

**Higher Education Search Handbook
2012-13
Higher Education Counselling**



DISCOVERY COLLEGE
智新書院

Table of Contents

HEC Overview, IB, and Roles.....	3-5
Tips for Students and Parents.....	6
Timeline.....	7-8
Overview of Application Requirements by Region.....	9-14
Australia.....	9
Canada.....	9-10
Hong Kong.....	10-11
New Zealand.....	11
United Kingdom.....	11-12
United States.....	12-13
Factors to Consider during your University Search.....	14-15
Standardised Testing.....	16-18
Teacher and Counsellor References.....	19
Writing the Personal Statement for the United Kingdom.....	20-22
Writing the Personal Statement/Essay for the United States....	23-25

Higher Education Counselling Overview

Our purpose is to assist students in career exploration and to emphasise the link between academic engagement and their path to university. We ask students to take ownership of the search process with the goal of finding the university that best fits their academic and career interests, world region choices, and personal goals and aspirations.

To achieve our purpose we offer group and individual higher education counselling, including university search timelines for each region. In addition, we liaise with representatives from universities around the world, assist with the application process, keep the Guidance Centre updated with relevant resources, and are committed to professional development.

We look forward to collaborating with students, parents, teachers and administrators to guide all of our students towards their best fit for postsecondary life. We know that each student's path will be a little bit different and we strive to help them take ownership of the process and focus on what is best for them as they narrow their academic and university interests, prepare their applications, make their final decisions and transition to their chosen university.

We welcome students and parents to engage with the Guidance Centre and our Higher Education Counselling staff. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,
Paula Myers
Higher Education Counsellor

Contact Information

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School Codes

CEEB Code: 670734
UCAS Code: 46220

The International Baccalaureate and Higher Education

Entry to Institutions of Higher Education

As IB students have the opportunity to attend universities worldwide, it is important that they spend time researching entry requirements independently. In addition, students are encouraged to use Guidance Centre resources and to seek advice and information about entry requirements from the Higher Education Counsellor.

In Year 12 and early in Year 13, one-to-one consultation sessions take place with the Higher Education Counsellor to ensure that the necessary research is in progress, and that applications are being made. Deadlines are set and applications are reviewed.

Academic Transcripts and Courses of Study

Transcripts, based on the 1-7 scale, will be available upon request to students leaving either during the IB Diploma Programme, or having completed the full two-year programme. Courses of Study indicating enrolment period will also be available.

In a number of countries (e.g. Canada, China, Singapore, USA), many tertiary institutions will require internal grades for Years 10 to 13, which will be provided by the Higher Education Counsellor. A profile of the school grading system will accompany each transcript. Transcripts of IB results will be sent by the IB to each university, in July, at the request of the student.

IB Single Subject Courses

Individual course results, particularly at Higher Level, will be recognised by many institutions for purposes of placement or credit.

Discovery College Graduation Diploma and ESF Advanced Diploma

The Discovery College Graduation Diploma and the ESF Advanced Diploma may be used in conjunction with the academic transcript for applying to colleges whose entrance requirements include documentary evidence of continuous internal assessment at the senior secondary level.

The future belongs to those who prepare for it.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)
American essayist, lecturer, and poet*

What is the student role in the university search process?

Students, this is your process. It is very important that you are fully engaged in deciding what you would like to study and what type of environment most suits you. Finding a university is about identifying the *right fit for you*. That may not be the same as others you know, but it will be a place that matches *your* academic and co-curricular interests best.

As international school students, there are so many options open to you that it can seem overwhelming. Choose to experience this process as a wonderful opportunity instead of a difficult chore, and you will not only find yourself on your way to university, but you will have learned a great deal about yourself along the way.

You will need to ask many questions and find honest answers for yourself and those supporting you. As you work your way through this process, remember that your family, teachers and counsellor are all here to guide you. Consider all they tell you about their own experiences and the wisdom they have gained as well as the strengths and qualities they see in you.

What is the Higher Education Counsellor's (HEC) role in the university search process?

The HEC's role is one of guidance and advocacy for students. Students will have one-on-one and group meetings with the HEC, who will explain the admissions process and get to know individual student's goals in order to provide the best advice.

Parents will be invited to information evenings and are welcome to meet with the HEC along with their child. The HEC will publish timelines for the search process and application deadlines for each region, keep resources up-to-date in the Guidance Centre, and act as a liaison with colleges and universities.

Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world.
Maria Montessori (1870-1952)
Italian physician, educator, philosopher, humanitarian

Tips for Students

- The best preparation for the university search and university life is to engage in your learning and focus on your academics
- Take advantage of the resources in the Guidance Centre
- Attend visits by University representatives when they visit school. Make sure that you prepare yourself for these visits by doing some research on the universities you are interested in and drafting questions to ask in advance
- Figure out a system to organize your search. Whether it is through a spreadsheet, a notebook, or another method, it is important to keep a record of deadlines as well as what you have completed
- If the universities you plan to apply to require standardized tests, make sure that you are aware of when they are offered and that you prepare in advance
- Do not dismiss a university because of old information or because you are not familiar with it. Instead, do some research!
- If you have the opportunity to visit a university, take advantage of it
- Discuss your search with your family and be clear about what is important to you. Keep communication open and be sure to ask them about financial considerations as well as university choices
- Plan to narrow your application list to 6 universities (8 if you are applying in more than one world region). If you apply to the United Kingdom, you are only permitted to apply to 5 courses at up to 5 institutions (only 4 for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine).

Tips for Parents

- Support the academic and co-curricular engagement of your child
- Encourage your child to explore career paths and develop goals
- Make sure that you and your child have discussed each other's expectations in regards to the university search, including financial considerations. Open and frequent communication goes a long way
- Encourage your child to become active in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community service activity
- Encourage participation in meaningful summer activities
- Attend university and career fairs and if possible, tour university campuses.

*If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.
Chinese Proverb*

Timeline for University Search Process

Year 11

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests.

- Begin to ask yourself how what you study and participate in now connects with what you might study in the future. Begin to explore courses/majors you might be interested in
- Explore career options. Optional opportunity to take the InterQuest Career Assessment.
- Consult with Higher Education Counsellor if you have questions about how IB subject selection relates to your university goals
- If you are interested in U.S. higher education, optional opportunity to take the PSAT exam in October
- In Term 3 group meetings with Higher Education Counsellor to become familiar with Guidance Centre resources

Year 12

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests

Term 1

- Attend Higher Education Counselling Information Evening for students and parents
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Naviance
- Participate in individual meeting with Higher Education Counsellor (required).
Questionnaire #1 due via Naviance
- Attend information sessions on the application process for regions you are considering and/or courses/majors you are thinking of studying and resume writing for university applications
- Take the PSAT if you are applying to U.S. universities and plan your SAT preparation timeline/registration
- Continue to research careers, courses/majors and university options
- Develop your initial list of possible university choices

Term 2

- Continue to research careers, courses/majors and university options
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Naviance
- Attend information session on writing your personal statement/application essay
- Identify and register for any summer programmes or courses
- If you are planning to study in the U.S., register/take the SAT exam (available during Term 3 as well)
- If you are required to submit an English language test, register and take the TOEFL or IELTS
- Narrow your list of university choices

Term 3

- Continue to research universities and develop your first list of possible universities
- **Questionnaire #2 due via Naviance**
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Naviance

- Request teacher references from teachers
- If you are planning to study in the U.S., take the SAT exam (if you have not already done so)

Holiday Break

- Investigate universities on your final list more thoroughly. Visit universities if possible
- Work on your personal statement/application essay
- Organize your application process and work on gathering everything you need to submit your applications

Year 13

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests

Term 1

- Participate in individual meeting with Higher Education Counsellor (required).
Questionnaire #3 due
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. These may include interviews
- Follow up on teacher reference requests (August)
- Complete personal statement/essay, if required
- Complete applications by deadlines set for each region by Higher Education Counselling

Terms 2 & 3

- Begin receiving decisions from universities
- **Final Questionnaire Due via Naviance**
- Giving back—panel for Year 12s on your university search process

March—UCAS Extra opens

April—deadline to reply to UK offers

May—deadline to reply to US offers (non-rolling admissions).

June—Transition to University workshop. If needed, apply for your student visa

July—IB results reported to Discovery College, students, and requested universities

Overview of Application Requirements by Region

Please find general information about each region, including method of application and what is required for application submission. Please note that DC Deadlines are listed only by month and that specific deadlines will be published in June of each year. It is important that you attend regional workshops and research university and/or course entry requirements.

Australia

Australia is home to 39 universities, of which 37 are government/national universities and 2 are private. Students apply directly to individual universities or through the University Admissions Centre (UAC), a centralized process.

DC Deadline: February

Timeline: Applications due in September/October for February/March intake and in March for July intake

Study duration: 3-4 years, depending on course

Academic Calendar: Most universities run on a semester system. Semester 1 begins in late February and ends in late June and semester 2 begins in mid July and ends in late November

Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Course Application**
 - Up to 6 courses at 1 or up to 6 institutions
 - Requirements vary by course and may include a personal statement, reference or additional documentation
- **Academic Qualifications**
 - Copies of transcripts
 - Any English language testing
- **Fee**
- **Reference**
 - No reference is required unless requested through specific course requirements

Useful Web Sites

Australia Unlimited-Australian Trade Commission
University Admissions Centre
Australian Education Network
The Good Universities Guide

www.studyinaustralia.gov.au
www.uac.edu.au
www.australian-universities.com
www.gooduniguide.com.au

The important thing in science is not so much to obtain new facts as to discover new ways of thinking about them.

Sir Lawrence Bragg (1890-1971) Australian physicist, x-ray crystallographer, Nobel Laureate

Canada

There are over 90 public and private universities in Canada. Students apply directly through each university or through a centralized admissions service by province such as the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC), Apply Alberta or Apply BC.

DC Deadline: December

Timeline: Applications due in January for September intake

Study Duration: Most courses take 4 years

Academic Calendar: Generally 2 semesters run from early September to early December and early January to late April. Universities may also offer summer session (June & July)

Application Requirements:

- **Programme Selection**
 - Varies by University and/or Province, but generally will be ordered.
- **Personal Information**
- **Academic Information**
 - High school curriculum, grades, transcripts
 - Any English language testing
- **Some Universities may require**
 - Personal profile or personal statement and references

Useful Web Sites

Association of Universities & Colleges in Canada

www.aucc.ca

Schools in Canada

www.schoolsincanada.com

Macleans On Campus

www.oncampus.macleans.ca

Imagine Studying in Canada

www.educationau-incanada.ca

Ontario Universities Application Centre

www.ouac.on.ca

Apply Alberta

www.applyalberta.ca

Apply BC

www.applybc.ca

CanLearn (financial aid)

www.canlearn.ca

Without knowledge the world is bereft of culture. And so we must be educators and students both.

Roberta Bondar (1945-) Canadian, first female astronaut from Canada, neurologist, former head of space medicine for NASA

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is home to 15 publicly funded universities and 6 private institutions. Applicants from international schools apply directly to each institution.

DC Deadline: December

Timeline: Applications due in December/January for September intake

Study Duration: 3-4 years, depending on course

Academic Calendar: Generally, 2 semesters and optional summer session. Semester 1 runs from early September to mid December and semester 2 runs from early January to mid May

Application Requirements:

- **Personal Information**
- **Choice of Curriculum**
- **Academic Qualifications**
 - Exam results
 - Transcripts
 - Personal statement of extracurricular activities/personal achievements/ work experience (not more than 2 pages)
- **Academic Reference**

- Focus on academic profile in relation to what the student plans to study, but also can include information on extracurricular activities
- **Fee**

Useful Web Sites

Hong Kong Education Bureau www.edb.gov.hk/
iPass www.ipass.gov.hk/

*Study extensively; Enquire accurately; Reflect carefully; Discriminate clearly; Practise earnestly.
Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) Chinese, doctor, revolutionary, political leader,
Hong Kong University graduate*

New Zealand

In New Zealand, there are 8 universities and 20 state owned polytechnics, which focus on vocational education. Applications are made directly to each university.

DC Deadline: February

Timeline: Applications due in September/October for February/March intake and in March for July intake

Study duration: 3-4 years, depending on course

Academic Calendar: Most universities run on a semester system. Semester 1 begins in late February and ends in late June and semester 2 begins in mid July and ends in late November

Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Intended course/programme**
- **Academic Qualifications**
 - Academic transcript
 - High school qualification results
 - English language competency
- **No fee or reference required**

Useful Web Sites

New Zealand Educated www.newzealandeducated.com
Ministry of Education www.minedu.govt.nz

Scientists are not dependent on the ideas of a single man, but on the combined wisdom of thousands of men, all thinking of the same problem and each doing his little bit to add to the great structure of knowledge which is gradually being erected.

Ernest Rutherford (1871-1937) New Zealander, renowned chemist and physicist, 1908 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, pioneer in nuclear physics

United Kingdom

There are over 180 higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Students apply through the University & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

DC Timeline: September 15 for Oxford and the University of Cambridge; October 1 for Medical school applications, November 20 for all other UK applications

Timeline: Applications due: October for dentistry, medicine, veterinary science and for all courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, January for all other courses except some art and design courses, March for some art and design courses. All for September/October intake.

Study Duration: 3-4 years, depending on the course

Academic Calendar: Varies by university. Can be divided into 2 semesters, 3 terms, or both.

Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Course Choices**
 - Up to 5 courses at up to 5 institutions (4 for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine)
 - Possible admissions test/interview (based on course)
- **Education**
 - Qualifications
 - Units/modules (for some qualifications)
 - English Language Testing if required
- **Employment History**
- **Personal Statement**
 - Should include student's motivation for applying to the course, relevant experiences, understanding of the subject and enthusiasm for the course. Read by an Admissions Tutor, who is an academic in the department the student is applying to join
- **School Reference**
 - Student references will be completed by a Higher Education Counsellor in collaboration with teachers chosen by the student
- **Fee**

Useful Web Sites

Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

www.ucas.com

UCAS Information for Parents

www.ucas.com/parents/

Unistats

www.direct.gov.uk/unistats

British Council

www.britishcouncil.org

Education UK

www.educationuk.org

Open Days

www.opendays.com

UK Council for International Student Affairs

www.ukcisa.org.uk

Prepare for Success

www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk

What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

*Jane Goodall (1939-), British, primatologist, ethologist,
and UN Messenger of Peace*

United States

There are over 4,000 higher education institutions in the United States. Students apply directly to each institution or through a centralized admissions process, including the Common Application (used by over 450 institutions) and centralized state university applications.

DC Timeline: Early Decision and early action applications and University of California applications due October 25. Regular decision applications due December 1.

Timeline: Applications due in October/November for University of California schools, October, November and December for Early Action/Early Decision 1, January for regular decision and Early Action/Early Decision 2. Some universities on rolling admission.

Study Duration: Usually 4 years

Application Requirements:

- **Personal Information**
- **Academics**
 - Grades, including class rank, if available, class size, grading scale
 - Testing, including ACT, SAT, AP, IB, Any English Language testing
 - Transcript including current courses
 - Academic distinctions or honours
- **Co-Curricular Activities**
 - Includes in and out of school activities, athletics, work experiences, leadership positions
- **Essay and Supplemental Essays**
 - Varies by university. Generally, readers are looking to learn something about the student that they could not learn from the rest of the application. Topics may focus on academic suitability, personal insight, creativity, or a combination. Students may send the same essay to universities that use the Common Application. Each of those may or may not require supplemental writing.
- **References**
 - Generally 2 teacher and one guidance counsellor recommendation
- **Fee**

Useful Web Sites

College Board	www.collegeboard.com
Council of International Schools	www.cois.org
Petersons	www.petersons.com
Common Application	www.commonapp.org
EduPass (financial aid)	www.edupass.org
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	www.fafsa.ed.gov (for U.S. Citizens)

The function of the university is not simply to teach breadwinning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment from which forms the secret of civilization.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) American historian, sociologist, civil rights activist, Pan Africanist, author and editor

Factors to Consider During Your University Search

Get to Know Yourself

Many times, students begin their search by researching universities before thinking about what they are looking for. Knowing yourself is the first step to finding the university that will be a fit *for you*.

Ask yourself some questions:

- What are your academic interests? What classes have inspired you? What do you enjoy most about learning?
- What are your career goals?
- How do your academic interests and career goals match up with each other?
- What types of co-curricular and outside activities are you most passionate about? Why? Do you want continue these during university? Are there other new activities you hope to find at your university?
- What is your academic profile? What are your overall marks? If you have taken standardized tests, what are your results? How does this profile represent you?
- How would you describe yourself to someone who had never met you? What would you want them to know about you?

What Type of University Will Be the Right Fit for You?

Answering this question will be different for each student. You will need to decide what is most important to you, prioritise, and determine what is negotiable and what is not. Remember, this is a process. Your priorities may shift as you go and you won't have all of the answers at once!

Academic Offerings and Environment

- Courses/majors offered and type of curriculum
- Class size and access to faculty
- Degree of competitiveness
- IB recognition policies
- Research opportunities

Student Enrolment

- Number of undergraduate students
- Diversity of student body
- Male/female ratio
- Retention rates

Location and Characteristics

- Urban, suburban, rural
- Climate, weather
- Size of student body, campus and city or town
- Proximity to family and friends
- Transportation options
- Accessibility and support for learning development
- Specific type: eg. art and design school, music conservatory, polytechnic, religiously affiliated, single sex or coeducational, historically black college or university (U.S.)

Student Life (On & Off Campus)

- Housing options
- Dining options
- Out of class activities on and off campus
- Athletics and recreational facilities
- Library and technical support
- Safety and security
- Support for religious life

Entrance Requirements

- Selectivity
- Course academic requirements
- Standardised tests
- Personal statements/essays
- Application process and deadlines

Financial Considerations

- Costs per year: tuition, fees, housing, books and equipment, board, transportation
- Availability of financial aid and/or loans
- Work opportunities

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.
Chinese Proverb

Standardised Testing

It is important to note that it is the student's responsibility to find out what tests each university requires. In addition, students should remember to have official test results sent directly by the testing agency to each university.

English Language Testing

If you have completed the IB curriculum, most universities will not require you to take an English Language Test. However, if English is not your first language and your marks in English are low, or you struggle with writing in English, you may want to consider supplementing your application with an English language test.

There may be specific universities that require English language testing for anyone for whom English is an additional language, therefore it is important that you explore requirements in advance of applying to universities. In addition, your scores may be used by immigration officials to confirm your English proficiency when granting your study visa.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

www.ets.org/toefl

Widely accepted English language test run through Educational Testing Services. This test evaluates listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. There are 30-40 test dates per year in over 165 countries.

Here in Hong Kong, there are test centres in Kowloon, Kwai Chung, Sai Kung, San Po Kong, Tsuen Wan, and Yuen Long.

The cost ranges from \$160-\$250USD, roughly equivalent to \$1200-\$2000HKD.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

www.ielts.org

Widely accepted English language test jointly owned by the British Council, IELTS Australia, and Cambridge ESOL. There are two versions of the test, the Academic and General Training tests. If you are taking it for entry into tertiary education, you should take the Academic test, which measures listening, reading, writing, and speaking. There are 48 fixed test dates per year and it is offered based on local demand.

In Hong Kong, there are test centres in Admiralty and Wan Chai.

The cost is \$1500HKD.

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Tests—United Kingdom

Required by some UK universities for entry into specific programs. You will need to find out if the course you are applying to requires one of these tests and give yourself ample time to take it during the admissions process.

For general information see: <http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/>

For specific test information, see:

BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test) is required for certain medicine, veterinary medicine and related courses.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/bmat>

ELAT (English Literature Admissions Test) is a pre-interview admissions test for applicants who wish to study English at the University of Oxford.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/elat>

HAT (History Aptitude Test) is required of applicants who wish to study History and its joint schools at the University of Oxford.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/hat>

PAT (Physics Aptitude Test) is required of applicants who wish to study Physics or Engineering at the University of Oxford.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/pat>

STEP (Sixth Term Examination Paper) is required of applicants who wish to study Mathematics at the University of Cambridge or the University of Warwick.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/step>

TSA (Thinking Skills Assessment) is required for some courses at the University of Cambridge.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/tsacambridge>

TSA Oxford (Oxford Thinking Skills Assessment) is required for some courses at the University of Oxford.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/tsaoxford>

TSA UCL (UCL Thinking Skills Assessment) is required for some courses at UCL.

These tests can be taken through the British Council, Hong Kong. For more information:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/hongkong-exams.htm>

LNAT (National Admissions Test for Law)-United Kingdom

The LNAT is an aptitude test used by several UK universities for admissions consideration who wish to study Law.

For general information and registration instructions: <http://www.lnat.ac.uk/>

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)—United States

Most U.S. universities will require you to submit an **SAT I** score as part of your application. This test consists of 3 parts; critical reading, mathematics and writing. We recommend that if you plan to apply to U.S. universities, you take this test prior to the end of Year 12.

Some universities will require you to submit **SAT II** scores as part of your application. These tests are subject specific tests. Some will ask for specific tests to be submitted and others might ask for you to take one or more of these tests of your choosing. It is your responsibility to find out the application requirements for each university. For more information on the SAT II, see <http://sat.collegeboard.org/about-tests/sat-subject-tests>.

To prepare:

- Take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). This is a practice exam, usually taken by students in Year 12 (sometimes Year 11), which can also qualify U.S. Citizens for National Merit Scholarships (Year 12 only). This test is offered each year in October. For more information on the PSAT see <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html>.

- Practice online or through a study guide: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>
- Take a preparation course. It is quite possible to prepare for the SAT on your own, but some students like the structure of a course.

To Register

The SAT is offered several times throughout the year. You must register in advance to take the SAT. When you register, you will need to pay a fee of \$78USD. You can find more information here: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/> and in the Guidance Centre, 4/F.

Discovery College's code is: 670734

An additional standardized test for U.S. university entrance is the **ACT**. It is not necessary to take both the SAT and ACT. For more information on the ACT see <http://actstudent.org/>.

Teacher and Counsellor References

Reference letters from your teachers and counsellor are an important part of your application for Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States. Generally, references are not required for Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, but could be requested for some courses. References may be required for other regions of the world. Please see your counsellor for specific information.

Hong Kong and the United Kingdom

- Require one school academic reference
- Letters will be written by your counsellor and will include written input from your teachers, which you will need to request (see Teacher Reference Request and Counsellor Reference Request forms)
- Letters will also include your predicted IB scores, which will be provided by your teachers

United States

- Most schools will require 2 teacher references and 1 counsellor reference (often called recommendation or evaluation)
- Letters will be written by your teachers and counsellor separately (see Teacher Reference Request and Counsellor Reference Request forms)
- Counsellor letter will include your predicted IB scores, which will be provided by your teachers

What do you need to know about requesting references?

- It is very important that you choose teachers who know you well and can speak to your academic skills, potential for success, and your character. Make sure at least one of the teachers you choose is a teacher who has had you in class recently and can speak to your work in the diploma programme
- Be sure to meet deadlines and ask your teachers in advance. This is not only courteous, but will ensure that your teachers have time to spend on your reference
- If there is something that your counsellor needs to know in regards to mitigating circumstances affecting your academic record, or relevant outside experiences you want to make sure are included in your reference, please be sure to discuss this prior to submitting your reference request or include pertinent information in the request

The Personal Statement for United Kingdom Applications

The personal statement is a key aspect of the UK application, particularly for selective courses. Use it as an opportunity to distinguish yourself and your application. Applicants submit one personal statement via UCAS, which is read by each university's admissions tutors. It is important that you carefully consider why you are applying for a course and what specific examples you can share about your interest in the subject area. This should include experiences you have had exploring that subject outside of class work. The majority of the personal statement should be dedicated to this task.

It is important to remember that admissions tutors are academics that are experts in their disciplines and while they don't expect students to be, they do look for genuine and demonstrated interest and understanding of the subject area as well as an idea of how the course might fit with future goals. As you share your extracurricular interests and achievements, find ways to tie the skills you have gained to your future studies.

Remember that you should take time and care when writing your personal statement. Read university websites and prospectuses to better understand the course you are pursuing. Brainstorm ideas and give yourself time to write several drafts and to ask for feedback.

Need more information? Talk with your counsellor and teachers and use the resources and tips below.

Tips and Resources:

UCAS has an outline tool for personal statements that you can find here:
<http://wwwucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/>

Heap University Degree Course Offers: The essential guide to winning your place at university, by Brian Heap includes advice on the personal statement within the subject tables as well as generally on page 56.

This book is available to use in the Guidance Centre.

The Times Good University Guide by John O'Leary includes advice on writing your personal statement on pages 193-195.

This book is available to use in the Guidance Centre.

Getting into Oxford & Cambridge by Katy Blatt includes Chapter 7, *UCAS and the Personal Statement*.

This book is available to use in the Guidance Centre.

St. Andrews University **St. Andrews, Scotland**

From the St. Andrews University: The definitive guide for International students

"Personal Statement: This is a student's opportunity to demonstrate their potential to succeed, explaining their background and reasoning leading to their choice of subject(s). It is also a chance to highlight commitment and character through such things as extracurricular activities."

**Cardiff University
Cardiff, Wales**

From the Cardiff University Prospectus, page 39

“How to write your personal statement

All Cardiff University applications require you to write a personal statement. A good personal statement will help you get the edge over other applicants and is your opportunity to tell the University about yourself, say why you're interested in the course and provide details of any relevant experience you have. Below are some tips for writing a good personal statement.

- be enthusiastic. Admission tutors want students that are passionate about the area they are studying. You should write why you are interested in the course, what research you have done into the subject area, and what you plan to do after you graduate.
- include any work experience. If you have any relevant work or voluntary experience this will help show your commitment. For example: If you are applying for a journalism course, include any experience you have working on student newspapers. This is very important for students considering applying to healthcare related courses. The admission tutors will want to be convinced that you understand the demands of working in these professions.
- show you can be part of a team. Admission tutors are looking for students that will integrate and work well with other students. If you have been a member of a team, or held a position of responsibility, you should show how these experiences will help you in your studies.
- include your interests. The University is also looking for students that will contribute to the wider student community. You should provide information on your social and cultural hobbies, for example: community volunteering or playing a musical instrument.
- demonstrate ability in English. It is a good idea to ask someone to proof-read your personal statement, and remember to run a spell-check. Even if English is your first language, you should detail how you have used English since your last English exam. For example: at work, or during your studies.”

Tips given by Jonathan Tinnacher, University of Leicester and Kerry France, University of Birmingham in their presentation, “Applying to ‘Traditional Subjects’ in the United Kingdom,” at the Council of International Schools Forum, November 2011.

Personal Statements (for “Traditional Subjects”)

- Should be led by how the university talks about the subject in the Entry Profile.
- Show enthusiasm for the subject
- Give specific examples
- Share experiences that raised questions for you that you want to explore
- Share reasons for choosing the course and why you have that interest beyond just your secondary classes
- Show understanding of the subject you wish to study
- Explain what you enjoy in a related subject (especially if you are applying to more than one)
- Other options to include: career aspirations, extracurricular activities and transferable skills relevant to the course
- Remember that academics from the subject areas read these applications!

University of Birmingham has a useful video on the personal statement at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djamYQC520Y>

Tips given by David Tobin, Aston University at the Council of International Schools Forum, November 2011.

- The more competitive the program, the more important the statement will be

- Remember that personal statements are read by admissions tutors who are academics in the chosen course. They should be 4000 characters only
- The largest portion of the statement should be dedicated to why you have chosen this course/programme
- What Admissions Tutors look for in a personal statement:
 - o Well structured and to the point
 - o Understanding of the subject
 - o Motivation to study the subject
 - o Relevant experience
 - o Enthusiasm
- Do: brainstorm your ideas, aim to use about five paragraphs, expect to produce several drafts, ask people you trust for feedback, ensure that you use your best English, be enthusiastic
- Don't: use too fancy language, go on about things which aren't relevant, try to be funny, lie, rely on a spellchecker, leave it to the last minute.

**London School of Economics
London, England**

Tips from web site:

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/howToApply/makingAnApplication/personalStatement/generalInformation.aspx>

“Your statement should be as original as possible, as this is the way in which you can differentiate yourself from other applicants who are applying to the same course as you and who have, or are predicted, similar grades. Your statement should focus mainly on your academic abilities and achievements.”

Sections include:

- What makes a good personal statement?
- Writing your personal statement
- What is a poor personal statement?
- Do's and don'ts
- Frequently asked Questions

**Nottingham Trent University
Nottingham, England**

From the Nottingham Trent University Prospectus, page 25

“This is your chance to shine, show your qualities and convince the admissions tutors why they should offer you a place.

For courses that may interview students, the personal statement can make the difference between being invited in for interview or being rejected.

For courses that do not interview students the personal statement is crucial in determining whether or not you are offered a place.

Choose your words wisely...

Your personal statement should:

- o be well structured and read clearly, using positive language
- o use a formal style, avoiding text speak, abbreviations and slang. Look at the prospectus of the university you're applying to and get an idea of how they've been written.
- o try to avoid starting every sentence with I.

Remember the simple rule – whenever you say you have a skill or quality you MUST demonstrate how/where/when you acquired it.”

Writing the Personal Statement/Essay for United States Applications

Many, but not all universities in the United States require you to write one or more essay or short answer response. The purpose of such writing is both to give application readers insight into who you are and what is important to you, and as a demonstration of your writing ability. If a university uses the Common Application, you can send the same essay to several universities, although some may require supplemental writing samples as well.

Although writing requirements may vary, there are some general guidelines you can keep in mind.

- It is important that you read the prompts given by each university to which you apply and that your writing reflects the specified topic and length. Sometimes you will be given the option of a topic of your choice, but make sure to note the expected length and format.
- The reader will learn a great deal of information about you from the other sections of your application. This is your chance to distinguish yourself! Don't repeat all of the facts already given, instead work to convey what you would like the reader to know about you, not just what you've done, but how you think.
- Ask for feedback, both on your writing and on how your essay reflects you as a person.
- Write with clear language and make sure that you check spelling and grammar.

Examples of essay prompts:

Common Application 2011-12:

*456 universities currently use the Common Application

Choose one (250-500 words)

- Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
- Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
- A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.
- Topic of your choice.

University of California 2011-12

Complete essays from both prompts (maximum 1000 words total)

- Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Purdue University

Essay 2012-choose one (250-1000 words)

- Describe how a Purdue education will help you achieve your personal and/or professional goals.

- Envision yourself near the end of a fulfilling, lifelong career and you just published your autobiography. Share the title and introduction.
- Imagine being able to join a conversation between any two people, living or deceased. Describe that conversation. Identify the people and topic and express what you were able to contribute and/or what you learned.

University of Chicago

Essay 2011-12

Six choices, including:

- Observation, Hypothesis, Experiment, Analysis, Conclusion; since the 17th century, the scientific method has been the generally accepted way to investigate, explore, and acquire new knowledge. The actual process of intellectual discovery, however, is rarely so simple or objective. The human mind often leaps from observation to conclusion with ease, rushes headlong into hypothesis-less experiments, or dwells on the analysis, refusing to conclude. Tell us about your non-scientific method. (Diagrams, graphs, and/or visual aids allowed within your essay.)
- Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote, "Between living and dreaming there is a third thing. Guess it." Give us your guess.

Examples of Common Application supplemental questions:

From Bowdoin College Supplement 2011-12

REQUIRED SHORT ESSAY:

In an effort to understand your interests and aspirations for college, we ask you to select **one** of the three topics below and provide a response of up to 250 words. Please include your name, birth date, and your topic choice at the top of the page.

Bowdoin students and alumni often cite world-class faculty and opportunities for intellectual engagement, the College's commitment to the Common Good, and the special quality of life on the coast of Maine as important aspects of the Bowdoin experience.

Reflecting on your own interests and experiences, please comment on **one** of the following:

1. Intellectual engagement
2. The Common Good
3. Connection to place

From New York University Supplement 2011-12

SHORT-ANSWER ESSAYS

Please respond to each of the following questions using a maximum of 1,500 characters in the space provided.

A. Why NYU?

B. Regardless of whether or not you have an intended major or concentration, please elaborate on an academic area of interest and how you wish to explore it at NYU's campuses in New York or Abu Dhabi or at one of our global academic centers around the world. Please share any activities or experiences you have had that have cultivated your intellectual interests leading you to choose to study at the NYU campus of your choice.

C. What intrigues you? Tell us about one work of art, scientific achievement, piece of literature, method of communication, or place in the world (a film, book, performance, website, event, location, etc.), and explain its significance to you.

From Stanford University Supplement 2011-12

Candidates respond to all three essay topics using at least 250 words, but not exceeding the space provided.

1. Stanford students possess intellectual vitality. Reflect on an idea or experience that has been important to your intellectual development.
2. Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you or that will help your roommate—and us—know you better.
3. What matters to you, and why?

From Whitman College Supplement 2011-12

The Whitman Supplement is intended to give the Admission Committee additional material that demonstrates your writing ability—a key component to academic success at Whitman. The Whitman Supplement also gives you the opportunity to provide additional information that you feel would be helpful for us to consider as we evaluate your application.

Required:

1. Please submit a copy of a graded, analytical paper from a junior or senior year English class. Your essay should include teacher comments and the grade earned. If a graded paper is not available, submit a critical analysis of a book you've read in the last two years. NOTE: Your essay should not exceed five double-spaced, typed pages. Make sure that your paper is typed, printed or in black/blue ink. Please do not use pencil. Make sure your full name and secondary school attended are on the top of every page.
2. Is Diversity important to your liberal arts education? Why or why not?

NOTE: Your response should not exceed 350 words.

Optional:

1. Why Whitman? NOTE: Your response should not exceed 350 words.

From Yale University Supplement 2011-12

Short Takes

Please respond in 25 words or fewer to each of the questions below.

1. What would you do with a free afternoon tomorrow?
2. Recall a compliment you received that you especially value. What was it? From whom did it come?
3. If you could witness one moment in history, what would it be and why?
4. What do you wish you were better at being or doing?
5. If you were choosing students to form a Yale class, what question would you ask here that we have not?

Additional Essay(s)

1. You have already told us about yourself in the Common Application, with its list of activities, Short Answer, and Personal Essay. In this required second essay, tell us something that you would like us to know about you that we might not get from the rest of your application – or something that you would like a chance to say more about. Please limit your essay to fewer than 500 words.
2. If you selected one of the engineering majors, please write a brief third essay telling us what has led you to an interest in this field of study, what experiences (if any) you have had in engineering, and what it is about Yale's engineering program that appeals to you.