

**GEMS**

مدرسة جيمس كامبريدج إنترناشيونال الخاصة بالشارقة

Cambridge International Private School

SHARJAH

# Career Counselling Handbook

By: Shahana Salman

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## Introduction

### Mission Statement

The GCS Counselling Department provides a variety of resources to match our students with the right university. We believe the process of finding the right university should be student-empowered and “owned.” Engaging students frequently, helping them obtain a greater awareness of who they are, and to discover viable options for life beyond GCS are the goals of the Counselling Department. We believe this approach encompasses each student’s personality, goals, and aspirations to ensure a challenging and rewarding opportunity throughout their lives. In addition to this process of self-discovery and university-discovery, we believe good communication among all parties, including parents, students, and the counselling department ensures a successful and satisfactory university placement outcome for our students.

### Statement of Philosophy

Students, with the collaboration and support of their parents and counsellors, embark on a year-long journey of self-discovery as they engage in honest self-assessment, thoughtful research and increasingly independent decisions. We encourage students to find their voice in the university process while they explore, probe and challenge their own assumptions about themselves and the universities they are considering. To find appropriate matches between students and undergraduate institutions, we attempt to foster among the students, parents and counsellors open lines of communication, honest feedback and a spirit of cooperation. We adhere to the belief that students are ultimately the driving force behind the process. Students must take ownership of their destiny and responsibility for their actions; we support them in embracing this opportunity to test their values, explore their personal preferences and make complex, long-term decisions for themselves. Application deadlines, testing dates, essays, recommendation requests and interviews all require equal and full attention from the students. In the end, students will find most success in their university process when they allow their insights, research and self-discoveries to lead them toward the best matches as they leave behind the safe and nurturing environment of GEMS Cambridge International Private School.

### How Do You Reach Us?



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Counselling Office: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor: Phone extension 827

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## Integrity in the University Process

The counselling process extends from the beginning of the second term of the student's junior year to graduation. The process, if broken down by term, can be divided into three sub-categories. During the second term of the junior year, we focus on the university search process and students develop a preliminary university list in collaboration with their counsellor. During the first term of the senior year, students finalize their university list and then work on the actual university application process. During the second term of the senior year, which leads up to graduation, the counsellor assists students with issues such as waiting list offers, UC appeals and other enrollment-related topics, as well as the transition to university process.

The Counselling Office shares the School's policy on academic integrity, and as such requires that the work of all students, including university essays, short responses, and any other information submitted to the universities or universities, will be entirely their own. The Counselling Office reserves the right to contact universities and universities if a student submits or intends to submit work that is not entirely his or her own.

Unrestricted authorisation is given for the GEMS Cambridge International Private School to represent any student to all universities and universities. Information that will be shared with universities and universities about the student includes, but is not limited to, letters of recommendation, transcripts, report cards, progress reports, testing results, disciplinary matters about which universities and universities ordinarily make inquiry, and anything else the Counselling Office believes to be important for universities and universities to have when considering a student for admission. All letters of recommendation are confidential, and students and parents waive their right to read such letters.

## Ten University/University Application Cap !

GEMS Cambridge International Private School has a ten university/university application limit worldwide. We have this cap as a way to ensure that students are giving careful consideration to the university applications that they submit. We advertise this cap on our School Profile and to all of the university representatives who visit GCS to let them know that if they receive an application from a GCS student, the application is a well-considered one. If a student wishes to add an additional application, they can submit an additional 500 words essay about why that university specifically appeals to you and warrants further documentation submission. Please see your counsellor for more information regarding the essay.

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# University Counselling Calendar for the Class of 2022

## Month Action

### January & February

- Meet with counsellors in class meetings to talk about important university counselling topics.
- Think about a standardized testing plan (if applicable).
- Log into your Unifrog account and begin to add universities that you are interested in, universities you have heard of, and/or universities you would like to apply to your “universities I’m thinking about” tab.
- Talk with your parents about what their expectations are for your university career. Which country would you/your family like to apply to? Which major would you/your family like for you to pursue? How much money can you/they afford to spend on university?
- Begin researching universities.
- Begin thinking about classes for your senior year (if applicable).
- If you haven’t already, get to know your teachers. Ask questions. Speak with them after class. Be proactive about your education. You will need to ask two teachers for letters of recommendation so you should start to get to know them now!
- Visit with university representatives when they visit GCS and set up a table in the entryway during break. Ask questions. Take some materials. Even if you aren’t interested in that university, you may get some great information!

### March, April & May

- Meet with counsellors in class meetings to talk about important university counselling topics.
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests (if applicable).
- Log into your Unifrog account to research the universities that you have added to your “universities I’m thinking about” tab. Don’t forget to utilize the “scattergram” feature (also listed as “graphs” in Unifrog) to see how your GPA and/or standardized scores compare to those who have applied from GCS).
- Research universities through Unifrog if this is a better platform for you but keep your prospective university list and final university list in Unifrog.
- Prepare for A levels exams and end of year exams for the classes on your schedule.
- Continue talking with your parents about what their expectations are for your university career. Don’t forget that they will probably pay the bill for university, so they are allowed some input.
- Continue researching universities. Pay specific attention to size, location, proximity to an international airport, majors, athletics, Greek organisations (fraternal organisations),

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extracurricular activities, admission requirements, essay topics, application types (Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, etc.), and deadlines.

- Continue to get to know your teachers. The counsellors will let you know when it's time to ask teachers for recommendations during these months.
- When asked by the counsellors, complete the Junior Questionnaire found in Unifrog. Please wait for information provided by the counsellors to complete this document.
- Find a summer opportunity such as an internship, job, university summer program, working on art portfolio, volunteering, traveling, etc.
- Visit with university representatives when they visit GCS and set up a table in the entryway during break.
- Plan visits to universities (if possible)
- When asked by the counsellors, begin the process of asking teachers for letters of recommendation. This will require each student filling out a "Brag Sheet" for each teacher they would like to write a recommendation and getting each teachers signature. The counsellors will discuss the process of asking teachers for recommendations during a class meeting. PLEASE DO NOT ASK TEACHERS UNTIL YOU KNOW THE PROCEDURE FROM THE COUNSELLORS.

## **June**

- Focus on final exams as a way to finish the term strong
- When asked by the counsellors, begin the process of asking teachers for letters of recommendation. This will require each student filling out a "Brag Sheet" for each teacher they would like to write a recommendation and getting each teachers signature. The counsellors will discuss the process of asking teachers for recommendations during a class meeting. PLEASE DO NOT ASK TEACHERS UNTIL YOU KNOW THE PROCEDURE FROM THE COUNSELLORS.
- If the teacher you asked for a recommendation is leaving GCS at the end of the year, make sure they have uploaded their recommendation for you in Unifrog before the end of the school year
- Continue adding universities to the "universities I'm thinking about tab" in Unifrog
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests.
- Continue researching universities
- Begin your summer opportunity such as an internship, job, university summer program, working on art portfolio, volunteering, traveling, etc.
- Visit universities (if possible)
- Work on writing the university essay

## **July**

- Continue researching universities and adding schools to your lists in Unifrog



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- Continue your summer opportunity such as an internship, job, university summer program, working on art portfolio, volunteering, traveling, etc.
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
- Visit universities (if possible)
- Work on writing the university essay
- Clean up all questionable blogs, YouTube, Facebook, etc. entries. Anything you reveal about yourself on the web is potentially available for the universities to see.
- Get organized. Set up a spreadsheet or system for keeping track of all your universities, application deadlines, teacher recommendation requirements, supplements, interview policies and timelines, etc.
- If you are applying to art, architecture, theater or music programs, prepare art portfolios, music pieces, auditions material, etc. Research to find out deadlines and to find out what each requires in the portfolio or audition. You need to send exactly what the university/university asks for.

## August

Schedule a meeting to meet with your counsellor about your specific university/university application timeline. Priority should go to those students who are applying with a deadline before December 1st. Make sure your Junior Questionnaire is completed before scheduling this meeting.

Finalize your university application list in Unifrog. Make sure you do the following for each university on your list:

Visit each university web site and read all requirements for admission

Make sure you have established an application account online for each university on your list. Some universities will be on the Common App in the US and some will not. Some programs will be on UCAS and some will not. Know how to apply to each of your schools.

Continue working on the university essay/personal statement and any short answer topics for each university on your list. Brainstorm ideas with your counsellors or teachers if you are stuck.

Revise/Complete your personal resume (if requested by a university/university).

Narrow your list – aim for 3 reach schools, 3 possible/target schools, and 3 likely schools

Visit with university representatives when they visit GCS and set up a table in the entryway during break

Prepare for upcoming standardized tests

Review your current courses to ensure you are meeting graduation requirements and university entrance requirements

- If you are applying to schools in the UK, create an account for the UCAS ⇒ Do not forget your **UCAS User Name and Password**. ⇒ Take a look at **Application Supplements** for every university on your list. Begin working on the supplements.

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## September

- Finalise your university list in Unifrog
- Narrow your list – aim for 3 reach schools, 3 possible/target schools, and 3 likely schools
- Make sure the teachers you asked to write a recommendation letter for you have uploaded it to Unifrog
- Decide if you are applying early. Update Unifrog with this information so your counsellor knows when to submit your GCS information to each university/university on your final list.
- Begin to complete the university applications usually in the order of the application deadline
- Make sure you consult your counsellor about your essay and anything else needed in the university application process
- Focus on your academic work, time management, and study skills
- Attend Senior/Parent University Night (mid-September)
- Request your SAT and/or ACT score report to be sent to each university or if you are retaking the tests, add the universities to your test registration
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
- OXBRIDGE: Oxford and Cambridge applications for overseas interviews are due mid-September (check the UCAS application for exact dates)

## October

- UK: Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Vet and Dentistry applications due mid-October (check the UCAS application for exact dates)
- UC and CSU: Applications open October 1st, but you can only submit until between November 1st and November 30th. You can complete your application during this time and write the required essays.
- If you have an application deadline between 10/10 and 11/15, you need to inform your counsellor no later than October 1
- Finalize your university list in Unifrog
- Make sure the teachers you asked to write a recommendation letter for you have uploaded it to Unifrog
- Decide if you are applying early. Update Unifrog with this information so your counsellor knows when to submit your GCS information to each university/university on your final list.
- Begin to complete the university applications usually in the order of the application deadline
- Make sure you consult your counsellor about your essay and anything else needed in the university application process
- Focus on your academic work, time management, and study skills



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- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
- Register for November SAT or SAT Subject tests as needed. The Language with Listening Tests are offered only in November.
- Request official test score reports to be sent to universities from test agencies such as SAT, ACT , IELTS and TOEFL
- Georgia Tech early application due mid-October (check the Georgia Tech website for more information) (if applicable)
- Complete and submit all applications (if applicable) with a deadline before November 1st
- Double check that all transcripts and test score reports have been sent to each university on your list.
- Register or request interviews for the universities that offer or require an interview.
- Receive A levels predicted scores (first round)
- Thank your recommenders for their letters of recommendation

#### REMINDER:

- Always keep a PDF copy of your completed application
- Always double check each application before submitting
- Always have at least one other person read your essays before you add it to the Application

#### November

- November 1: Deadline for many early decision and action applications
- If you have an application deadline between 11/15 and 12/15, you need to inform your counsellor no later than November 1
- Many public universities such as University of Michigan and University of Illinois have priority filing deadlines around this time. Research for more information.
- Make sure the teachers you asked to write a recommendation letter for you have uploaded it to Unifrog
- Make sure you consult your counsellor about your essay and anything else needed in the university application process
- Focus on your academic work, time management, and study skills
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
- Thank your recommenders for their letters of recommendation
- **Research UC majors.** For most UC campuses, you have to provide a primary and an alternate major choice on your application. Do your research carefully; majors may sound alike or may be housed in different schools (e.g. School of Engineering vs. School of Arts and Sciences).

#### December





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- If you have an application deadline between 12/15 and 1/15, you need to inform your counsellor no later than December 1
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests
- Finish university applications and essays
- Submit finalized university applications
- Finalized university list in Unifrog. Counsellors will submit application materials for all universities/universities with a deadline of January 15th or sooner before leaving for winter break.
- Thank your recommenders for their letters of recommendation

### **January**

- If you have an application deadline between 1/15 and 2/15, you need to inform your counsellor no later than January 1 or the first day back from winter vacation
- Submit the form if you are applying for financial aid.
- Prepare for upcoming standardized tests, as needed
- Finish university applications and essays
- Submit finalized university applications
- Study for final exams
- Mid-year reports sent automatically to every university each student has applied to
- Thank your recommenders for their letters of recommendation

### **February**

- If you have an application deadline between 2/15 and the end of the academic year, you need to inform your counsellor no later than February 1
- Thank your recommenders for their letters of recommendation

### **March**

- Notify your counsellor as soon as possible when you receive admissions decisions (admitted, denied, or wait-listed)
- Notify your counsellor if you have received any scholarship offers

### **April**

- Most universities will inform students of decisions by **April 1st**
- Notify your counsellor as soon as possible when you receive admissions decisions (admitted, denied, or wait-listed)
- Decision making time!

### **May**





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- Reply to universities by **May 1st** about your decision
- Inform all other universities that you will attend another institution (name the university) and tell your counsellor of your decision
- IB exams!

## June

- Begin the visa process if necessary
- Final transcript sent to the university or university you are committed to attending

# Responsibilities

## The Student

In important order to ensure for you a to productive familiarise and yourself successful with the university following search expectations and university of application the Counselling process, Office: it is

### A. RESPECT

a. Treat the university search and application process like an academic class. While there is no grade, university admission decisions will depend on your continued engagement.

b. Treat everyone with respect, including university visitors, the Counsellor, your parents, and also your peers.

### B. COMMUNICATION

a. Be proactive in the university search process. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to schedule meetings with your Counsellor, to conduct extensive research on each of your universities and universities, to complete all required forms, and to meet all deadlines.

### C. SELF-ADVOCACY and INITIATIVE

a. Take full ownership of the university search and application process.

b. Become your strongest self-advocate. Keep in mind that the very purpose of each application is to provide you an opportunity to present your best self to the universities. There is a direct correlation between the amount of effort you put into this process and the strength of your candidacy.

c. Use the resources available to you, including the Counselling Office and your Counsellor.

d. Invest the necessary time and energy into this process. During the first term of your senior year, this will require what we call a shift of priorities—meaning you will devote approximately half an hour every night to working on your university applications.



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You will meet these expectations by agreeing to the following:

1. Attend university meetings when scheduled and be on time.
2. Check your e-mail on a daily basis and promptly respond to any communications from your Counsellor within 24 hours.
3. Schedule appointments to meet with your Counsellor so that he or she can get to know you in order to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf and to advise you in the university search process, and to answer any questions you may have about the university search process.
4. Make decisions for yourself. Keep in mind that this is your university search, your university application process, and ultimately your future.

As a junior and senior, your responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Take on the responsibility of leadership in the school by setting a clear and mature tone in every endeavor you undertake.
  - a. Respect your teachers and bring your very best effort to the intellectual life of GEMS Cambridge International Private School.
  - b. Participate fully in the whole life of the school, in your own individual way. If you are devoted to service, then sustain that commitment with purposeful zest; if you are a thespian or musician, make each rehearsal as engaging an experience as you can; if you are an athlete, bring to each practice the focus and determination that you might carry into the most significant MESAC game of the season. Set a tone that younger students can admire.
  - c. Abide scrupulously by the rules of GEMS Cambridge International Private School and live by the GCS values.
2. Research, try to visit, and greet university and university visitors to our campus whose institutions interest you. When conducting your research, make sure you meet all admission requirements before applying to the school.
3. When you construct your Final University List, make certain that you would be pleased to attend every university on that list!
4. Meet all deadlines for applications, testing registration, sending test scores, financial aid and scholarships. Additionally, meet all GCS Counselling Office deadlines for submitting application materials.
5. Read and understand this handbook, especially the Policies section
6. Communicate honestly and often with both your Counsellor and your parents.
7. Adhere to all university and university admission policies including, but not limited to the following:



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a. Early Decision agreements, withdrawing applications if required, committing to only one university at the national reply date of May 1 (if going to the US), and paying a deposit to reserve a space at ONE school only.

## The Parent

1. Provide unconditional support for your child. Remind him/her of strengths and talents, independent of any university admission decision, grades or standardized testing scores.
2. Help your student understand as many universities as possible, whether through actual or virtual visits, internet research and/or through meeting with visiting university representatives. Hardest of all, try to hold your own opinions to yourself, unless they are solicited. Listen carefully to the impressions your child has gathered and help him/her to take appropriate notes and gather information.
3. Read and understand the information and policies outlined in this handbook.
4. Communicate openly and honestly with the Counselling Office.
5. If applicable, fill out all necessary financial aid forms, according to the financial aid office websites of each university. If your child is a non-US citizen applying to US universities and universities, gather financial documents from your bank and have notarized any documents as required by each school.
6. **MOST IMPORTANT** - Please do not do the work for your son or daughter. Please do not fill out university applications on their behalf. Please do not write their essay or employ someone to do so. This is your child's process and it is important that they take all of the wonderful lessons you have taught them until this point in order to stand on their own two feet. You have taught them well. Believe in yourself and your child.

## The Counsellor

1. To get to know you as a person; to come to understand and appreciate your enthusiasm, dreams, talents, and concerns.
2. To help you develop an intelligent, balanced, and appropriate list of universities. There will be many more campuses to learn about than campuses to which you will actually apply. The goal is to construct a list that is broad, deep and realistic. At GCS, we use the terms **reach**, **target**, and **likely** to rate the difficulty of admission based on historical results for students with academic credentials similar to yours.
  - a. **Reach** schools are those to which fewer students with a similar profile have been admitted than have not, or a school that is so competitive (lower than 20% admit rate, for example) that it is a reach for any student.
  - b. **Target** refers to a university, still highly competitive, where many applicants have academic credentials similar to yours; some are admitted and some are not.
  - c. **Likely** is a university in whose general application pool you should be a strong candidate.

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3. To advocate on your behalf by presenting your transcript and official recommendations to the universities so that you have the strongest chance of being given favorable consideration by the universities.
4. To listen to, learn from, and communicate with your parents.
5. To enable you to make good decisions throughout the university application process by providing you with timely, up-to-date and accurate information.

## Counselling Policies

he there established university is much search by opportunity the process GCS Counselling can for be an exciting and rewarding one, but it can also be confusing, and miscommunication. Please read through the following policies

Office:

- **Each Student is in Charge of His or Her Own University Process** Universities want to see an organized, independent applicant with internal motivation. While our office focuses on giving good advice and representing the students to the universities, students need to remain aware of and on top of ALL requirements and deadlines, either internal to GCS or external to the universities. At the end of the day, the student is responsible for researching universities, writing essays, completing applications, preparing for and taking tests, and keeping track of due dates.
- **Building a Balanced University List** As mentioned before, this is the essential task in the university process! An ideally balanced university list would have at least 2-3 likely schools, 2-3 target schools and 2-3 reach schools. We strongly recommend working towards this kind of balance in the list so that each senior is presented with a “dilemma of choice” in the spring term, meaning that the student has several university acceptances to choose from.
- **Finding Your “Best Fit” University** You are the only one who can determine what your “best fit” university feels like, but how can you know if you will feel at home at a school halfway around the world? Here are a few suggestions to help you choose the university that best suits your goals.
- **Finding Likely Schools** Perhaps the most emotionally difficult aspect of constructing the university list for parents, and sometimes the students, is choosing and sticking with several schools to which the student is quite likely to gain admissions. Each parent knows well the rich talents and personality of his or her child, and each parent has come to regard certain schools as excellent and some as merely serviceable. There are some things that families can do to make the process of finding likely schools which would be a good match of the student easier:
  - o When visiting schools or researching schools for the first time, try schools other than those that are among the most competitive for admission!
  - o Remember that there are far more students applying to universities than in the past and average GPAs and SAT scores are higher than ever before. While this has made the more famous schools even more competitive, it has also made less well-known schools both more demanding and filled with stronger students. Before you dismiss a school because you have not heard of it or because someone who graduated more than 4 years ago found it unimpressive, do your own research into what that university is like today. Yesterday’s weaker school may be today an institution of a very high caliber and increasingly competitive to



be admitted into. o Look at the “worst case scenario” using Unifrog for each school on your list. Notice that high GPAs and high-test scores do not guarantee admission. This further reinforces the fact that you need to have some schools on your list where there is high probability, they will admit you based on your academic strengths.

- **Importance of Extracurricular Involvement and Leadership** It helps to recognize that universities look carefully at levels of extracurricular involvement, leadership at school and extracurricular excellence outside of school. Athletics is a good example with involvement ranging from participation as a hobby to team. Similarly in music, technology, service, theater, art, cultural and ethnic clubs – in all of these, universities are looking for ways to measure ability, commitment, and/or leadership in an objective fashion. The better you can show them directly, the stronger your candidacy will be.

- **GCS Transcript** The high school transcript is one of the most important documents in a student’s application because it offers important insight into the student’s academic life in terms of his or her course selections, rigor and classroom performance. o We do not rank our students. There is no class rank on the transcript, high school profile, or secondary school report. o The GPA is an weighted cumulative average. At the time students file their university applications, the GPA reflects all high school work done at GCS through the end of junior year. Courses in progress during the senior year will also be noted on the transcript sent to universities. Senior year grades are not sent until February, after the majority of university applications have already been due.

- **Standardized Testing** All the activities around standardized testing take place between the student and the University Board, ACT, or any other testing service. Students plan their own testing calendar in concert with us, but the students themselves need to register for the tests, attend the tests and report the scores to the universities. The University Board and the ACT are large bureaucratic organisations and are subject to the same drawbacks of any large organization. If it appears that the University Board or ACT has made some error, we strongly recommend that you contact the representatives of that organization immediately and make them aware of the mistake.

- **Test Preparation** The SAT/ACT/Subject Tests are NOT entrance exams to US universities and universities. The SAT measures aptitude in quantitative and verbal areas that are developed over a long period of time. Students typically experience a natural lift in their results through continued exposure to a strong high school curriculum, greater familiarity with the tests themselves and maturation as test takers. Preparation certainly does not hurt, but it is important to understand the limitations of using test prep organisations and outside tutors, and to consider the significant commitment of time and energy required during a time already filled with tremendous demands. Testing results must confirm and verify the level of academic achievement as presented on the GCS transcript. Discrepancies between the two may not help the universities understand the student’s true academic ability but instead may confuse them. They may ask why a student with a very high SAT score did not perform better in the classroom.

- **Recommendation Letters** Recommendation letters are confidential communications between GEMS Cambridge International Private School and the universities. Feedback from students helps us to present a full and positive portrayal of each student to the universities. That the universities know that these are confidential only adds to the effectiveness of and integrity in our testimony.



- **Financial Aid :**

**Merit scholarships** are scholarships that can be given either by schools or by other organisations that do not depend on the student's financial status. They change rapidly, are different at every school and are frequently linked with specific achievements, talents, backgrounds, or residency requirements. Our office cannot keep track of all available merit scholarships. We recommend that if you are interested in a merit scholarship, that in your investigation of each university, you look into what scholarships are available and what their requirements are. It is the student's responsibility to follow through on any merit scholarships, and we are happy to offer advice and support in the process.

o **Need-based financial aid** is offered based on the financial need demonstrated by each family. Need-based aid may come in the form of scholarships, student loans, and work study. Please consult the financial aid websites of each university to understand which forms (i.e. FAFSA, CSS Profile, and international student financial certification) will be required to be submitted and their respective deadlines. o See the Financial Aid section of this handbook for a more comprehensive discussion.

- **Early Action, Early Decision, and Rolling Applications** With the recent discussion in the US media regarding Early Decision and Early Action admission plans, it is important to understand the various policies for students who wish to pursue Early Action and/or Early Decision programs. Admissions offices are able to cross check early candidate lists; GCS students should carefully follow the early policies of the university or university to which they are applying. **CHECK EACH SCHOOL'S WEBSITE TO CLARIFY THEIR POLICY!**

**Early Decision** – One applies early, is notified of results early, and if admitted, is committed to attend and must withdraw all pending applications immediately. One may simultaneously apply to rolling application universities. Some early decision schools will also allow simultaneous applications to non-binding early action (not single choice early action) schools.

**Early Decision II** – A second round of Early Decision, one applies typically in January and is notified of results typically in early February. At the time of filing the ED II application, one must simultaneously submit regular decision applications. If the student is admitted, s/he is committed to attend and must withdraw all pending applications immediately. A student can apply ED II after being denied or deferred ED I by another university.

**Early Action** – One applies early, is notified of results early, but if admitted early may still continue applying to other universities. One may simultaneously apply to rolling application schools. Some may also allow simultaneous application to an early decision university (if it is not a single choice early decision school).

**Single Choice Early Action** – One applies early, is notified of results early, but if admitted early may still continue applying to other universities. At the time of the Single Choice Early Action application, one may apply only to rolling application universities. One may not apply to early decision universities or other Early Action universities.

**Rolling** – One may apply anytime over a long period (frequently September through February, for example), and could hear back as soon as several weeks after applying, though a rolling school might also wait quite a while to notify an applicant.



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**Regular Decision** – One applies by the regular deadline typically in early January but can be as late as March. Admission decisions are returned to students typically no later than April 1st and a student must reply by May 1st.

- **Committing to a University and Making an Enrollment Deposit**

**If you are accepted under an Early Decision plan, you have committed to attending the university and are made ineligible to be considered for admission anywhere else!** You must email each additional university to which you have applied and cc: your Counsellor on the note that you will be withdrawing your application from the other universities immediately after you hear your positive ED results. Failure to do so jeopardizes your privilege of attending any university in the fall. For Early Decision candidates, universities may require an enrollment contract and deposit in late winter. For spring acceptances, universities require that students make their enrollment decision and submit a deposit by May 1st. If you are on the waiting list at another university and wish to remain in consideration, you need to still accept and deposit with one of the schools to which you have been accepted by May 1st. If you are then accepted at a school off the waiting list in May or June, you can then accept the new offer and inform your other school of this decision. In most cases, you will have to forfeit your original deposit.

**DO NOT double deposit** – a policy that is guided by GCS's commitment to honesty and the National Association of University Admission Counselling's accepted standards of good practice. Universities require final transcripts before they officially finalize your enrollment and the GCS Counselling Office will only send a final transcript to the university you will be attending.

**Deferring University for a Gap Year** -After having been admitted to university, some students take a "gap" year to travel, work, pursue community service, military service or enroll in a non-degree granting academic program. We strongly support such considerations; our experience on university campuses shows that students who take gap years often begin university refreshed, with greater focus and bring maturity and worldliness to their campus communities. Please pursue this potentially rewarding option with the values of openness and honesty at the core of your choices. In the spring of your senior year of high school, we encourage you to be in touch with the admissions office of the university or university to which you have been admitted to learn about its process of deferment. A small number of students have in the past realized during their gap year an interest that leads them to consider applying to other universities they had not considered the first time through. If you wish to apply to other universities, you must first seek the written permission of the university to which you had been intending to matriculate. When that university releases you, GCS will then be able to send a full packet of your transcript, recommendations, and profile to other universities. Without a release, you risk losing both your place at the first school and at other universities.

## Choosing the Best University for You

There are too many these factors pointers, to take make into sure consideration, to read our but several questions stand out as particularly significant. In "policy on finding likely schools" in our policies section of this





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We suggest you consider:

1. Size of school: small (under 3,000), mid-size (3,000-10,000), large (over 10,000) or super-sized (20,000+)
2. Distance from home: one plane ride or multiple; Region of the US, continental Europe, UK, Australia, Canada, Korea and Asia?
3. Location and setting: Urban big city, university town, rural/small town or suburban.
4. Nature of the institutions: liberal arts and sciences universities, comprehensive universities with graduate programs or major research universities
5. The culture of the school:
  - a. Diversity: presence, emphasis, value in the community
  - b. Activities (extracurricular both formal and informal)
  - c. Dormitory/residential life: Who gets to live where? With whom? And when? Is campus housing guaranteed? If so, for how many years?
  - d. Access to airports, speakers, concerts, dances, theater, movies, shopping, restaurants, athletic events, ethnic communities, religious communities
  - e. Depth of political, artistic, athletic, international life of a campus give your enthusiasm
  - f. Athletic atmosphere, focus on sports in the life of the university
  - g. Greek Life (fraternities/sororities), non-Greek life, social atmosphere
6. Intellectual Life:
  - a. Required courses: distribution requirements, core curriculum, language requirements
  - b. Number of courses needed to graduate
  - c. Availability of an honours program
  - d. Is there a strong department in my area of greatest academic interest? Is a thesis required in my major? How easy is it to switch majors? Add minors? Double major?
  - e. Size of classes? Who is teaching the classes? Who handles the grading?
  - f. Availability and interest of the faculty in teaching undergraduates
  - g. What are the other students like? Do they enjoy studying? Do they take their work seriously?
  - h. Intensity; degree of independence expected?
  - i. Availability of courses to all undergraduates and/or non-majors
  - j. Pre-professional programs (i.e. business, pre-med, pre-law, dentistry, architecture) and their access to non- majors



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k. Is every dorm “online”? Is the campus wireless? Can I access the library and other significant research information from my dormitory room?

l. What interdisciplinary programs are offered?

m. Are there cooperative education (co-op) and internship opportunities available during the school year?

n. What are the resources available for academic, social, residential, mental health advising?

7. Extracurricular opportunities for study beyond the traditional classroom curriculum:

a. University exchanges, linkage with other universities’ programs

i. Study abroad

ii. “January term”, “May term”, etc. Note the academic calendar to see what opportunities are presented

b. How active is the university in supporting your interests?

8. It is increasingly important to know something about the placement programs (job or graduate school opportunities after you graduate) at a university. Some are very proactive on behalf of their students. Who handles the advising? When does it start? Do they help with summer job placement? Consider single sex universities. There are fewer such opportunities for men, but many for women. The research on the success women have, both professionally and in terms of gaining access to graduate programs after attending a women’s university, is disproportionately favorable to women’s universities.

9. Availability of financial aid and access to scholarships

10. Be patient with yourself. You may not be at all certain about any of the questions listed above. That’s okay! You may think one way now, and after researching several universities, completely change your mind! Just remember not to be afraid to think about all of this. It is the best defense against the nosy neighbor who insists that you “really should be going to xxxxxx...”

a. Additionally, universities are expensive. Remember to thank your parents for making it possible, first for you to attend Gems Cambridge International Private School, and secondly even to consider the burden of undertaking university expenses.

## An Admissions Dean’s Promise

**“Follow this advice and I guarantee you’ll get into a great university!”**

The Middlebury University Admissions Office and Dan Lundquist, former dean of admissions at Union University, who has worked in selective university admissions for over 25 years, at large Ivy League universities and small liberal arts and sciences universities, offer the following advice to students in the hope that they will have a more successful – and less stressful – university search:



- It is important that you take the lead in thinking critically to get down to a short list of universities. A student who has been spoon fed is the one who is going to be disappointed when he or she discovers that other people's interests and values drove the university search. Learn for yourself through the research process whether the labels and stereotypes that get attached to some universities really are valid.
- Be realistic when developing a university list. Assess your interests, values, skills and aspirations. And gather information about the universities themselves: the range and diversity of the world's higher education system is wonderful, so never assume there are any universal policies, strengths or preferences. Or that what is right for someone else will fit for you. Decide for yourself.
- For most students there isn't one perfect university. In fact, against the backdrop of so many fine options (keep in mind there are over 3000 universities in the US alone), you probably have the talent and flexibility to succeed at a number of universities. Please feel buoyed by the variety of options you have... rather than oppressed by competition and process. Your choice also needs to make you feel, "This is home."
- Applicants should redefine "best university" to "right university for me". Concentrate on finding the right accessible university first, so you can say, "If this university accepts me, I'll be delighted to attend."
- Apply Early to a private university or university only if you felt like "lightning struck" during your university search... not to "get it over with" or game the system.
- The most competitive universities turn away thousands of stellar candidates every year... because they do not have room to admit them all. Fair? No; Reality? Yes. At most universities to which you apply, it is likely that your scores will look quite similar to those of other applicants, which means it is unlikely that they will be a deciding factor in your candidacy. Create a balanced list from which you would be excited to attend any school that admits you.
- Don't be overwhelmed by all that you have to do senior year. Relax when it comes time to writing your personal essay(s) and let it come from your heart.
- You control two-thirds of the process: you choose where to apply...and then where to attend.
- Since most applicants to competitive universities are admissible due to grades and scores, it is important to understand that most offers of admission are based on the applicants' personal presentation – their talents, their background, their ambitions and their ability to clearly and persuasively discuss the academic and personal match between them and a particular university.
- Remember that a year from now you will very likely be attending a truly excellent university where you will receive a first-rate education and have a wonderful experience. The quality of your educational experience is far more up to you than it is up to the institution that you attend.
- **Good luck!**

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# University Athletics

## Steps to Take

If you truly are a superior athlete, not just at GCS or at MESAC but compared the universe of students playing your sport, there are some steps you need to take early in high school.

1. Students who play university sports must have completed a certain number of core academic courses. Just like you can't graduate from GCS if you've not completed the right combination of courses, you can't play university sports if you haven't fulfilled the core course requirements. The good news is that the standard is rather low so most GCS students don't have an issue with the requirements or the SAT/ACT minimums.

2. Register with the Eligibility Center. This confirms that you are indeed an amateur athlete and aren't secretly being paid to play a sport in your home country. Register in the first part of your junior year and be sure to meet their deadlines.

3. Begin to make a list of universities where you might be able to play. Much like students are told to have likely, possible, and reach universities on their lists, you will need to do that with each school's athletic program. If you are playing a sport such as swimming or track where you can objectively be measured by your performance times, it is much easier to assess your athletic talents and compare your times to a university's team. For team sports like American football or soccer it's a bigger challenge to realistically assess your skills.

4. Create a video. A recruiting video is one of the most important ways an athlete can attract the attention of coaches. The contents will vary depending upon the sport. Sports such as volleyball and American football generally work best with a collection of 15-25 highlight plays illustrating your ability. Continuous play sports such as soccer, basketball and rugby should have 10 to 15 highlight plays - perhaps with an additional game half included to show overall ability. Keep your video short, simple and as professional looking as possible and then upload it to YouTube so that you can simply provide a link to the coaches.

5. Make contact in your junior year. Check the school's website to find out who you should contact. The website is a great way to learn about the team. For example, if you are a pitcher on a baseball team and you see that the university has four pitchers coming back next year, you should probably look at other universities since the team won't need you. When you email the coach, provide a brief introduction explaining who you are and why you're contacting them. Keep the message short but provide your times and/or a link where they can view your video.

6. Attend camps. Attending summer camps allows you to get an assessment of your skill level and provides some exposure to coaches. Camps help athletes get better and to get noticed. Therefore, you are encouraged to research sports camps and find one or more that you would like to attend. Below are just a few examples of camps that you can find online. If you're truly talented, talking to coaches is obviously a good thing both during the camp and by email before the camp begins.

a. US Sports Camps – [www.ussportscamps.com](http://www.ussportscamps.com)

b. Summer Discovery UCLA Sports Camps – [www.summerdiscovery.com/ucla/sports](http://www.summerdiscovery.com/ucla/sports)

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- c. Duke University Sports Camps – [www.goduke.com](http://www.goduke.com) (click on "fan zone" → "camps")
- d. Brown University Sports Camps – [www.brown.edu/academics/pre-university/sportscamps](http://www.brown.edu/academics/pre-university/sportscamps)
- e. Appalachian State University Camps – [conferences-camps.appstate.edu/youth-camps](http://conferences-camps.appstate.edu/youth-camps)
- f. Hanover University – [www.hanover.edu/athletics/summercamps](http://www.hanover.edu/athletics/summercamps)

## Additional Resources

- The Guide for the University-Bound Student-Athletes, (<http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/CBSA17.pdf>)
- Road Map to Initial Eligibility, (<http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/EB16.pdf>)
- Checklist for University-Bound Student-Athletes, (<http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/EB15.pdf>)
- International Student Athletes, (<http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/international-student-athletes>)
- Division I and II Worksheet, ([http://fs.ncaa.org/docs/eligibility\\_center/DI\\_and\\_DII\\_Worksheet.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/docs/eligibility_center/DI_and_DII_Worksheet.pdf))
- Division I and II Test Score Requirements, (<http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/test-scores>)

## Are you being recruited?

Students sometimes think they are being recruited when they receive mailings from a university admission office. Reality check: Universities purchase lists of prospective students from several sources so if you received an email or letter, it has nothing to do with your athletic talents.

If you receive an email, letter or questionnaire from a university coach it can be a good thing, but it doesn't mean you're being recruited. That might happen after the questionnaire is returned, but not before. The same thing goes if a university coach contacts your high school coach. There is a lot of evaluation that goes on before a coach decides if you are an interesting prospect.

If a coach calls you it obviously means there is some interest in you. Should a coach invite you on an "official visit" (expenses are paid by the university), it is serious stuff.

Regardless of whether you initiated contact with the coach or are being actively recruited by a coach, there are some questions that you should consider asking him or her in order to be sure that this university's athletic program is right for you. Here are several sample questions that you may find helpful:

- How many athletes are you recruiting?
- How do I fit into your program?
- Where am I on the depth chart?

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- What are my chances of playing as a freshman?
- What are my chances of ever being a starter?
- What or how many other athletes do you currently have in my position?
- What is your coaching philosophy?
- Based on your past experience with student-athletes you wanted for this program, how do I to those who have or have not gained admission?
- How many athletes are graduating?
- What makes your school and program so good? How does it stand out from others?
- Can I try out as a walk on?
- Will I play or sit on the bench?
- What is the 4-year graduation rate for athletes on your team?
- What would your players tell me they like most or least about you?
- How much time is devoted to/what is the schedule for practices?
- When are the competitions typically scheduled/how often do students miss class?
- How much travel is involved?
- What is the off-season training/workout expectations?
- How many credits is it reasonable for players to take per term?
- In the past few years, how many players dropped out of the program b/c it was too demanding for them?

## Watch Out For Scams

If you search on Google for "athletic recruiting" you will find a large number of websites asking you to send money so that you can buy a book or get their help. Most coaches will tell you that these sites primarily exist to make money for the company and provide very little value to the student. Your best approach is always to contact coaches directly. And while there are a few reputable scouting agencies who might be able to assist in the process of getting noticed, a coach generally doesn't pay attention to someone who says how great you are if you paid the person to make that comment.

# Tools for University Searches in Popular Places

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Unifrog - [unifrog.org](http://unifrog.org) - best place to start!

## Canada

- Universities Canada, (<http://www.univcan.ca/>)
- Ontario - [www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca)
- Canada's Scholarship Website, ([www.scholarshipscanada.com](http://www.scholarshipscanada.com)): an extensive searchable database to find scholarships, student awards, bursaries and grants available in Canada.
- Study in Canada, (<http://www.studyincanada.com/english/index.asp>): Find the right university, university, career university, language school, secondary (high) school or elementary school for you. Students interested in learning English as a second language can find out about ESL and TOEFL scores. Post-secondary programs such as MBA, computer science, engineering and business are also featured. Learn about visas, tuition, application requirements and learn about Canada and Canadian education.
- Schools in Canada, (<http://www.schoolsincanada.com/index.cfm>): a website for international students

## United Kingdom

For undergraduate studies, the centralized admissions service in the UK allows you to apply to five institutions simultaneously through one electronic application. This service is known as UCAS (Universities and Universities Admissions Service). You can learn more about the process at <http://www.ucas.ac.uk>. Your Counsellor will have specific login information specific for GCS students to use through the application process.

## France

- Campus France: [www.campusfrance.org](http://www.campusfrance.org) – The national agency for the promotion of higher education, international student services, and international mobility. They also offer a virtual fair in November (<http://virtual.campusfrance.org>).
- CIEP: [www.ciep.fr/delf-dalf](http://www.ciep.fr/delf-dalf) - The organization responsible for French language tests
- MOOC: <http://mooc-ref.net/>

## The United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) requires all males between the age of 18-30 to serve in the military for 12 months. SPEA sends a request to GCS to provide them with a list of Emirati male



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students who are in the 12th grade. All male students on this list must register for the UAE National Service. There are a few exemptions to present at registration:

1. If the student is the only son in the family, he must present documentation at registration to exempt him from National Service.
2. If the student has plans to study at university and is offered acceptance into a higher educational institution.
3. Temporary exemption for a son who is the sole breadwinner for a parent.

For more information, please visit the following website: [www.uaensr.ae/default.aspx](http://www.uaensr.ae/default.aspx)

### **Scholarships**

Government Scholarships Local students can complete the registration for scholarships through NAPO (National Admissions & Placement Office). Please visit the following website for more information: [https://adm.moe.gov.ae/napo/Default\\_EN.aspx](https://adm.moe.gov.ae/napo/Default_EN.aspx)

Please use the following links to get more information about scholarship requirements:

<https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/education/higher-education/joining-higher-education-institutions/admission-to-universities>

<https://www.moe.gov.ae/En/EServices/ServiceCard/pages/scholarships.aspx>

<https://www.uae-embassy.org/services-resources/students>

EmSAT:

<http://emsat.moe.gov.ae/emsat/Default.aspx>

<http://emsat.moe.gov.ae/emsat/FAQs.aspx>

### **For students wanting to study at a university in the UAE:**

<https://www.moe.gov.ae/En/EServices/ServiceCard/pages/CertEquivalent.aspx>

Arab passport holders must have Arabic all 4 years on their transcript. Muslim students must have Islamic all 4 years on their transcript.

## **Europe**

These websites offer general information on the admissions process by country:

**Austria** - <http://studyinaustria.at>

**Czech Republic** - [www.studyin.cz](http://www.studyin.cz)

**Denmark** - [www.studyindenmark.dk](http://www.studyindenmark.dk)

**Finland** - [www.studyinfinland.fi](http://www.studyinfinland.fi)

**Germany** - [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de) and [www.young-germany.de](http://www.young-germany.de)

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**Ireland** - [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) and [www.hea.ie](http://www.hea.ie)

**Italy** - <http://www.study-in-italy.it/> and <http://www.universitaly.it/>

**Netherlands** - [www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl) and [www.studyfinder.nl](http://www.studyfinder.nl)

**Norway** - [www.studyinnorway.no](http://www.studyinnorway.no)

**Spain** - <http://www.studying-in-spain.com/>

**Sweden** - [www.studyinsweden.se](http://www.studyinsweden.se)

**Switzerland** - <http://www.crus.ch>

Here is some general information about studying in Europe. Because every country and every institution has their own application procedure, requirements, and deadlines, we hope you will use this information as a starting point for your research of European universities.

- Euro-Asia Higher Education Platform, (<http://www.eahep.org/europeanhigher-education/study-in-europe/courses-in-english.html>)
- European Commission: Supporting Education and Training in Europe and Beyond, (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/>)
- Study in Europe, (<https://www.studyineurope.eu>) \*Please note that some information is only accessible with a paid subscription
- Bachelors Portal, ([www.bachelorportal.eu](http://www.bachelorportal.eu)) \*Paid subscription service only
- The Complete University Guide, (<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk>) \*Paid subscription service only
- European University Central Application Support Service, (<http://eunicas.ie/>) \*Partially paid subscription service
- A Star Future, (<http://www.astarfuture.co.uk/>) \*Paid subscription service only
- European Universities Consortium, ([www.european-universities.eu](http://www.european-universities.eu))

*\*Please keep in mind: some websites are run by private organisations/individuals and some websites are paid subscription services. We have indicated these above.*

## **The University Visit and the Interview University Representatives on Your High School Campus**

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As you are determining which universities and universities will be included on your final university application list, keep in mind an admission representative from that university or university may visit GCS to offer an information session. This would be another great way of determining if the campus is a good fit. Notices around GCS, Unifrog, and announcements in the senior seminar class report the times and dates admission officers will be visiting GCS.

There are several reasons to take the time to meet with university representatives:

- The university representatives who visit our school are usually the people who will read your file when you apply.
- These visits provide valuable opportunities to learn more about various universities, especially if you will not have the opportunity to visit their campuses before you apply.
- Even if you are applying early, you should not ignore these opportunities. Remember—you may not be accepted by your early decision/action choice. Be prepared and be informed.
- Your Counsellor can advise you more effectively if you have met with university representatives and discussed their institutions. The more informed you are, the better decision-maker you will be.
- For students applying to visual arts programs, because the representatives travel from so far, they may also do portfolio reviews while they are here.

## The University Visit

If possible, please visit the universities on your university list. If you are able to see these schools, it is important for you to plan out your visits in advance and set aside time to see all the universities on your list. This means visiting a range of schools: reach schools, possible schools and likely schools. If you cannot visit, we encourage watching virtual tours on each university's website and contacting GCS students currently attending each university. Please see your Counsellor for email addresses of our alumni on university campuses.

## How Do You Prepare for A University Visit?

1. Check out their website! Most universities will have a "Visit Us" page that offers information on everything you can do during a visit to the university. They may also have hotel suggestions, directions, sightseeing suggestions, etc. The university's website should be your first stop in this process!
2. Determine the distance between various campuses. Try not to schedule more than two visits a day.
3. Check the internet to:
  - See if they offer information sessions. If so, find out the times of the information sessions. Find out the length of the information sessions. Find out if you must call in advance to reserve a space in the information session.

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- See if they offer tours. If so, find out the times of the tours. Find out the length of the tours. Find out what you will see on the tour (dorm room, cafeteria, etc.). Find out if the tour is guided by a current student. Find out if you must call in advance to reserve a spot on the tour.
- See if they offer interviews. If so, who conducts this interview (current student, alumni, member of the admissions staff)? Find out if the interview is evaluative or informational.
- Contact faculty members in the department in which you wish to study.
- Contact coaches if you are interested in being a recruited athlete.
- Contact other specialists on campus relating to your interests.
- See if the university recommends places to stay, places to eat, or other things in the area.

4. Know the university you are going to visit...before you step out of the car! Read the catalogue, website, and view books thoroughly; have at hand the questions you cannot discern from the reading. If most of those concerns are answered during your information session or the tour, have another set of questions ready that are more personal and have to do with your interests. For example: You love being a part of theatre life at GCS. You have determined from reading that there is a strong theatre department at the university you are visiting. You see the theatre on your tour and learn that your tour guide has never been to one of the shows, "but heard from friends that they're great!" What do you ask the interviewer? You might ask whether, as a non-theatre major, you can: take advanced courses in the department, try out for all productions with any chance of being cast, or find alternative options for your thespian enthusiasm. If you wish to major in theatre, you should ascertain whether an audition is required. If so, where, how will they be scheduled, and what should you prepare beforehand? This example can be employed for almost any and every curricular or extracurricular interest. Just use your imagination, and practice. Remember, you do not want to leave the campus without the interviewer knowing something about your particular passions and talents – not by bragging, but through the questions you pose.

5. Pick up a copy of the student newspaper and read the letters to the editor. Discover what the "real issues" on campus are.

6. Study the bulletin boards and kiosks to get a sense of the social life. Graffiti can provide insight into the campus. Have a cup of coffee in the student center and watch the students interact and socialize.

## The Campus Tour

1. Call ahead or check the university or university's website to determine what times tours are offered and how far in advance you should arrive on campus.
2. While on tour, be sure to get your tour guide's name. Remember your tour guide is just ONE of the students who attend that university or university. Try not to let them determine your whole impression of the university.
3. Ask your tour guide appropriate questions about the campus. If they do not know the answer to one of your questions, ask them to point you in the direction of someone who can.

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# Standardized Testing Information

Standardized testing is an important factor in admissions decisions at most highly selective universities and universities. A few institutions have downplayed the importance of scores and some have eliminated test requirements entirely, but those institutions are in the minority. At most universities standardized testing still matters.

We want our students to understand the testing requirements and, just as importantly, to keep testing in perspective. Students' academic achievement and extracurricular activities are more important than test scores, both in terms of acquiring a first-rate education and in terms of enhancing their chances of admission to selective institutions.

## SAT Reasoning Test

Students can register for the SAT and the SAT Subject Test at [www.sat.universityboard.org](http://www.sat.universityboard.org). If you need more detailed instructions, please come to the Counselling Office and talk with your Counsellor.

## SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject Tests, formerly called the SAT II tests (and in your parents' day were called Achievement Tests), are one- hour, primarily multiple-choice tests designed to measure knowledge in a particular subject and the application of that knowledge. No student should ever re-take a subject test! Students should only be taking the SAT and Subject Tests in an official capacity when they are ready and confident that they will score the highest score in a particular sitting!

To learn more about the SAT Subject Tests, we recommend that you go to the University Board website: <http://sat.universityboard.com/about-tests/sat-subject-tests>. This website offers detailed explanations of each subject test, opportunities to take mini-practice tests, free downloadable publications and information about test preparation.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Requirements about SAT Subject Tests, including "how many" and "which" test should be taken, differ from institution to institution. You must refer to the admission requirements of each school to which you will apply in order to determine specific testing requirements and how the results will be used. Check the school's website to find out what is required and don't go by what is listed on universityboard.com or universityprowler.com. These are not necessarily reliable sites.

## ACT

The ACT offers online registration at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

## TOEFL

The purpose of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is to evaluate the English proficiency of people whose first language is not English. The test was initially developed to measure English proficiency of international students wishing to study at universities and universities in the United States and Canada, and this continues to be its primary function. The

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TOEFL measures proficiency through three sections – listening, structure and reading – to measure an examinee’s ability to understand English as it is spoken, recognize the language that is appropriate for standard written English, and read and understand short passages on academic subjects.

The Counselling Office recommends students take the TOEFL exam if they score below a 550 on the Critical Reading section of the SAT. In some very specific cases a university or university will require an GCS student to take the TOEFL exam if the Critical Reading score is below 600. If your Critical Reading score falls below 550, consult with your Counsellor about the TOEFL exam.

TOEFL offers online registration at [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org).

## Final Notes about Standardized Testing

- If you are applying early decision or early action, the October SAT/ACT exams are generally the last exams students can take. Some institutions may allow an early decision or early action student to take the November SAT exam; however, there is no guarantee that the test results will be sent to the university in time for consideration.
- For students applying under regular decision, the December test dates for the SAT/ACT are generally the last exams students can take. SAT exams taken in January of the senior year will almost certainly not be sent to the university in time for consideration.
- For students specifically applying to the University of California system, the application deadline is November 30th; however, students may still take the December SAT and ACT exams. The UC system has specifically stated they will accept December SAT and ACT exam results.
- It is the students’ responsibility to send SAT, SAT Subject Test, ACT, TOEFL results to the universities/universities where they submitted an application. If a student is applying early decision or early action, test scores should be sent to universities and universities in mid-October. And if a student is applying for regular decision, it is advised that test scores should be sent to universities and universities in mid-December.
- It is worth repeating that the Counselling office recommends students take the TOEFL exam if you score below a 550 on your Critical Reading section of the SAT. In some very specific cases a university or university will require a GCS student to take the TOEFL exam if the Critical Reading score is below 600. If your Critical Reading score falls below 550, consult with your Counsellor about the TOEFL exam.

## SAT Optional Universities and Universities

Some universities and universities do not require students to submit their SATs as part of the application process. This list is a sampling of some of these schools. Please consult the universities’ websites to learn more about their specific testing requirements. To find a comprehensive list of the 400 institutions that have flexible testing requirements, we suggest that you investigate the Fair Test website: [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)

## The University Essay



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The impact of a student's written portion of the application can hardly be overstated. In the UK, the personal statement comprises roughly one third of the admission evaluation. We have many resources available to help with this including the opportunity to meet with us individually in the fall. Take the time over the summer before your senior year to at least create a first draft of each type of writing you might need. All the below information can be found on the Unifrog platform.

- ★ Personal Essay presentation - predominately for the United States
- ★ Personal Statement presentation - helpful for UK and any other countries with specific course focused essays
- ★ UCAS Personal Statement assistance
- ★ Unifrog Essay and Statement Writing Tools