



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SUVA

World Class Citizens ~ Lifelong Learners

University Application Booklet

2016

This booklet is aimed at helping you to apply for the universities you want to go to in a timely fashion and with the minimum of pressure. If you start planning and “doing” now, it will help you manage that end of year rush that comes upon us all. Certainly the school is less than sympathetic if we are asked to help when an application is due the next day or even that afternoon. Certainly over the holidays, your teachers want a break and desperate emails for last minute help will not be treated favorably.

“Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there!”

I hope that the process of applying might actually be an enjoyable one as you contemplate life beyond ISS.....

THINKING ABOUT TERTIARY EDUCATION

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1. WHY?

There are many options open to you after school. Aside from the achievement of a formal tertiary qualification, attendance at a tertiary institution is a wonderful way to learn about life and experience a raft of new things, learn new ideas and experience different cultures.

There are many options: the traditional university, a new establishment, a specialist institution (eg technikon, dance, art or drama college), liberal arts college (available in the US), women's colleges, TAFE or Polytechnics (Australia and New Zealand). Each will have their own requirements for entry and often you need to apply before your results are out, so it is important to apply to several.

There are a lot of things to consider when you are trying to choose a particular way forward after school. You can follow a three step process:

Step 1: Consider what you are interested in or good at.

When thinking about a possible career path for example, think about what you enjoy most, are successful at, and how you might see you developing should you follow this path as you get older. It is important that you choose something that is going to be rewarding.

Step 2: Explore all your study options.

You can think about where you would like to go and then narrow down the institutions, look at what they offer and see whether the culture of the institution suits you. Look at what scholarships are available and what finance is needed as well as whether the courses are appropriate. If you are looking at a Northern Hemisphere school, you need to think about what you will do for the six or seven months before you start, sometimes this may be a gap experience or work. Identify courses that are available and entry requirements and make sure they fit your programme.

Step 3: Make the decision.

Do not simply choose a course or institution simply because all your friends are going! It sometimes works to write a list of pros and cons for your choices but you must think about what will be best for you and you alone!

2. GAP YEAR?

One option is to take a gap year. (If you are applying to the Northern hemisphere the academic year begins only in August or September, so you will have half a year off anyway before you start).

Taking a year off will not weaken your university application - in fact many institutions look on this favourably.

However, institutions which have granted significant financial aid to students do not usually allow students to defer their starting date unless they are prepared to apply afresh for financial aid and understand that their current award might be reduced or eliminated altogether. In the US, you will also have to discuss a gap year with your university if you wish to defer starting when a place has been assigned.

Gap year options include: work experience/volunteer work/language learning or other study and travel. See: www.yearoutgroup.org and www.gapyear.com and <http://www.americangap.org/about.php>

3. CONSIDER WHAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN

Choosing a course is easy for some students and some students have known what they want to do for a long time. However, many have little idea what they want to do and look to many people or resources such as websites or publications for help. Teachers will be able to provide honest feedback on where your strengths may lie if you are not sure. It is best to think about what inspires you, what you like to do and what you are good at.

You will need to be realistic about your aptitude and about the opportunities that are open to you. Look at your current subject combination as this will define entry to many courses. You can go to www.careercruising.com to get an initial assessment of a career that may be appropriate (log in is User: SUVA, password: laucala). UCAS also provides a similar service called the “Stamford test” available through their website at www.ucas.com. Also think about what you enjoy doing for fun or outside of school as it would be nice to have a profession that covers both your skill and a wide range of your interests.

Remember too that there are many courses available, which involve subjects you have **not** encountered at school: investigate Law, Politics, International Relations and Marketing or whatever it might be. Some courses are not available at undergraduate level in some countries, for example it is not possible to do medicine in the US or Canada at first degree level. Explore careers outside the usual ‘doctor-dentist-lawyer-banker’ routine: perhaps look through adverts in overseas newspapers.

Sometimes it is useful to ask to volunteer at a workplace that is similar to that you may be interested in joining after your degree. Aside from being a beneficial fact-finding exercise, this also looks good on your CV. Work experience also shows you the demands and expectations of work.

Make sure that you attend the careers expo, go to the USP Open Day and visiting university expo as this will help to clarify any ideas you may have on a particular course.

Look at the websites for universities and contact their Admissions Offices to seek their advice (but never ask questions which are answered in their publications). Whilst there are courses which commit you to a profession (medicine, dentistry, veterinary science), many courses are more open-ended and provide an excellent starting point for a range of occupations.

4. **EXPLORE YOUR STUDY OPTIONS**

Consider:

- ❖ Employment prospects for graduates and **crucially** for most- is there any form of **financial aid** available?
- ❖ Location – Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, UK, home country? Consider climate, culture, and distance from home. Do you want to be thousands of miles from your home and family? There is nothing wrong with wanting to study in your home country and in many cases it might well be your most effective career route!
- ❖ City-based, suburban, rural: is there a campus?
- ❖ Size of the university, department.
- ❖ Academic status/reputation of institution/subject - assessments of research and teaching quality.
- ❖ Teaching and assessment methods - choose the learning environment which best suits you.
- ❖ Subject choice availability/flexibility/combination
- ❖ Degree structure - yearly progression or modularization, terms or semesters.
- ❖ Student composition - international student body, or mainly monocultural? Single-sex or mixed?
- ❖ Student life – what is the nature and quality of everyday student life going to be like for you?
- ❖ Accommodation provision.
- ❖ Living costs - how expensive is the university town to live in? Are there part time jobs on campus (can you get a student work visa if it is not your own country)?
- ❖ Academic facilities - library, computer resources, research opportunities, special strengths eg science, arts.
- ❖ Other facilities - welfare, sports.
- ❖ Links with 'outside world' – eg government, business, finance, other educational institutions - how much help, formal or otherwise, might the institution be able to give you after you graduate?

First things first

Make sure that the universities you apply to are **suitable for your needs**. Every year, students who have not researched the institution properly make an application only to discover that the course they want is not offered, or that this institution does not offer Financial Aid to International Students. Identify **non-negotiable key factors** first. Don't select on the basis of the name (or where most of your family went to), look for a place that is a good **FIT** for you!

Bear in mind when you are reading prospectuses and viewing websites that the material is promotional: sift through the information and ask yourself what it might be like for **you** to attend that college. One-way is to read campus newspapers to get a feel for the place.

Be realistic

Ultimately, it is important to be realistic about how attractive a candidate you will be for any given establishment. The more competitive an institution is, the stronger your application will need to be. So formulate a sense of your strengths, and make realistic applications.

A student applying to an Oxbridge or Ivy League university will need a very high ATAR score or IB predicted grade over 39/40. Applicants for Medicine at some Australian universities require ATAR scores over 98 (and many students have better rankings than this). University web sites will have information about course entry requirements.

Making an unrealistic application is not only futile (and expensive), but it wastes time and effort. Your Semester reports and Mock Examination grades (if you are an IB student) is a way of identifying where you sit in ranking with other students.

A consistently impressive performance through year 11 and 12 is vital – your grade transcript is one of the most persuasive pieces of evidence!

It is realistic to apply to six institutions per country: two 'reaches' (places which might accept you with a bit of luck), two 'realistics' (places which fit your current performance) and two 'insurances' (places which would be likely to accept an applicant a bit weaker than you): it should be possible to find 'insurance' or "safety" places which you would happily attend.

5. GETTING ORGANISED

It takes a significant amount of time to do the research and apply to universities, therefore it is not something you should be doing around exams (which unfortunately is how late many students leave this!). Applications require work and they need to have your full attention. You may need to write several essays, submit sample work, provide

financial information and other things which are not easily achievable at the last minute. You should have a separate file to help you collate information. Keep copies of emails, all correspondence from the university: a lost reference/PIN number can make life frustrating. Of course you should keep a hard copy of everything, and make sure everything is saved on both hard drive and on your USB.

Being organized means less work, done less intensely, under less pressure and is liable to produce better results. Plan to do this in the second holidays of Year 12. If you leave it until the end of the year, then scholarships may not be open to you and you may not have school resources to help you. Remember the Fiji scholarships are usually advertised at the end of June. Register for your university applications (ie CommonApp.org and UCAS.com) before you leave so that you can check that you are on the right track. Teachers who are asked to complete documentation in the holidays at the end of the year will be less than impressed at your lack of planning and remember their impressions will be reflected in any reference you ask them to write.

Websites

The following two websites www.braintrack.com and www.unigo.com have links to universities throughout the world. If you know the name of the university, the directly to the website, look at international admissions requirements and make sure you can go before looking further.

Start early

I cannot stress how crucial it is that you **adhere to deadlines**. University applications should be sorted before your final exams!

Last minute entirely foreseeable requests will not be entertained! Be warned! Also, you will not be able to get hold of me over the Christmas holidays as I travel to an internet unfriendly place in NZ (no mobile phones either) – so you need to get everything done early.

TIMESCALE

By Term Two Year 12:

- Read through this booklet and keep it safe for reference.
- Research on websites/in careers library (if you haven't already done it check the careercruising.com site)
- Attend the careers fair at school and any other university fairs such as the USP fair
- Talk to parents, friends, former students, older siblings, teachers and me!
- Draw up list of possible institutions: aim for a 'long shortlist' of about 10 or 12 institutions in more than one country
- Read their prospectuses and websites in detail, highlight deadlines

- Make enquiries of their International Admissions Office
- Identify whether you have all necessary information: do you need signatures / financial information from your parents? The US International Financial Aid Form is lengthy and requires specific information.
- Are there gaps in the strength of your application which you can rectify by taking action now? (A number of applicants for Medicine every year suddenly discover they have had no experience of working in any clinical setting. If you have applied for an art related course, have you a suitable portfolio?).
- Be aware of SAT registration deadlines and go online to look at possible coaching sessions (if considering North America). Ideally if you are sitting SAT, it is good to have identified at least four of your likely institutions by the time you register: this will allow you to have SAT send your results automatically to them. You will need to sit the SAT 1 if you are applying to Ivy Leagues which want SAT 2.

Ensure that your grades are where you want them to be! If not then you have a short time left to meet your potential. Admission decisions are based on concrete evidence of your ability.

Get involved in as many school events and activities as possible to make you as attractive as possible to admissions officers. **They are looking for leaders, movers and shakers!** The application process is an art not a science so the qualitative stuff is just as important as the quantitative! It is important to show that you have made progress and often it is important to show that you have taken one course in CAS and developed your skills into being in a leadership role rather than a lot of rather superficial experiences.

- Narrow your focus and research and move towards your shortlist. Secure any parental help/advice/signatures. Organise copies of your IGCSE certificates / Reports.

Term Two/ Three

Refine list of institutions for applications. Identify deadlines.

- Approach referees to ask if they are willing to write you a reference. You will receive two references with your report but you must make sure the teachers you ask to be referees understand whether a general reference is required or whether they have to be tailored for a particular application. If you are applying for the US, tell me as these references are slightly different – you must have a Counselor reference and subject references for example. For any referee, make sure they know what course you are applying for and why. Use the form provided to help.
- Complete the Careers letter documentation and submit to me by May 30th.

- If you have to prepare a personal essay / statement submit your draft by the end of term 2.
- IB students should have identified the universities they wish to send transcripts to so Mrs Karountzos can place these on the IBIS website. You are allowed one to be sent to the US, three in total to North America (may include your US application) and three elsewhere or alternately, six in total if they are not to US / Canadian universities.

You are entirely responsible for the organisation and timing of each and every part of your application. I repeat: if you fail to adhere to our deadlines, any request you make will go to the very bottom of lists of things to do!

COLLATING APPLICATIONS:

- When requesting a reference from a teacher you will always need to **specify the institution, the course and show any personal statement/application forms, so that the reference is pertinent and informed.**
- **Keep a record of what you have done and what remains to be done.** A form without a signature or with a single piece of information omitted is unimpressive and will certainly cause delays. Many applications have checklists, or accompanying leaflets - **use these.**
- It is crucial that your referee understand **exactly what** needs to be done and **by when.** Make sure s/he is fully briefed.
- For **all** applications, keep a photocopy of **everything** sent with proof of postage (if you are not applying online (although this is best) registered post is normally reliable: courier might be better for any ED/EA (first choices)
- It is vital that you are consistent with the **name** that you use on your applications and any other university business like SAT registration. Always use your name as it appears on your passport to avoid problems with study visa applications!

Those Applying For Art/Design Courses:

You will need to assemble a collection of good quality photographs of your work. They need to be stamped with the school stamp on the reverse, signed by the Head of Visual Arts.

Term Three

- On receiving your Mock Exam results or last semester's report you should be in a good position to finalise your list of colleges that you wish to apply to
- Discuss and submit this list to me so that I know where to send the school part of your application
- Register with UCAS, complete UCAS form online if applying to the UK and submit it to me before you leave
- Register with UAC
- Complete US Foreign Application Financial Aid Form (if relevant) with your parents help.

6. FIJI

The University of the South Pacific application form and brochures are available in Mrs David's office and you can visit the website. Applications should be received by December prior to a January start. If you are not a Fiji Citizen, you will require a study permit and have to pay international fees.

Fiji citizens will need to refer to the Government Scholarship Board. This is based on school performance and recently rules have changed. There is also a Tertiary Scholarships and Loans scheme <http://home.tslb.com.fj/>. This will replace the previously existing iTaukei, PSC or Multi-Ethnic Affairs scholarship <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=250818>

There are also AUSAID and NZODA scholarships available, however to apply for these, students must be Fiji citizens and they cannot have dual citizenship or parents who have residency of another country.

7. AUSTRALIA AND UAC APPLICATIONS

At the end of year 12 you can apply for several universities via the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) which is the central office that processes applications for both undergraduate and graduate courses in Australia, particularly in NSW and the ACT. For further information about UAC visit www.uac.edu.au .

For ACT students the ATAR score is a ranking (not a mark) that universities use for admission and is an overall measure of student achievement. An excellent booklet on UAC is in the careers office that lists entry requirements and specifications for a variety of universities and courses in Australia that are accessible via UAC. IB students can register for their Diploma scores to be sent to the UAC centre via VTAC. Mrs Karountzos will arrange for this registration.

There are 39 universities in Australia ranging in size from 3000 to more than 30,000 students. There is a total of more than 600,000 students studying in Australian universities and over 65,000 of these are international students. **Scholarships are very rare.**

Average fees for courses vary greatly and depend on citizenship. International students can expect to pay higher fees. Australian citizens qualify for loans schemes. Most courses start in February; however, some may also start in July and October. A bachelor's degree is generally 3-5 years long.

To study in Australia as an international student, you must obtain a student visa - once you have been accepted to your chosen institution, advice will be given on how to proceed. Refer to the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) at www.immi.gov.au In order to be granted the visa it is often necessary to take the TOEFL and/of IELTS test.

There are no official "league tables" of institutions: there are a number of publications which rate various university attributes but none rank institutions as such. A useful guide, published by the Federal Department of Education Science and Technology (FDEST) can be found at www.detva.gov.au/tenfields/.

Excellent websites include www.studyaustralia.com.au: this organisation appears to offer a range of services and even offers help with applications:
Email info@studyaustralia.com.au

8. NEW ZEALAND

There are a variety of very good schools in New Zealand and they recognize both the ATAR and IB qualifications. Some schools will give preferential entry to courses based on a good IB / ACT score. A useful site is <http://www.commonapp.org/whats-appening/application-updates/common-application-announces-2016-2017-essay-prompts>

Scholarships information is at <http://www.gostudynewzealand.com/studying-in-new-zealand/funding-your-education/scholarships-in-new-zealand/>

There is the Student Loan Scheme and tertiary assistance for NZ citizens who qualify which are payable on reaching a certain threshold of income once the student starts work. Whilst Australian citizens are regarded as domestic students in NZ in terms of fees for courses, they are not eligible for the Student Loans Scheme without having lived three years consecutively in NZ.

Some courses such as medicine require a first year entry course to be taken. Be aware that competition is high for these places, however, there are a few specific scholarships

and placement allocations for those students with New Zealand citizenship that are of Maori and Pacific Island descent. For most major universities, applications open in August for Medicine and must be completed by September but it is best to check the relevant universities.

Some universities in NZ require proof of English proficiency and I can write letters to the institution indicating that your education is in English and in some cases this has led to some institutions waiving this requirement.

You may need references for entry to Halls of Residence and early application is advisable for international students.

9. UNITED KINGDOM

The UK offers excellent quality and diversity of courses. However, the crucial issue is **funding**. UK fees are expensive for most international students (+E200,000) and scholarships are rare. If you have a European passport, you may be eligible for the (very much) cheaper European Union fees, but there may be restrictions on residency (the number of years in country prior to application).

A degree (with automatic honours) is generally a three-year course, though Engineering, Languages, and Scottish universities tend to operate four years. Medicine, veterinary science, architecture and dentistry vary from five to six years. UK degrees are generally more specialized than the liberal arts programmes available in the USA.

Applications to the UK are straightforward as there is a centralized application system called 'UCAS' (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) much like UAC via which students apply to their chosen universities (up to five institutions). Note that you may apply only for FOUR Medicine courses. Medicine is hugely competitive for International students and still highly competitive for home students. Also be aware that courses like Medicine and Law require you to take extra tests (BMAT/LNAT/TSA), however these tests are expensive. **It is your responsibility to register online for these tests.**

If you are asking for a reference for the UK please make sure that your referee knows that they need to sell you for a particular course!

How UCAS works at ISS

The application must be made through the Electronic Application System "Apply" at www.ucas.com. You must register through ISS by using our buzzword (rather than as an individual). There is only one referee required for UCAS, but I suggest that you still ask two and then I will merge them together to make sure that your reference is as comprehensive as possible. Make sure your chosen referees are familiar with each and every aspect of your achievements at ISS: the UCAS reference is a general one with a focus on your suitability for the course. Ask your referees to email the reference to me.

Offers (often conditional on point total) and rejections from your chosen universities usually arrive in the period January-March. By the time you receive news from your UK universities, you will probably be in receipt of your IB results (released Jan 6). After all your offers have come in, you must choose one as a firm acceptance.

You must decide on your UK university choices by November 1st so that we can request the IBO to automatically send your final results to your chosen universities. The UCAS application fee is 20 pounds sterling payable online by credit card.

British citizens who are resident in the UK have some University fees paid for by their Local Education Authority (LEA). **Note that you have to apply (in advance) to your LEA to pay for the university course that you have chosen** – it is not paid for automatically by the LEA. Contact your LEA well in advance if there is any doubt with respect to your status. Different universities have different criteria when classifying applicants for fee purposes.

Use www.ucas.com - offering information by subject, university or geographical location within the UK. It gives brief overviews of courses/universities, with entrance requirements, interview dates and contact details.

Oxbridge (ie either Oxford or Cambridge) applicants need to speak to me by the middle of term two: there is a lot to prepare and much extra paperwork. Oxbridge is particularly competitive and IB and ATAR scores need to be very high. A 39 this year was required at least for entry.

10. USA

The United States is a popular choice of study for the quality of their universities – however the major plus is that scholarships are easier to secure in universities there. There is a huge range in the type of degree offered – you may study at a ‘college’ which usually only has undergraduate programmes, or at a ‘university’ which usually has both under and post-graduate programmes. Liberal Arts colleges provide students with a breadth of knowledge in a range of areas rather than training students for a particular job. Universities are either private or state. It is also good to know that many institutions will give credit (‘advanced standing’) for good IB grades (usually 6/7) at IB Higher Level. Applicants with a good ATAR score are also accepted into schools and many of those having both IB and ATAR find that their ATAR is the first point of entry.

A four-year course can be done at a ‘liberal arts’ college, a broad degree studying subjects as diverse as Biology, English and History all at one time. This is a good option for people who are not sure where they want to go with post-school education. Or a standard degree with a ‘major’ subject and a ‘minor’ subject may be done at one of the ‘universities.’ Note that Law and Medicine are **graduate** subjects only in the US: you would need to study ‘PreMed’ before applying to graduate Medicine School. Law school will usually accept a wide range of disciplines. It is especially difficult (actually unheard

of!) to access Medical School for International Students, especially if you need a scholarship. In the wake of 9/11 short-term aviation courses for international students are not an option! Note that Law and Medicine can be taken as undergraduate courses in most other systems including New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

Common Application

Each school in the USA does its own admissions, but 300 of them, including most which fund international students, accept a common application form, available on www.commonapp.org The whole point of the Common Application Form is that you are saved the trouble of filling in a number of forms which require the same information. However all the popular colleges insist on you completing their own “supplements” which can be long and time-consuming. Some also have extra requirements like writing samples or peer evaluations – eg Dartmouth – it is your responsibility to confirm what each college requires. **Completing the CommonApp is an epic venture and you need to leave enough time to do a decent job.** It also takes a Counselor a long time to fill in so it is better to have plenty of time to do this for you. Put me (Mrs Navunisaravi) down as the Counselor as I must complete school details and manage references. Please make sure you have done something that will bring you to my attention in a positive way if I don’t teach you, so I can more easily complete the reference. You must also complete a personal statement and this has quite a technique attached to it as well as specific topics to write on so you need to start early! Big Future is a useful collegeboard website: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search?navid=gh-cs>

On-line applications

All colleges are now providing an electronic application as an alternative to the paper version. Colleges prefer on-line applications because they do not have to enter the information from the paper copy of your application into their system. Some colleges encourage you to do an on-line application by waiving the application fee if you apply on-line.

Size matters!

As a rough guide, colleges can be divided into three categories: small colleges (fewer than 3000 students); medium colleges (3000-10,000 students); and large colleges (10 000 plus). You will have your own preferences but it is worth knowing that many of the small colleges (which include prestigious Liberal Arts colleges like Carleton, Middlebury, St Olaf) are keen to diversify their student body: in brief, this plays to the advantage of international and ‘minority’ students. Large colleges have more opportunities, but the disadvantage can be an impersonal bureaucracy: examples include many State universities eg University of Michigan, University of Virginia, University of Florida.

What do Colleges require?

- i. Online Application form: could be either a common application form or one specific to that college
- ii. Essay(s)
- iii. Application fee
- iv. Transcripts, ie school academic records. These comprise your record from the beginning of Year 11 to Year 12. Often we are required to produce transcripts for Year 9 and 10 as well.
- v. Tests:

SAT – This has been restructured for 2016 and the new SAT has three sections: Reading, Writing and Language, and Maths with a 1600 point scoring scale. A new side to the SAT process is the option to complete the SAT essay as well as the three previous components. The essay is scored separately and it is important to check whether the university you are interested in requires this component or not.

Almost all USA universities and colleges require that you take SAT1. Ivy Leagues are looking for 700+ in each area, selective Liberal Arts Colleges 600+. The SAT test dates are early May, early June, early October, early November, early December and late January. The tests in June, October and November are usually available at ISS (which acts as Fiji's SAT testing centre along with a centre in Nadi). Of course you can sit a SAT test anywhere but you will need to take along your passport as proof of identity. SAT costs a fee, which includes sending score reports to a maximum of four universities. Consult the 'Register for the SAT Booklet' available from Mrs Fong.

There are also **SAT Subject Tests** which are specific and a way to show a college that you are interested in a particular major. Not all schools require them and it is important to check if they are really necessary before doing them. A good site to go for this is <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/about/institutions-using>

. To register for the SAT

- do this online at <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register> well before the test date (our test centre can fill up with external students so be warned!) - you can only pay by credit card here and need to upload a photo. See later for the CEEB number for the school which is **702360**. You will need to bring your ID, admissions ticket, pencils, eraser, pencil sharpener, watch and calculator.

The SAT is certainly not the most important part of your application. Don't get stressed by it at the expense of your school subjects but do take it seriously!

TOEFL – This test is for students whose first language is not English: institutions wish to satisfy themselves that applicants would be comfortable studying in an

all-English learning environment. As you study English as a 1st Language and if you are asked to prove your English proficiency, then refer to me and get a covering letter along with a standard IB letter which explains the system. See <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

- vi) **3 References** which must be from two of your **academic teachers and me!** Always ask teachers in plenty of time and make sure they are genuinely happy to support your application: explain the nature of the course and institution. It is also a good idea to write a summary of your achievements, extra curricular activities etc. A teacher can never really write a good reference if he/she has not been properly briefed: they are human: make it easier for them! And don't wait until you have completed all your forms before you give the referee his/her section: give them to your referee **as soon as you have decided to apply.**

Some universities specify that they require a science teacher or a language teacher to be the referee – please check this in good time.

If a teacher appears hesitant, then find out why: if s/he is not wanting to recommend you, find someone in a better position. Good teachers and good reference writers get swamped by students requesting references so approach them in good time during term 2.

Occasionally, a Peer Report is requested: be careful. Make sure the person you choose can write well and understands what is needed.

You are often given the opportunity to 'waive your right' to see your reference. Whilst out of curiosity you might like to see what we have to say about you, I suggest you resist the temptation to insist on this right: institutions see that you have **not** waived this right and the reference might not be treated so seriously. Moreover, whilst you might think a teacher would write a 'better' reference if you do not waive your right, this is almost never true: what happens is that a blander, more general report is written which, like a boring personal statement, will kill off your application. I think you have to trust your teachers to be fair and honest (and positive too).

It occasionally happens that students are worried about their **Disciplinary record** at ISS. If an institution has not asked us to comment on your record, there would be no need to volunteer this sort of information (except in unusual circumstances). If the form **does** request this information however, we will provide it so please remember the potential long term consequences of poor decision making this year, particularly with regard to anti-social behavior and academic honesty.

- vii) Sample work: some institutions will ask for samples of your work. Sometimes this is stipulated in the application material; occasionally such a request is made in the light of an application. Usually marked and graded work is required: photocopies are acceptable. Often length/subject areas are stipulated. If you give this work to me in a sealed and addressed envelope before graduation then I can send it off for you.

Deadlines?

Many institutions have Regular Decision deadlines around mid-December to early January, and Early Decision deadlines around early October to mid January. However, you should send applications in earlier.

EARLY DECISION (ED)

About 10% of American establishments offer this option including the most competitive.

If you apply to a college for Early Decision, you commit to attend that college if they offer you a place – so you can apply Early Decision to only one college and you must be certain that this really is your top choice. Early Decision plans are **binding**. If you apply for Early Decision, many colleges will let you know whether you have been accepted within weeks. The advantage is that the Admissions Committee will feel that you are serious about this commitment: of course you will need to be sufficiently strong for them to want to offer you a place early on, without having seen the full range of the Regular Pool. (Sometimes if you are not successful in securing an Early Decision offer, you will be placed into the Regular pool.)

EARLY ACTION (EA)

Early Action (or Early Notification) schools allow you to apply early and receive an early notification, but they do not require you to withdraw your other applications. Unlike Early Decision, Early Action is **non-binding**. Applications are usually due on November 1 and notification is made in mid-December, but accepted students don't have to decide which offer to accept until the regular May 1 reply date.

Only one early application can be made ED or EA.

Good reference site on the pros and cons of ED or EA:

<https://professionals.collegeboard.org/guidance/applications/early>

REGULAR DECISION

This has a deadline of early January (**but remember our deadlines and your holidays!**) with decisions usually communicated by end March/mid April at the latest. Most applications are of course made as Regular Decision: this means a huge number arrive at

institutions in early January in time for the deadline: you should certainly try to have your application in by mid December: the longer your application is with the university, the better your chances. Very occasionally you will be put onto a Wait List, the result of which should be made known to you by May.

As stated earlier, **SIX** is the maximum number of applications to make: more than this can be unmanageable and usually indicates that you have not properly identified where you might be happy. ISS will normally support only six applications for these reasons plus this is more fair for all and the fact that they will be taken more seriously by your prospective college who asks how many other colleges you are applying to.

Remember, this is not a raffle! It is not true that more equals better: aim for a small number of well informed quality applications. College lists cannot be changed after you have signed your list as correct and final. Every year some students request this after they have left to no avail **so do your research now!**

Cost of an education

There are around 3000 institutes of higher education in the US; all of them offer financial assistance to US citizens and residents, as much of the aid is state or federally based.

Only about 80 offer the possibility of a 90% or higher scholarship to international students; these funds come from the school itself, from endowments. A student must be admitted before financial aid is considered.

Need Based Financial Aid; most of the selective US colleges and universities and the Davis program use financial need as the primary determinant for the amount of financial aid a student is awarded.

Merit and Talent Based Aid: Some schools offer scholarship for exceptional academic achievement, athletic prowess, artistic talent, and even community service and "leadership." Merit aid is not widely available at the "first tier" schools, but it is available at many second tier schools in an effort to lure away the most talented students from the most selective schools. These scholarships may be sizeable, but generally do not exceed 50% of the total cost.

Need Blind vs Need Aware; colleges and universities have budget constraints, just like any other businesses. If a college is 'need aware', then, to be frank, any qualified applicant who can pay full fees is advantaged over the needy applicant. But there are Need Blind schools, like Harvard and Yale who process and reach a decision on your application without knowledge of your circumstances: they are wealthy enough to be able to fund all needy students and fund 100% of demonstrated need. Of course these are highly competitive places.

US Financial Aid Packages:

The International Student Financial Aid Form and Certification of Finances Form is available from www.collegeboard.com. Fill them out once with your parents' help as accurately and honestly as possible, add the necessary supporting documents and photocopy 6 times. Many students wait until they return home in December to fill out the form – this is fine as long as you take responsibility to post it to your colleges before Christmas.

Usually financial aid application is online. By filling out and submitting various financial aid forms, your family contribution is determined. This is based largely on income, but savings and assets (home, property, businesses, etc.) as well as outgoings are factored into the equation. Once your family contribution is determined, it is deducted from the total costs and that leaves your “financial need.”

Websites:

www.collegeboard.com - the best starting point. It includes a ‘planning for college’ section with a good overview of SAT. Search either by college name or by majors, location etc, in database of over 3500 colleges. Gives basic information and links to college Web pages.

www.edupass.org - specifically for International Students. Look under ‘college admissions’ then ‘choose a school’ for lots of useful links giving information and the web pages of individual colleges.

www.petersons.com is easy to use and has a college search.

Flick through the American Colleges and Universities Magazine (the corresponding website is www.acuinfo.com) which gives you an idea of how it might be to study as a non US citizen in the USA.

Note that in most cases, the typical US College website is www.nameofcollege.edu Be careful – there are many colleges with the same name including at least 4 Westminster!

VISA

Lastly, if you are successful in securing a place in the States or anywhere abroad for that matter, take your college’s advice about processing your student visa. It is a time consuming process and you should begin the process as soon as you have accepted your place.

11. CANADA

Applying to study in Canada is more straightforward than applying to the U.S.A. because:

- There are fewer universities to choose from (some are more UWC friendly than others)
- Some areas organise a centralised admissions service
- The costs are lower

Canadian universities offer a variety of programmes ranging from short certificate/diploma courses to the more traditional degree courses – these are either 3 or 4 years of study. The universities are generally state funded meaning that tuition fees are lower than the USA but scholarships are less likely to be available.

Look at the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) at www.aucc.ca which has information and contact details on all courses and institutions in Canada.

Also see www.cbie.ca and, to help identify the quality of Canadian universities refer to www.macleans.ca which publishes rankings. You might also try www.collegenet.com

You can apply to all Canadian Universities through their own websites. UBC, York, SFU, Trent and Toronto have been popular choices in the past – mainly because they offer full scholarships to UWC students. But there are many more.

Please let me know if you would like to be nominated for any scholarships in Canada by the end of term 2. Some colleges only allow one nomination per school. If nominated it is your responsibility to download all the necessary forms and submit to me before you leave ISS even if the deadline is March the following year!

Cost of an education

Need financial help: you can get a free copy of “Awards for Study” from the Canadian Bureau of International Education: www.cbie.ca

Deadlines

January 15th for McGill. Between February and April for most other Canadian Universities. Again, you must adhere to our deadlines as it is much more difficult to make an effective and efficient application after you have left ISS.

**12. ENGLISH MEDIUM UNIVERSITIES IN EUROPE:
(not based in the UK).**

There are plenty of these. Most offer a limited range of subjects and little if any financial aid. There are also American Universities in Paris, London, Rome etc. which could be worth considering if a you are attracted by a liberal arts education but not attracted by the US!

13. PERSONAL STATEMENTS/ESSAYS

These are critical because they are the only means of bringing your application to life. Admissions officers read endless applications: why should they admit a student who is going to bore everybody for three/four years? Make your statements/essays rattle and clink! Convey what is *unique, different* about you: make as punchy an impact as possible: communicate the *person* behind the grades. For practical reasons, many of you will not have an interview, so the Personal Statements are all the more important.

How these statements are read:

- i) For content ii) For what they indicate about your ability to express yourself

UCAS Personal Statement: explain why you are perfectly suited to the **courses** you are applying for: a reminder here that whilst there is no prohibition on applying for a variety of courses, it is usual practice to **apply for the same course/ sort of course** for each of the universities. The Personal Statement needs to be informed and informative: you should demonstrate that you will both benefit from the course and contribute to the universities in question.

The instructions on the UCAS website encourage you to say something about:

- career aspiration and its relevance to the course
- what has driven you to choose this particular course, any life experience that has led to this course of action
- relevant background or experience, which may include work experience, or work shadowing, practical activity in music or theatre for example
- courses, time abroad (you should explain why this is relevant.)
- interests, including sports, you may have which are not strictly relevant to the course, but help to give an impression of you as a person (this should be a very small component of the essay)

For **Cambridge** you will need to submit a separate form (COAF) and fee to that university: there is a box there for you to say anything by way of a mini personal statement which will be read by that university only: so if there is a special reason for your choice (and there should be!), that is the place to write it and not in the UCAS statement, where the emphasis should be on your suitability for the course. Naturally, Oxbridge will also read your Personal Statement as it appears on the UCAS form. Remember ISS will only support an Oxbridge application if you are predicted more than **40** points!

US College Essays: one or more specific essay questions: the important thing here is to focus on the question/issue and a primary focus must be to demonstrate that you are a perfect fit for **the college** and vice-versa. The essay should be personal and show, not tell, the reader what you have to offer in a natural way.

The Common Application makes applying to the USA fairly straightforward, however not all colleges subscribe to it. If they are not common app schools – for example Florida, Oklahoma and Methodist then it is your responsibility to apply direct on their own websites.

The essay for US Common Applications changes each year and you need to make sure that you have the most up to date one and choose an essay that is appropriate. I have a couple of essays you can look at for exemplars. The 2016/17 prompts are to be found at <http://www.commonapp.org/whats-appening/application-updates/common-application-announces-2016-2017-essay-prompts>

Purposes of the application essay

1. The essay gives you a chance to communicate something of yourself not already reflected in information submitted elsewhere.
2. If your academic record shows some weakness, you can use the essay to explain the problem (is it a problem overcome?) and highlight other strengths.
3. The essay gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your writing ability. If your application is borderline, the essay can help the admissions committee make a final decision. It can be used to determine, amongst other things, your seriousness.

Writing Your Admissions Essay

Do

- Read the question carefully
- Discuss the question with others

- Treat any ‘short answer’ questions seriously, too. Sometimes an applicant writes an excellent essay and then undoes all the good work with poor ‘short answers’.
- For questions that ask you to explain your involvement in extracurricular activities, choose the **key** activities and **say what they meant to you. Don’t just list. Hone in on details: be vivid, involve the reader.**
- Write a first draft.
- Be concise, specific and always avoid the banal and the general, even if the question appears to merit such a response!
- Have someone else read and give her/his opinion.
- Revise your essay.
- Have someone else (ideally a fresh set of eyes) proof-read.
- Feel free to use the same essay for different colleges, so long as the titles are the compatible, but take extra care: are there any adjustments(e.g. to the name of the college) which need to be made?

Don't

- Repeat
- Praise the institution
- Use unusual language. This is pretentious and irritating. Express yourself naturally.
- Have someone else write your essay: it’s dishonest and counterproductive. It is, however, acceptable to have input from others.

It is good to submit drafts for consideration.

FOR ALL STATEMENTS/ESSAYS

Be reader friendly: type, paragraph properly, grammar-check/spell-check/proof-read, use appropriate sized font (12), and if you are attaching it to a form, indicate your name, the college name, and the nature of this piece (personal statement/essay, etc.) There is no spelling facility in the “Apply” UCAS system, so prepare in Word first, and then paste.

Consider Readability: aim for one coherent unit, not a choppy set of sentences.

Know the college you’re applying to (esp. for US): the more you have researched the college, the more convincing you will be. For the UK know **the course** and communicate something of what it means to you.

Use **specific** anecdotes/**specific** examples/**specific** facts to convey your qualities: poor applicants enumerate adjectives or list achievements.

Let your **personality** come through—have a friend and stranger read your statement and revise if necessary.

14. SCHOLARSHIPS

See the following websites for more information on scholarships:

www.ecis.org, www.isoa.org, www.finaid.org www.internationalstudent.com,

There are many other scholarships available to international students in the US. For example the Morehead Cain at UNC, the Robertson at Duke, the Jefferson at UVA and the **Mastercard** Program at a dozen or so of the best universities in North America. Do some research! Let me know if you wish to be nominated by the end of term 2 for these very competitive merit scholarships! (You will need 40+ points).

Canadian Scholarships:

All of these require the nominated students to complete additional forms. Most are aimed at high financial need students. Please see me before the end of term 2 if you are interested in being nominated by the school. Examples are:

Trent University, Ontario, Canada see www.trentu.ca

Trent International Program (TIP) offers a limited number of highly competitive renewable full and tuition scholarships.

University Of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

This university has an International Leader of Tomorrow Award plus others. The purpose of this award is to provide access to the University for outstanding international students who have shown great leadership and do not have the economic means to study at the post-secondary level. One nomination per school is allowed.

University of Toronto

Full International scholarship but 39+ IB points required

European Scholarships:

'Studienstiftung'

German nationals should acquaint themselves with the opportunities created by the 'Studienstiftung': email: sdv@studienstiftung.de Excellence in curricular and extra curricular settings is needed.

University College, Utrecht University (Netherlands) offers substantial though not 100% scholarships to outstanding students nominated by their schools who are subsequently accepted. See the website: www.ucu.uu.nl

Jacobs University – Bremen (Germany)

Has an international scholarship fund.

General UK Scholarships for International Students:

These are **extremely** hard to come by, but there are several possibilities. As an international student, study at either Oxford or Cambridge makes you eligible for financial assistance. In Cambridge, this is awarded by the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, or Cambridge Overseas Trust (CCT/COT, PO Box 252, Cambridge, CB21TZ, UK).

If you have been accepted by Oxford, you may be eligible for an award from the Rhodes Foundation or a Reach Scholarship.

University of Richmond, Cardiff and Reading have an international scholarship program amongst others. But timing is a huge issue as you may only be notified in August (of next year) which is way after you will have firmly committed elsewhere.

Good sources of on-line scholarship information:

British Council Education UK site: www.educationuk.org
Refer to www.britishcouncil.org/education/funding

www.scholarship-search.org.uk - this has listings of undergraduate awards (many listed are not substantial)

The ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities) web site - www.acu.ac.uk has useful information on the awards they offer.

Of course it might be possible for you to arrange sponsorship through a company yourself: some firms sponsor students on condition they work for them for a period of time afterwards. You would need to be careful that the conditions were to your satisfaction and that you understand the ramifications of such an arrangement.

Where part-scholarships have been secured, it might be possible for you to secure that crucial additional help from organizations like the Rotary Club.

Scholarships in Asia

There are international scholarships available at a number of Universities in Asia including Yale-NUS in Singapore, NYU Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong University, Asia Pacific University in Japan.

15. KEEPING IN TOUCH AND FEEDBACK

Lastly, many of you will be receiving your offers after you've left ISS. Whilst it is true that many colleges tell us which students they have accepted, we do not **always** know: and often we are not sure which places were taken up. So let us know. Teachers often ask "whatever happened to?" Also, if we have records, we are in a better position to guide students in years to come. It is polite of course to thank referees and let them know where you are headed: a brief email is appreciated.

Let me know how you are getting along and if you discover useful information (websites etc), which were not included in this booklet, then please inform me so that we can improve future editions. Similarly, please flag up any inaccuracies or omissions.

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Notes

At the end of 2016, you will receive

along with your report

- *Teacher References/Evaluations
- *School Transcripts/records (Secondary School Report etc)
- *ACT students – an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate
- * School Profile

We will contact you to collect and sign for (as the certificates arrive later)

- The ATAR Certificate (ACT students)
- The IB Diploma (IB Students).

Please note we do not send these certificates directly on to institutions.

You are responsible for any applications to any single institution / Common App / UCAS/ UAC etc – we do not apply for you. You are responsible for sending the following to support your application.

*application form

- *any supplementary form/s
- *essays
- *SAT results if appropriate
- *financial aid forms: these often, though not always, have a later deadline
- *anything else requested by the institution

I can send to institutions if needed:

- *Predicted Grades if an IB student
- *TOEFL waiver letter if needed
- *Teacher References/Evaluations
- *School Transcripts/records (Secondary School Report etc)
- *School profile

This may be done at a cost to you. Only if you get messages from colleges after January saying that your file is incomplete should you email me and ask me to resend documents.

Thanks go to John Storer Director of Admission and University Advisor Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSA, the original compiler of many parts of this booklet and his letting me use and edit relevant sections.