

KIS University Advising Handbook

Welcome Message

Dear Kazakhstan International School Students & Families:

For the first semester of Grade 12, the university application process can be viewed as your “eighth class”. This is an exciting but rigorous process of critical self-reflection. You will be spending the next three or four years living in a country of your choice, residing in a city and campus of your choice, while studying a major/minor or your choice. It is crucial that you take time to ask yourself the following questions: What do I really want out of my university experience? Why do I want to choose a specific field of study? Where will I feel most comfortable?

The university application process can be a difficult process to navigate. Keeping track of the deadlines, academic entry requirements, document requirements, standardized test registration, interviews, and supplemental essays is no easy feat. Each university has its own set of rules and policies that you must abide by, which are stated on the university’s website. It is vital that you research and familiarize yourself with these protocols for each university of your choice. KIS has a set of rules and policies that have been implemented to help you and your University Advisors work together to move through this process. Please take time to review this handbook to ensure that you are aware of how KIS can offer its assistance and support to you during the university application process.

Remember the School Guidance Counselor is here to support you. We ask that you stay proactive and keep active communication with us to ensure you have a smooth and memorable application process and transition from High School to University. We wish you much success.

Kind Regards,

Mr. Alex Hinckley - School Guidance Counselor

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Goals & Objectives

This handbook is designed to inform all students and families about Kazakhstan International School's policies and practices relating to the University Advising Department. The intent of these policies and practices are to ensure a positive and collaborative effort to create the highest quality college application.

Following the practices set forth in this handbook will ensure that you have a successful university application process. Your teacher recommendation will be properly written, your IB predicted grades will be up-to-date, the preparation of your other documentation will be adequately completed, and all of your documentation will arrive at your chosen university in a timely manner.

Failing to follow the policies and practices outlined in this handbook may delay the submission of the supporting documentation, jeopardize the quality of the supporting documentation, and/or put your entire application and possible admission at risk.

Official School Documentation

Official school documentation are documents that Kazakhstan International School is responsible for. This includes: Official KIS high school transcripts, IB predicted grades, teacher recommendation letters, University Advisor/School Guidance Counselor recommendation letter (if applicable), and any school forms that the university requires KIS to complete.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of the documentation and forms that each specific university requires and inform the School Guidance Counselor in writing when these documents must be submitted. Universities require different types of documentation and clearly state what they are expecting and when the deadline is on their official website. The School Guidance Counselor will obtain the school documentation for the student, however, the counselor is not responsible for informing students which specific documents each university requires. Documents will not be sent nor processed during a KIS scheduled break (i.e. fall, winter, summer break) without prior agreement. Students are responsible for ensuring that any document to be completed or sent to a university is finished well in advance of any school break.

Official Transcripts – *A high school transcript is a student's academic record. Including semester grades, a transcript is from Grade 9 until Grade 12. KIS students can attain two separate transcripts (qualifications): One from KIS and the other from the IB, as long as they satisfy all of the criteria.*

The Secondary School would be responsible for the printing of official KIS transcripts. Students and families can receive a printed version of their official (stamped and sealed) transcript if deemed necessary and all students receive their transcript upon graduation. Universities typically expect to receive the transcript to the Admissions office prior to students enrolling at the university. The Secondary Office would be able to share digital copies of student transcripts only directly with the university during the summer break. Official transcripts, whether printed or digital copy, take at least three working days to process. Official transcript requests can be made by directly emailing Mr. Alex Hinckley (ahinckley@kisnet.org).

Students will receive their final IB transcript (hard copy) at the KIS Secondary School in early September. Students who request for their IB transcript sent to them or the university they are matriculating to must contact the School Guidance Counselor, Alex Hinckley (ahinckley@kisnet.org), with the full mailing address, a contact number and the bank advice slip once payment is made so that the school can mail out the document. If payment is being made via bank wire transfer, bank charges will be borne by the student. In the spring, Grade 12 students would work with the IB Coordinator to designate to which university they would need to send their IB final results. If a student ends up accepting an offer from a school that they did not designate, they can always arrange to have the IBO directly send their IB final results to the university through [the official IBO website](#) and search for “requesting transcripts and transcripts.” There is a small fee for this process.

Transfer Transcripts - If a student has transferred to KIS from another school, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain their previous school’s transcript. Many universities require the academic records (the transcript) from Grade 9 to Grade 12. Students may inform their previous school to email the official transcript to the KIS School Guidance Counselor or submit a hard copy of the document to the advisor so that they can scan this document and save this in the student’s file for future sending to the university.

IB Predicted Grades – *IB Predicted Grades are teacher predictions of the student’s final IB exams, based on students’ consistent performance throughout the IB programme. This includes six IB courses, Theory of Knowledge, and Extended Essay.*

It is the DP Coordinator’s responsibility to organize and publish the IB predicted grades, typically at the beginning or middle of November via Managebac. The University Advisor will send the IB predicted grades to each university on the students’ university list upon the student request. Students should not approach teachers to collect or request their IB predicted grades. Students may not request that a teacher change their predicted grades.

If students wish to discuss their IB predicted grades, they must first arrange a meeting with the IB Coordinator.

Recommendation Letters – *A recommendation letter is written by either a teacher and/or University Advisor that details a student’s abilities, qualities and characteristics.*

In order to receive a recommendation letter, students must first complete the “Competencies” section and the “US Recommenders” form on Unifrog. Students must ensure that their response provides enough detail and specificity so that the referee can write a well-rounded and strong recommendation letter. Once completed, students must ask a teacher and/or School Guidance Counselor (applicable mostly for universities based in the US and Japan) if they are willing to write them a recommendation letter. If the teacher agrees, the student will then make a formal request via Unifrog. The teacher/School Guidance Counselor will not begin writing the recommendation letter until the student has completed the “US Recommender” and the “Competencies” section on Unifrog, asked the teacher/School Guidance Counselor in-person, ***and*** made a formal request via Unifrog.

Please keep in mind that teachers already have a great deal of work and writing a recommendation letter is an additional workload. Teachers have the right to tell a student that they are unable to write a recommendation for them. Students can ask any one teacher for a recommendation letter. If the university that a student is applying to requires two recommendation letters, they must show the School Guidance Counselor where it states that on the university’s website, and then would be allowed to request two letters.

Teachers and the School Guidance Counselors are given three (3) working weeks to write a recommendation letter. This starts from the day that the student has completed the above mentioned process. Recommendation letters are confidential documents and cannot be given electronically or by hard copy

to students and families. Students would not have access to or be able to view recommendation letters.

Rationale: KIS follows the best practice of many leading international schools and keeping letters of recommendation confidential is a standard practice among (international) high schools across the globe. In general, universities prefer confidential letters of recommendation because the schools assume that confidential evaluations would be more candid. Both high schools and universities across the globe recognize the importance of keeping recommendation letters confidential. The School Guidance Counselor reviews all teacher recommendation letters and ensures these letters reflect the best accomplishments and potential of our students.

If there are any teacher or School Guidance Counselor forms that are required to fill in from the university, it is the student's responsibility to provide those forms (electronic or paper) to either the teacher and/or the School Guidance Counselor. The School Guidance Counselor can help the student in locating such forms, however, it is the student's responsibility to research and provide such documentation to the teacher and/or School Guidance Counselor.

Submitting Final Transcripts

KIS will send the student's final KIS transcript to the university they will be matriculating to before the last day of the academic year. The School Guidance Counselor will send the final KIS transcript **electronically** to the university that the student will be matriculating to, **if** the initial transcript was sent via Unifrog/Common App/UCAS or the student's university portal. This includes all universities based in the US and Canada. It is the student's responsibility to inform their University Advisor in writing as to which university they are planning to attend after graduation in order to ensure all transcripts are sent to the appropriate institutions. Once the student decides on the university that they will attend, it is the student's responsibility to notify the other universities from which they have an offer that they will not be attending.

Students who need to physically mail their final KIS transcript to their university must email Mr Alex Hinckley at ahinckley@kisnet.org with the full mailing address, a contact number, and the bank advice slip once payment is made so that the school can mail out the document. If payment is being made via bank wire transfer, bank charges will be borne by the student.

In order for a student's final IB transcript to be sent to the university where the student is going to matriculate to, the student must fill in a form that the IB Coordinator sends out to Grade 12 students in the Spring semester where the student lists the university they are planning to attend. Students who do not do this, or who at a later date request to have the IB final transcript sent to a university must go to [the official IBO website](#) and search for "requesting transcripts and certificates."

Student Application Submission

Early Application Schemes

Any student wanting to apply through an early application scheme should notify and confirm with the School Guidance Counselor at least two (2) months before the application deadline (see the timeline chart at the end of this document.) Failing to do so means students and families will take full responsibility for the quality of the student application. The pool of applicants who apply through the early application schemes tend to have a strong academic and extracurricular profiles so students should prepare well in advance to be able to showcase their accomplishments and submit a strong application.

The majority of early schemes fall into the U.S. and these schemes are often called Early Decision and Early Action (ED and EA). These ED and EA schemes are typically due on November 1 or November 15. Universities based in Asia also tend to have "early rounds." Universities based in the UK require medical, dental, veterinary, and OxBridge applicants to apply by October 15. An *Early Decision* scheme is a binding agreement between the student, families, KIS and the university. If the student applies through the ED scheme and is accepted, they

must withdraw all of their offers from *all* countries as well as remove any application with pending decisions by notifying these universities to which they have submitted their application. All parties sign an agreement to do this and must abide by the ED binding agreement. KIS will only send the final high school transcript to the ED university to which the student has been accepted. EA is “non-binding,” with the advantage that students receive their decision between December and early January. Typically, students would have until May 1 to make their final decision.

Regular Application

Students applying via regular decision should have their “shortlist” universities listed on the [University Selection](#) document by September 3, are responsible for knowing the application requirements and deadlines, ensure that they meet the entry requirements, and communicate with their School Guidance Counselor in order for the preparation process to run smoothly and accurately. In order for the School Guidance Counselor to provide ample support to the student in their university application process, students must keep the communication lines open with the School Guidance Counselor and their families. Counselors have an open door policy where students can always drop in during one of their breaks, and where parents can email the Counselor with any questions that they have.

From the end of October until December 11 (see below), students and University Advisors will be putting the finishing touches on a high quality, outstanding application. The student and families pay and submit the application well in advance of the deadline to ensure a high quality application.

The School Guidance Counselor expects students to have completed and submitted their university application a week before the winter holiday, if applying to North America, Europe, Hong Kong, and Japan. For the graduating class of 2022, this date has been set as December 10, 2021 (*subject to change once 2021-2022 academic calendar released by KIS*). This allows the Counselor a few working days after December 10 to review student applications and notify students on any aspect of their application the students may have overlooked.

KIS School Guidance Counselors take pride in adhering to the standards of other globally-recognized international schools in Kazakhstan and the rest of the world. It is not acceptable for a student to inform their School Guidance Counselor that they are “thinking” of applying to a university without ever having mentioned it in the preceding weeks or months, and then proceed to apply. It is also not acceptable for a student to inform their School Guidance Counselor during an official holiday and school break that they are applying to a university and need essays reviewed and/or supporting school documents sent to the university. Careful and thoughtful planning of the university application process is required by all stakeholders in order to ensure that students submit the strongest application to their universities of choice. This collaborative process happens over a period of time beginning in Grade 11 and up to the end of the “application season,” which for all intensive purposes takes place between August and December for the majority of Grade 12 students.

Generally speaking, KIS School Guidance Counselors recommend that applications be submitted earlier rather than later. Once a student's application is complete, has been reviewed and approved by the School Guidance Counselor and is of a high standard, then the application is ready to be submitted.

Number of Universities students can apply

At KIS, we allow students to submit up to ten (10) applications. This follows the practice at many leading international schools around the world. We recommend that students roughly break down their 10 applications as the following: 2-3 “reach or aspirational”, 4-5 “realistic/match” and 2-3 “safety” schools.

*Note: University of California (UC), OUAC (Ontario), and UCAS (UK) schools count as one as they are centralized application systems. As we count University of California (UC), OUAC, and UCAS as one individual application, the number of schools students may end up applying to would be more than ten.

Some of the reasons that KIS limits to 10 applications include:

- Students have to write supplemental essays (more for the US). Each essay takes a significant amount of time to develop and refine.

- Students need to spend time researching and narrowing down their recommendations.
- Students have to maintain academic performance while balancing their IB coursework, extracurriculars and university applications.
- Having too many offers is stressful to narrow down to one.
- Each University Advisor has 40+ seniors that they work with. We want to ensure that we are able to maintain the quality of personalized attention that we are able to provide for each student and university applications.

Verifying Entry Requirements:

It is the student's responsibility to carefully read about the admissions criteria and to ensure they meet the minimum entry requirements (e.g. predicted IB points total, subject-specific requirements, any standardized tests). Minimum predicted IB points total and subject-specific requirements are more common for university courses in the United Kingdom, Canada, Singapore and Europe. Students should not apply to courses that exceed their IB predicted grades or in cases where they do not take the subject-specific requirements. This will result in a rejection from the university.

School Documentation Submission (Electronic):

It is the responsibility of the School Guidance Counselor to submit school documentation to a student's universities in the USA and UK, *after* the student submits their application. Submitting documentation electronically to universities takes at least three working days for the advisor to process and complete.

Once the School Guidance Counselor submits supporting school documents, it will take time for the university to process and update students' application status.

In regards to university applications to Canada, Europe, Singapore and other countries that allow/require the students to upload supporting school documents through their university application portal, School Guidance Counselors will share with students their (watermarked) school documents in order for students to be able to upload them onto their own university application portal. The School Guidance Counselor will work with students to facilitate this process.

Since the teacher and School Guidance Counselor recommendation letters are confidential documents, students will NOT have access to these letters. As such, the School Guidance Counselor will be sharing these recommendation letters directly with the universities. In case the universities require the recommendation letters to be mailed, the School Guidance Counselor will place the letters (stamped) in a sealed KIS envelope for students to mail.

School Documentation Submission (Mail)

Any school documentation that is to be sent to the university by hard copy ***must be sent from KIS*** via express courier, DHL, UPS and/or FedEx. The School Guidance Counselor will collect all necessary school documentation. The documentation will be shown to the student to verify, then placed in an envelope and sealed. Students must provide the School Guidance Counselor with their university application number, the mailing address, and telephone number of the institution so they may be included on the school documentation envelope. Documentation will not be sent unless the student brings the required items. Any student documentation that is the student's responsibility should be mailed by the student.

It will take at least five working days for the School Guidance Counselor to collect and prepare hard copies of the school documentation. Please keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to inform the School Guidance Counselor in writing well in advance to begin preparing the school documentation for mailing. The student will also provide the School Guidance Counselor, if applicable, with their previous school's transcript, certifications, and/or awards that they wish to include in the documentation envelope.

Students and families will cover the cost of mailing the school documentation to the universities. After the five working days, students will go to the KIS Accounting Office to arrange payment for the express mail, and then hand the invoice over to the KIS main receptionist, who will then arrange pick up with the courier.

GRADE 11 UNIVERSITY ADMISSION CHECKLIST

JANUARY	
26	University application cycle process introduction (pm)
1-31	Research summer programs (if applicable)
FEBRUARY	
1-28	University advisor meetings.
	Complete the “Activities”, “Competencies”, and “Notes for Recommendation” sections on Unifrog.
	Begin drafting statement/college essay(s)/ motivational letter in Unifrog
	Continue research for personalized list of university factors/criteria and majors/courses of study
MARCH	
1-31	Register for the IELTS/TOEFL (English B students)
	Continue to review entrance requirements for universities of interest
	Continue summer programme research
APRIL	
15	Personal statement/college essay(s)/ motivational letter first draft due
1-31	Confirm summer planning where possible (programmes/university visits)
	Attend university representative visits (virtual/in-person)
MAY	

1-31	Attend university representative visits (virtual/in-person)
8	SAT registration deadline
30	All students have at least 9 schools filled out on the University Selection Worksheet

GRADE 12 UNIVERSITY ADMISSION CHECKLIST

AUGUST	
1-31	University planning meetings with University Advisor
	Update University Selection document with final university longlist
	Register for the IELTS/TOEFL (English B students only)
	Finalize “ Competencies ” for Teacher Recommendation & ask one teacher* to be your referee. <i>*Show University Advisor university website requirements (more than one letter only) to facilitate approval of a two letter request.</i>
13	Oxbridge & UK Medicine/Veterinary/Dentistry candidates application intent deadline (submit to University Advisor)
17	Personal statement / college essay(s) / motivational letter 2nd draft submission deadline
20	US early decision (ED) / early action (EA) candidates application intent deadline (submit to University Advisor)
27	Teacher recommendation request deadline (ask teachers)
SEPTEMBER	
1-31	University planning meetings with University Advisor
	Attend university representative visits (online/in-person)
3	Update University Selection document with final university shortlist
8	University of Cambridge application submission (internal) deadline
17	Final draft for Common application and supplemental essays for ED & EA applications

22	University of Oxford, UK Medical/Vet application submission internal deadline
OCTOBER	
1-31	Discuss application process and university selection with University Advisor
	Attend university representative visits (online/in-person)
	Begin to finalize your application i.e. materials, requirements, Unifrog, etc
25	Any November 1 EA/ED application (internal) deadline
27	Submit your final draft of Personal Statement/application essay(s) to your University Advisor.
NOVEMBER	
1-31	Attend university representative visits online
	Complete your regular decision application (materials, requirements, etc)
3	Any November 15 EA/ED application (internal) deadline Hong Kong fast track application deadline
18	University of California (UC) application (internal) deadline
DECEMBER	
10	Submit/complete ALL U.S., UK, Europe, HK & Japan applications with deadline of January 15 or earlier

KIS INTERNAL DEADLINES: BY COUNTRY

United Kingdom (UK)	September 8	University of Cambridge
	September 22	University of Oxford & all UK Medicine/ Veterinary/ Dentistry courses
	December 10	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline or earlier deadline
United States (U.S.)	October 25	Any November 1 EA/ED official deadline
	November 3	Any November 15 EA/ED official deadline
	November 18	University of California (UC) applications
	December 10	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline or earlier deadline
Netherlands	December 10	Complete initial Studielink registration
	December 10	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline / university-specific Numerus Fixus program applications <u>must be submitted</u>
	7 full working days prior to the official deadline	All other university applications
Canada <i>Some universities require supplemental materials (essay, video interview etc) when submitting initial application.</i>	December 10	Internal application deadline for universities with a January 15 deadline or earlier
	7 full working days prior to the official deadline	Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC)-affiliated schools or all other university applications with direct applications
Asia	7 full working days prior to the official deadline	All university applications are completed and due (sent to university or completed on university portal) regardless of country and/or admissions' round

Student and Family Agreement

I (student name: _____) and my family (parent/guardian name: _____) understand that we have access to the KIS University Advising Handbook. We will read the set of policies and guidelines within. We understand that by following these set policies and guidelines would ensure a smooth and successful university application process and deviating from these set of practices may negatively impact the application process and outcome.

Date:

Student Signature:

Parent/Guardian Signature: