't apply to five totally unrelated courses and instead should focus your application on a certain area and ideally the same subject!

Many universities publish the kind of things they want students to show in their personal statement on their websites. Use this information and filter it



into your application. The structure many of our team find works best is a four-part personal statement of around five paragraphs.

How to write a Personal Statement

1. State Your Purpose

Make very clear in your introduction what it is you want to study, and (briefly) why you want to study it. A top tip is to avoid being cliché - you want to grab the admissions officer's attention. Originality is key!

2. How have you come to the decision to choose your course? What has prepared you to take it on?

a. School Work

- How has your studying so far led you towards your course choice?
- Are any of your IB subjects particularly relevant to your course?

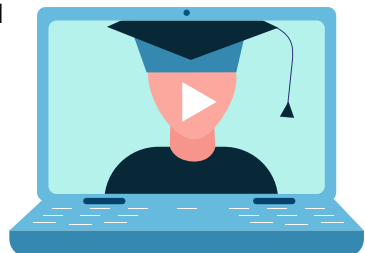
Don't be afraid to be specific - talk about which topics/modules (ideally relevant ones) that you found especially interesting, and why. Give **evidence** of how you gained the key skills to succeed on your course.

If you did your extended essay on a topic relating to it, talk about it. If you haven't yet done your EE, choosing your EE topic related to the degree that you want to study is a great choice!

b. Outside of School

How have you gone out of your way to learn about your subject of choice **beyond** just school? Examples of this might include:

- Reading books/articles not on your school reading list
- Attending any talks/events/conferences/museums/exhibitions on your subject
- Seeking relevant work experience
- Talking to experts in the field





3. Extra Curriculars

Use this section to show that you are an interesting individual who is capable of successfully pursuing several interests at once. This shows the ability to manage your time well and is a skill which all successful university students must have! Make sure to mention your most impressive pastimes; clubs, positions of responsibility, charitable efforts...CAS activities are perfect to pop in here! Don't go too overboard here - generally this should make up at most 20% of your overall application. Unlike the US, the UK cares mostly about how good of a fit you are for the course, and not who you are as a person overall. Mention your top activities and how they may make you a better student - no need to list all extracurriculars you participated in over the last 3 years.

4. Summarise, Conclude

Briefly restate why you want to study your course, and why you are a strong applicant. Be concise, and make sure this sentence makes an impact - it will be the last thing the admissions officer reads, so leave a lasting impression!

As mentioned, some courses require more than your predicted grades and a personal statement. If you want to study medicine, nearly all degrees use an **admissions test** as part of their entry requirements and note that the personal statement is far less important than these. There are three admissions tests. Applicants may sit different combinations of these tests according to the medical schools they intend to include in their application. These are the BMAT, UKCAT and GAMSAT. It is easy to find out which test you need for the university you wish to study Medicine at. If you want to know more about the process, we have a [whole blog series](#) on the process.

At Oxford and Cambridge there can also be entrance exams to study for. This information is always available on the UCAS website. Moreover, for Medicine and a small number of elite universities (including Oxbridge) you may be asked to come **for an interview**. Many of our team have studied multiple degrees at these incredible places. If you want to find out more about the interview process, and read some of their top tips; head over to [our blog!](#)



Once you've sent off your applications, you will start to hear back. The deadline for applying to Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences is in the Autumn (mid October) and for all other universities in January. You will hear one of three things from each of the universities you applied to:

- **Conditional Offer:** The university wants you but to attend in the Autumn you have to achieve the offer they have set (e.g. 36 points, 6,6,5 higher level)
- **Unconditional Offer:** This is rarer than the above, but it means that if you firm this choice you will be attending the course and your admittance doesn't depend on your final IB exams.
- **Rejected:** This is what we hope to avoid but if it happens, don't worry! You have four other options, or you could even reapply next year!

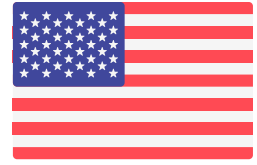


Once these have come in, you must make a second choice - which offer to choose as your 'firm' and which to place as your 'insurance'. Firm indicates it's your first choice, insurance denotes it will be your back-up. All other offers must be declined! If you meet your firm offer, congrats you're off to school there. If you miss it and meet your back-up, then you'll be off to that university! Think smart when you make these choices. There is no point in putting your 'insurance' as a university with very similar requirements to your 'firm' choice. Make sure your insurance is there in case things don't go exactly as planned in exam season!



Applying to US Universities

The US doesn't have a centralised application system like in the UK so each student must apply to each university individually (regardless if it's a private or state college). The common application, however, can make the process easier and allows students to apply to more than 600 institutions through a single application process, although some institutions might still have additional requirements and many are still not on it, so it's not quite as centralized as UCAS.



Each university has its **own admission standards** and way of assessing your application. Lots of courses require you to submit written work as part of your application: whether this is essays you have already written and had marked as part of your schoolwork, or original essays on topics prescribed by the university itself. Find out early what these requirements are, and make sure that you leave yourself with plenty of time to prepare. If you are asked to submit schoolwork, speak to your teachers and work with them to select work that fully shows what you are capable of.





In many instances, you will be able to apply to a university using just your IB exam results. However, there are quite a few exceptions to this. Many schools will also require you to take an additional test; **an ACT or SAT**. There is a great deal of excellent information online about how these work and how to succeed in them. It is also worth noting that the majority of US schools do not set an IB requirement. Instead, the combination of your ACT or SAT test scores, predicted grades, CAS, EE and additional submitted material will be weighed up. The US has a more holistic approach to university admission.

Make sure you are familiar with the timeline for applications as it's on a slightly different one to the UK system - applications tend to be handed in slightly earlier. This also means that predicted grades are a big part of the application process and admissions are based, at least in part, on these. You'll then hear back from your universities, and unlike the UK you will often be given unconditional offers. This means that theoretically it does not matter how you do on your IB exams, you'll still have your place at that university! However, in practice this isn't always true. If a student's final IB scores are significantly below the anticipated grades submitted by the school, a university is able to withdraw its offer! Additionally, by scoring particularly well in a certain course in the IB you may earn university credits that allow you to skip classes in university. So, by getting a slightly better score on your IB you'll have more free time at university! The same is often true for Canadian universities





Applying to Canadian Universities

Canada is a popular destination for IB graduates. With a wide array of top universities and an enviable way of life, more and more graduates are heading to study there.



Like the US, Canada has a mixture of public and private institutions as well as **no centralised application procedure** except for in the province of Ontario (much like the common application but for public universities in Ontario).

This means most applications are completed online and consist of predicted grades, recommendations, essays and test scores. Be aware that these vary from school to school. Like the US, the timeline is slightly earlier which again means the strength of your predicted grades is important to admission. It is also worth noting that like the US, you can gain first year 'credit' at some Canadian universities if you perform well in your IB exams!





Applying to German Universities

The application process in Germany can be **quite complicated** and varies widely between degree programs. Some types of courses have their admissions determined by individual universities whilst for some the application process is nationwide. You should be aware of which one of these two streams the course you want to study falls on as well as the language requirements for the course.



To be able to study in Germany you generally need a Hochschulzugangsberechtigung (HZB) or “higher education entrance qualification”. For most students in Germany this is the Abitur but the IB can also be used for admittance. If you are an international student, you must obtain a statement of comparability directly from the university. In some cases, the quality of your IB diploma may not be enough for a certain subject and so you have to take a preparatory course at a Studienkolleg and after a Feststellungsprüfung (an assessment test) for the subject you wish to study. Upon completion, you can then apply across Germany for the subject you wish to study.

Students who are interested in applying to Germany are advised to confer with their university counsellor and start the application process early due to the number of hoops applicants may be asked to jump through. This shouldn't put you off - just be aware that the process is not as straightforward as in the UK! Did you know? At public German universities outside of Baden-Württemberg, there are no tuition fees!





Applying to Dutch Universities

The Netherlands is fast becoming one of the top IB graduate destinations not least because of the relatively cheap cost, wide number of courses available in English as well as the use of English across the country! Indeed, a large number of Dutch universities have partnerships with universities around the world so even if you're not interested in spending three years there, there may be opportunities to study abroad for one year if you choose to study elsewhere!



In the Netherlands there are three types of universities: private, government-approved and government-funded. Usually, to enter a bachelor's degree at a Dutch university you have to apply directly to the programme at the university you are interested in (note: application processes can vary widely between subjects at the same Uni!)

It's also worth mentioning that Dutch university **acceptance rates tend to be higher** than those in Germany or the UK. This is because a significant number of students fail the first year. It may be slightly easier to get in, but be prepared to work if you want to stay on!

As with the advice for German universities, it is worth doing your research early to make sure you are not tripped up by a specific application process!

Going Forward...

Want to find out even more information about the application processes? The IBO publishes some very handy guides that go into even more depth regarding the application processes for each country. Make sure you consult with them to double check you're heading down the right path!

If you're looking for further assistance with applying, check out our online private tuition service. We can pair you with a tutor who is studying the course or is at the university you wish to study at! They are available to give advice on the process and your application!

Best of luck with your applications from all the Lanterna Team!

Online Private Tuition

Receive one-on-one support from the comfort of your own home. Support whenever and wherever you need!



FOR MORE SUPPORT

head to
lanternaeducation.com

Revision Courses

A helping hand when it matters the most to boost your grades! Held strategically during the Winter and Easter break before you final exam, our courses help ensure you reach you full potential!

Summer Courses

Whenever you are about to start your first or final year of the IB, use the summer to get ahead and on top of your IB subjects!



Questions? Email us at info@lanternaeducation.com