



**SINGAPORE
AMERICAN
SCHOOL**

COLLEGE APPLICATION GUIDE

2023—24

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INTRODUCTION

At Singapore American School, each student and family has a different level of familiarity with colleges and how the college application process works. Some begin the process with lists of possible schools already in mind, while others have only vague notions about what they might want to study or where they might want to go. We also work with students who are planning to take gap years or who will spend their first two years after graduation fulfilling Singapore's National Service (NS) requirement. The role of the SAS college counselors is to guide all students, with their many different needs, perspectives, and interests, through a process that helps them to find schools at which they will be successful.

The SAS college counselors view a student's engagement in the college admissions cycle as an educational experience. Students learn to ask questions, research institutions, and reflect on their discoveries. They practice speaking, writing, and organizational skills. Most students will craft essays and take tests. So while the college process is not a formal class at SAS, it provides a learning experience for each student. And it is the college counselor's job to help guide and support each SAS student through this journey.

Ultimately, the college research and application experience should be about process as well as outcomes. The college counselors want the process to be a positive one, so that all students and families conclude their SAS experience feeling supported and finding "great fit" schools: colleges to which students are admissible, at which they will be happy and successful, and from which they will graduate. The college counselors are here to provide as much help as you need.

APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES

Please note that, because most students at SAS apply to universities in the US, this planning guide is focused on the US application process. If you are thinking about applying to universities in Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, or the United Kingdom, please see the section on "Applying to Colleges Outside the US." If you are thinking about applying to universities in countries beyond this list, please talk to your college counselor.

TIMELINE

In order to ensure a thoughtful application process, the college counseling office recommends students follow this general timeline. This plan may vary with students' unique college plans, so make sure you discuss your personal timeline with your college counselor.

JUNIOR YEAR, SECOND SEMESTER

- Attend an individual meeting with your college counselor.
- Attend a family meeting with your college counselor once the individual meeting has occurred.
- Attend monthly college counseling workshops.
- Update the "Extracurricular Activities" in Cialfo (under the Profile tab).
- Take the SAT or ACT at least once.
- Secure at least one letter of recommendation from a junior year teacher in a core academic area. Many colleges will require two letters.
- After a teacher has verbally agreed to a letter of recommendation, fill out the appropriate "Teacher Rec Survey."
- Begin college research and keep a running list of colleges in Cialfo on the "Longlist."
- Check the Daily Bulletin and Cialfo for the list of colleges that will be visiting SAS.
- Take virtual tours of colleges and attend virtual information sessions.

SUMMER

- Research schools of interest.
- Visit campuses in person and/or virtually.
- Explore an interest, commitment, or hobby through a summer camp, course, a job, or other opportunities.
- Brainstorm responses to essay prompts; write first draft of Common Application personal essay.
- Complete the Counselor Recommendation questionnaire.
- Update the "Extracurricular Activities" in Cialfo (under the Profile tab).
- Prepare for fall testing (if needed).
- Relax.

SENIOR YEAR

August through November

- Meet with your college counselor.
- Update your list of colleges in Cialfo, moving colleges from the Longlist to Shortlist.
- Register for any additional standardized tests you would like to take in the fall of senior year.
- Attend the Lion City College Fair in September.
- Explore admissions websites for the schools you are considering and check their requirements.
- Read the SAS guides to the Common Application and UCAS.
- Create application accounts (such as the Common Application, UCAS, school-specific applications, etc.) and begin working on your applications.
- If you are using the Common Application, sync your Common Application and Cialfo accounts.
- If you will be applying to Oxford, Cambridge, or medical/dental/veterinary programs in the UK, submit your UCAS applications and supplements prior to October 15.
- Draft college essays and supplements.
- By mid-September, notify your counselor if you will be applying early decision (ED), early action (EA), or to other colleges with October 1 to November 15 deadlines.
- Submit Application Notification Forms (ANFs) by the appropriate deadlines. This is a Google Form that will be emailed to you in senior year.
- Check the Daily Bulletin and Cialfo for the list of colleges that will be visiting SAS.

- Keep your college counselor up to date on your college plans.
- Consult financial aid requirements and deadlines for each school to which you are considering applying. These deadlines may differ from college application deadlines.
- Complete applications.

December, January, and February:

- Continue to complete applications for all deadlines through February.
- Submit UCAS application to college counselor by December 1.
- If you are admitted EA or ED, let your college counselor know. If you are admitted ED, you must immediately cancel any applications you have submitted to other schools.
- If your application has been deferred by a college, please talk with your college counselor about next steps.
- If applying to South Korea, begin to gather appropriate documents in December.
- If applying to Singapore, begin the application process.

March and April:

- As you receive each decision, notify your college counselor.
- If you are placed on a waitlist, see your counselor to review your options.
- Once you've made your decision of which school to attend, notify other schools you will not be enrolling.
- Keep your grades up. Your offer of admission is contingent upon the successful completion of your senior year. If your grades drop, your offer of admission could be withdrawn.
- If you are applying to colleges in Australia, Japan, or South Korea, you will likely be completing your applications for those schools during this time period.
- If you will be entering Singapore's NS, attend the SAS NS luncheon.
- If you will be attending college in the US and are not a US passport holder, attend the SAS Visa workshop.

RESEARCHING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

It is important to start this process with self-reflection. Start by asking "why do I want to go to college" rather than "where." Your reason(s) for attending college will help guide your subsequent decision-making.

Deciding where to apply is a highly individual process. Your choices will be influenced by where you want to study, what you want to study, and your high school grades earned so far. Your decision will also be influenced by personal factors including everything from location to class size, from available activities to cost of attending, and it's completely normal to change your mind about your priorities often during this decision-making process! For almost every student, there are dozens of institutions where they would be happy and successful. This guide is one resource among many for you to utilize in the college search process.

WEB RESOURCES

In Cialfo, students can create a list of prospective colleges based on a variety of factors, look at graphs (called scattergrams) to predict their chances of admission, and follow the progress of submitted applications. If you are unsure how to access Cialfo, see your college counselor. The college counseling department's extensive website is full of information about the college application process. Spend time browsing pages and links. It contains nearly everything you could possibly want to know about selecting and applying to college.

The SAS College Counseling Facebook page is another way in which you can keep up with news about SAS college counseling and college admission. It is a private group, so you will need to go to Facebook, search for "SAS College Counseling" and request to join.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

The SAS high school library has an up-to-date collection of college handbooks. You will also find some of the more popular print references on the bookshelves in the back of the college counseling center—feel free to come sit on our couches and browse!

One of the best independent guides is the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Fiske is one of the few resources to utilize feedback from current students and faculty members. Additional useful print resources include *Colleges that Change Lives*, *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance*, the *Heap Guides (UK)*, and the *Good University Guide (UK)*.

Regarding rankings: each year, the *US News & World Report* and several other publications rate colleges. Each publication uses a different methodology to create its list, and each methodology is highly subjective. Please view rankings with a skeptical eye. There is no one correct way to rank colleges. Directly comparing a school such as UC Berkeley (with 29,000 students) to Tufts (with 6,000 students) is problematic. Yet that is exactly what these ranking guides attempt to do. And few guides (let alone rankings) take student feedback into account. Just because a for-profit publishing company has assigned a rank to a school does not mean that the ranking is in any way reliable. If you do use a ranking list, please use it only as a guide, not as a reliable reference.

VISITS, CAMPUS TOURS, AND INFORMATION SESSIONS

Each year SAS hosts dozens of college representatives. Many visit SAS on their own or in small groups; in addition we host the Lion City College Fair in September with representatives from over 100 universities in attendance. Take advantage of these visits. Even if you're not particularly interested in a school, the more information gathered about different types of schools, the easier it will be to make a thoughtful college list. These meetings also provide a chance for you to demonstrate interest in the college, which can be a factor in some colleges' decision-making processes. Talking with college representatives provides you with the opportunity to learn about a college and to interact with a member of the admissions staff. If you decide to apply, the chance to talk one-to-one might make a lasting impression, which the admissions representative might remember during the selection process. You will also have a contact name if you have a question about your application.

Perhaps the greatest impact the pandemic has had on the college admissions process is on visits. College admissions offices have expanded their virtual offerings to a robust array of tours and sessions, and we encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

In both in-person and virtual information sessions—either scheduled through the university website, or through a virtual college fair on Cialfo or other platforms—you may have the chance to ask questions of admissions representatives. Talking with them provides the opportunity to learn about a college and to interact with a member of the admissions staff. You will also have a contact name if you have a question about your application.

Uncertain what to ask of college representatives? Here are some ideas:

- Oftentimes, general questions like "Tell me about your college" may elicit general answers that are too vague to be useful. A good way to get specific answers is to be specific about yourself. For example, you might say: "I'm planning to study technical theater, and I also hope to play soccer in college. Can you tell me about theater and athletics at your school?"
- If you don't know what you want to study or get involved with at college, what else are you interested in knowing? Other specific questions can yield interesting information, such as: "Tell me about the political/social climate of the campus," "What is residence life like at your school?," or "How do students usually spend their time on and off campus?"
- Ask about scholarships or financial aid. It may be difficult to get in-depth answers in a short session, but this is a good time to start a conversation. There is always email if you have a follow-up question.

When possible, we encourage students to visit college campuses. This is an excellent way to help narrow your college choices. You may find a rural campus more appealing than an urban setting, or learn that you prefer small schools to larger ones. It is great to have an opportunity to assess both what you like about colleges generally, and then what you like about particular colleges specifically. Even if you are only able to walk or drive around a campus, get a sense of the surrounding community, and how you would travel to and from the college during breaks, you will learn valuable information. Even if you do not plan on applying to a college you happen to be near, visiting will help you get a better idea of what is important to you in a college.

If you are able, we recommend that you take a formal tour. Other aspects of a visit may include sitting in on information sessions with admissions staff, sitting in on a class, an admissions interview, even a meal on campus.

Whatever you do when you visit, make sure the admissions office knows that you're there!

CONSIDERING COST

For each of our families, the cost of college attendance plays a different role. If cost will play a factor in your college choices, there are several things to keep in mind when conducting your search. First, make sure that you understand how your financial need status will be viewed at different colleges. US universities typically have different funds available for citizens versus non-citizens. Additionally, public institutions in the US have different costs for state residents. If you are a citizen questioning whether you have residency in your "home" state, please review the state guidelines, as they vary greatly. For US citizens, we recommend that you get familiar with the federal financial aid process at studentaid.gov.

Second, for US universities, all institutions are required to include something called the Net Price Calculator on their website that estimates what a family may pay according to various criteria. This is always an estimate because many more factors determine financial assistance than what is considered on the calculator. Additionally, read the fine print: most are only for US students.

Third, the US is often the most expensive country for college tuition. If cost is a factor, it may be worth considering other countries as well. Some less expensive countries may include Australia, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UK. Lastly, it is worth thinking about scholarships. Many US universities offer merit-based scholarships without an application. Please note: these are not always available to non-US citizens. Most colleges consider you for such scholarships automatically based largely on your academic qualifications. Some colleges require an additional application for merit scholarships. Please check individual college websites—either on the admission or financial aid webpages—for more information.

An additional source of financial assistance may be private scholarships. Applying for these scholarships is a process that requires research and time. Two scholarship databases you may wish to utilize are scholarships.com and fastweb.com.

Making sure to consider the cost of an institution while building your list will ensure that you're not surprised by any deadlines or expectations.

If cost is a factor, make sure to address this with your college counselor.

ATHLETICS

Many students dream of playing a sport in college, and there are many opportunities for doing so. Most colleges offer not only varsity and junior varsity teams, but also club and intramural teams. This means that students can make thoughtful choices about how large a role athletics will play in their college experiences.

Some students hope to be recruited to play sports in college. The truth is that it is extremely difficult to become a recruited athlete. If you are interested in the recruitment process, please let your college counselor know right away.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has data on the likelihood that a student will be able to compete in athletics beyond high school. The NCAA also offers toolkits for Divisions I-III, information on scholarships, recruiting calendars, and frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you hope to play sports at a high level at a US college, make sure to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

ARTS

Arts opportunities abound at universities. For some, art will be an extracurricular activity; for others, it will be the focus of their college experience. Depending upon the college, students may do anything from joining a choral ensemble to taking a single glassblowing class to pursuing dance as a major.

Students who apply to be arts majors may have extra application requirements, either in the form of an audition or a visual/digital art portfolio. These are likely to require extra preparation and advance planning, and you should check with your dance, theater, music or art teacher to see if they can offer any assistance. Please also check schools' websites carefully for audition/portfolio requirements and due dates.

Some US colleges may accept additional demonstrations of artistic talent as part of an application even if you are not applying in the arts. Please talk with your college counselor if you are considering submitting any additional materials.

BUILDING YOUR LIST

There are likely tens, maybe even hundreds of colleges at which each SAS student would be happy. So while you may hear students talking about their "first choice" colleges, there is not one single, best college for a particular individual. You should be working to build a balanced list that includes a number of colleges, any of which you'd be happy to attend if admitted.

If you're not sure what major might interest you, that's not a problem in North America. The majority of students who begin college in the US do not declare a major. In the US, there is latitude to try different courses in the first year or two and choose a major later. Many students apply as "undecided," and wait until sophomore year to declare a major. Except for a few select majors—such as engineering and nursing—most students take a variety of courses during this time. Note that if you want to attend college outside of North America, you generally need to know your intended field of study.

You should consider whether any particular skills or interests—such as visual arts, athletics, theater, music, dance, or scientific research—might be a part of your college search. If you know that certain areas matter to you, please share these with your college counselor.

It is important to consider your chances of admissibility in creating your list. US universities think the best predictor of college success is high school performance. Therefore, grades earned and high school courses taken and the rigor of these courses are the most important factors considered. Please note that your grades in core academic courses are far more important than your cumulative GPA. Standardized test scores — if a college requires them — will also be an important consideration. Please review the "Admission Tests" section of this guide for more information regarding standardized test scores.

In building your list, Cialfo is invaluable in two ways. First, it allows you to maintain a list of schools as extensive as you choose in the section "Longlist." This is a quick way to keep track of colleges you've researched or considered. Additionally, you will be able to see in Cialfo whether your college counselor has assessed your chances of admission to a given school as "Likely," "Target," "Reach," or "Far Reach." We define these terms as follows:

- A “likely” school is a college for which you are an extremely strong candidate. Using the scattergrams, you will be able to find “likely” schools if you see that your grades are on the high end of what the college admits.
- A “target” school is one that generally admits students with profiles similar to yours. The scattergram will show your profile firmly in the admit range.
- “Reach” schools are colleges that normally admit students with a stronger profile than yours and/or are schools that are highly rejective. Your chance of being offered admission to a reach school is fairly low.
- A “far reach” school is more difficult still; we would not expect you to be admitted to a “far reach” school and do not recommend that you submit an application to these schools.

When you enter your senior year, you will need to finalize your list. While SAS does not have a limit as to the number of applications you can submit, we recommend that students apply to 8-12 schools. It is important that the list is well-researched and balanced. Every student should have two or more “likely” schools. Beyond that, there should be an appropriate mix of “likely,” “target,” and “reach” schools for your academic profile and preparedness.

ADMISSION TESTS (SAT, ACT, ETC.)

DO I NEED STANDARDIZED TESTING?

You will need to check the individual admissions website of each school to which you might consider applying to see whether they require any test scores. Standardized testing requirements range widely from school to school — and testing policies have changed in recent years, and continue to change, especially in the US.

We generally recommend that each SAS student take the SAT or ACT at least once in junior year. But many colleges in the US are now either “test optional,” which means that students can choose whether to submit test scores, or “test blind,” which means that the college will not consider SAT or ACT scores at all. If a school is “test optional,” then submitting a test score is truly optional — and a student should do so only if they feel that their test score is a good reflection of their academic abilities. We recommend consulting your college counselor if you are unsure about submitting standardized test scores.

SAT OR ACT

The SAT and ACT are used equally by US colleges. Students generally choose one or the other; no schools require both. In general, if you are happy with your PSAT score, then you should prepare for and take the SAT. If you feel your PSAT score is not a good indicator of your ability, then we would recommend that you take a diagnostic ACT and compare your scores.

Please note that SAS is not an ACT test center. You can find instructions on how to register for the ACT on their website, my.act.org. We remain an SAT test center and will send registration instructions for the SAT by email.

WHEN TO TAKE THE TEST

As the tests primarily measure your reading comprehension and math skills, the further into high school you are, the better you may do on the test. We, therefore, encourage students to take the test for the first time in December or March of their junior year, so they have the option of taking the test again later in the spring or early in senior year. If you are considering applying early action or early decision, you should complete all testing by October of senior year; for regular decision applications, you can retake the SAT as late as December of your senior year.

PREPARING FOR THE SAT OR ACT

Like you would for any test, you should prepare for the SAT or ACT. You can prepare using books or free websites (such as Khan Academy for the SAT). Please do not start test preparation more than eight to 10 weeks before the test itself; there is no data to show that earlier preparation leads to higher results.

While you may wish to enroll in a test preparation course, we recommend that you limit your time in such a program. Grades are by far the most important factor in college admissions, so we do not recommend students take lengthy coaching courses that distract from school work and extracurricular activities — especially when so many colleges are now test optional or test blind. Also, research shows that gains from coaching courses are minimal.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTS: TOEFL, IELTS, AND DUOLINGO

If English is not your native language, or you are from a country where English is not the official language, you may need to take an English language proficiency test. Unlike other standardized testing, a higher score is not necessarily better on these tests; you just need to meet the college's threshold score for English proficiency. So most students take these tests only once.

Our students are most likely to take the TOEFL for this purpose. Since SAS students listen, read, write, and speak in English every day at school, they usually perform well on this test. Check individual college websites to see if taking the TOEFL makes sense for you. Your TOEFL score is valid for only two years, so don't take it too early.

Be aware that if you plan to apply to a university in the UK, you may need to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) instead of the TOEFL. The IELTS is a UK English language test that has also gained some currency with North American admissions offices. As such, students may be at liberty to take the IELTS instead of the TOEFL if they wish. Test sites for the IELTS include the British Council and IDP.

Another language test that is increasingly popular globally is the Duolingo English Test. It is less expensive than the other exams, but not all colleges accept this test. Please research carefully to see if Duolingo is accepted at the schools to which you are applying.

AP EXAMINATIONS

If you are enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) class, you will likely sit for an AP exam at the end of that class. You may also choose to take an AP exam if you are taking certain Advanced Topic (AT) courses. AP exams are always tied to coursework in a particular class. AP exams are content-specific and typically take place on one assigned school day in May each year.

Most UK universities and some Singapore universities require at least three AP exam results or predicted scores in order for an applicant to be considered for admission. You will need to check the required scores for each of the schools and programs to which you are applying in these countries. US schools may take AP exam scores into consideration, but no US schools require AP scores as a part of the admissions process.

Note that AP exams completed in the senior year are not available until July, long after US admission decisions are made.

APPLYING TO SCHOOLS

Applying to colleges can be a complex process. The bulk of the responsibility for this process belongs to the student, but the college counseling team also has a part to play. The most significant role of our office is to provide students with good counsel and support. We also have a responsibility to submit student transcripts and supporting documents to colleges. For this reason, we require every student to submit an Application Notification Form (ANF) for each institution to which they are applying. It is important to follow the deadlines laid out by the college counseling office regarding submission of ANFs.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the US, colleges and universities set their own individual criteria for determining who gets admitted and how. Each one designs its own application, asks different questions, has a variety of deadlines, and sets its own policies. This can become rather complicated as you attempt to keep track of what each school wants. Even schools accepting the Common Application often ask for individualized supplements specific to their college.

Completing college applications may seem daunting, so you should be sure to give yourself plenty of time to fill them out thoughtfully. Admissions requirements and deadlines will vary from school to school and year to year, so you need to check carefully to ensure you have completed all the necessary requirements. Your college counselor is available to answer any questions that you might have at any point in the process.

Essays

Essay topics for colleges will typically be released in the spring or summer before your senior year, and they may change year-to-year. While specific directions vary from college to college, all will ask some variation of “tell us about yourself.”

No matter the prompt, the purpose of the essay is for the admissions officer to learn more about you. The person reading your essay should be able to draw some conclusions about how you think and process information, your ethics and/or value system, your sense of humor, and/or your intellectual curiosity.

SAS offers essay writing workshops in the spring of junior year, and your college counselor can help you brainstorm potential essay topics and give you feedback along the way.

Many schools will require one large essay and smaller, supplemental essays. Make sure you check the requirements so you are aware of the expectations of each college.

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges will give you the opportunity to report your extracurricular activities and interests. Concentrate on your important activities and list them in the order of what is most meaningful to you. Under the Profile tab in Cialfo is a section called Extra-curricular Activities that allows you to track your involvements including clubs, service, athletics, work experience, and other out-of-school activities. Keeping this section up to date can assist you with completing this section of your applications.

Sending your Official Test Scores

When you take an SAT, ACT, TOEFL, or IELTS, you are the person who receives and “owns” the scores. If colleges require you to send your scores directly and officially from the testing agency (e.g., College Board, ACT, etc.) you should send your scores at least two weeks before a college’s application deadline.

Many colleges allow students to self-report their test scores on their application. There is a significant cost savings to self-reporting scores.

It is recommended that you speak with your college counselor to determine if you should submit your test scores to schools that are test-optional.

Counselor Recommendation

Most applications require a counselor recommendation. This is the letter that will provide information about your academic performance, extracurricular activities, and your character and values. You must complete the Counselor Rec survey by the end of the summer. Your answers will help your college counselor as they write your letter of recommendation, so please be thorough in completing this survey.

Please note that letters of recommendation are confidential, and you will not be allowed to read any recommendations.

Teacher Recommendations

Teacher recommendation letters focus on academics; teachers address what they have seen in class and in your coursework. Most SAS students applying to US schools will request two teacher letters of recommendation.

Choosing whom to ask to write a recommendation is important and one of the things that will be covered during the junior workshops and discussed with your college counselor. It is best to ask teachers you have had in your junior year, because they have taught you recently. Letters should come from core subject teachers. It's not necessary to choose teachers in courses where you earned As. In fact, if you received a lower grade in a particular course, you may want to have this explained by the recommender.

You should plan on asking your teachers for a letter of recommendation in the April of junior year to give them plenty of advance notice. The college counselors will let you know when it is time to start asking.

After asking the teacher for a recommendation, you must respond to the Teacher Rec survey. Your answers will help your teacher to recall specifics about you, so please fill it out thoughtfully. Once you have finished the form, contact your college counselor.

Please note that letters of recommendation are confidential, and you will not be allowed to read any recommendations.

Additional Recommendations or Materials

If you think that you might benefit from submitting one (and no more than one) supplemental recommendation, an art portfolio, or any other supporting materials, you should have a conversation with your college counselor. Please do not send extra materials without consulting your college counselor; college admissions representatives may become frustrated with files that have too much extra material.

When to Apply

Colleges in the US have a wide range of application deadlines, the earliest of which is October 15 (for only a handful of schools). Most SAS students will begin submitting applications in late October or November of senior year. Deadlines on a student's list may vary widely, and students may be applying in the second semester of their senior year. It is important to consult deadlines for colleges early, and also to pay close attention to the SAS college counseling office's requirements for submitting ANFs.

Individual colleges typically offer multiple deadlines—usually early decision, early action, or priority, and later early decision II and regular decision. Other colleges may offer rolling admission. Please consult the glossary of terms and college application policies at the end of this guide for more information.

APPLYING TO COLLEGES OUTSIDE THE US

AUSTRALIA

There are nearly 40 universities in Australia. When you apply, you must know what you want to study; your courses will all focus on that area of study. Most courses of study in Australia are three years long. Because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, the school year begins in February. Many courses at most universities also have a mid- year intake in late June or early July.

If you want information about studying in Australia or have questions about the application process, you might want to contact International Development Program (IDP) Education Australia, an organization here in Singapore established by Australian universities and the government. IDP Education, <https://www.idp.com/singapore>, offers a range of services, from providing information about courses of study to assisting with visa applications.

Application Considerations

Most Australian universities only consider your SAT or ACT scores in making an admissions decision. A few Australian universities have programs that require two AP scores, and a couple may ask to review your high school transcript. You can look at each university's website for the program that you intend to study to see if you meet their standardized testing criteria for entry.

If your qualifications are not sufficient to gain admission, you may often enroll in a six- to twelve- month foundation year program at a school. Success in this program will usually earn you entry into that university.

Australian universities do not require letters of recommendation or personal essays for admission, though if you are applying to live in on-campus housing, you may need to submit supporting written materials from one or more character references.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Australia.

- **Non-Australian Passport Holders**—You will need to follow the application directions on each individual university's website. Links to websites for all of the Australian universities may be found on the Universities Australia website, <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au>.
- **Australian Passport Holders**—If you hold an Australian passport, you must apply through the tertiary admissions centre in each state.

When to Apply

For international students, Australian universities admit students on a rolling basis, so you may apply at any time within a year of your planned enrollment date. We generally recommend that you apply five or six months before you plan to start. This means that students who want to start at the beginning of the Australian school year, which is in February, usually apply in September following senior year. If you want to start university in Australia mid-year, in late June or July, you will usually apply in January or February. If you are planning to enroll at the start of Australia's school year, in February, it is worth thinking about how you will use your time in the eight months between graduation and the start of school. This is a great opportunity to have a gap year experience.

Residential halls (or "colleges" in Australia) generally offer places on a first come, first-served basis and have a separate application system. Therefore, you should submit this application as early as possible. While it may seem strange, you may need to apply to the residential college before you actually submit your university application. Be sure to contact each residential college directly to find out more details.

CANADA

There are almost 100 universities in Canada. In Canada, the term “college” generally refers to a two-year program or trade school, whereas “university” refers to a four-year institution. In Canada, while you may be asked to apply to a particular field of study in the application process, you generally have the ability to change your intended major within the first two years of a program.

Application Considerations

Most Canadian universities are mainly concerned with a student’s grades in core academic areas (especially English, math, science, and social studies) in the last two years of high school.

Some Canadian universities are moving to a more holistic review process for some programs. For a few universities and programs, students may be asked to write one or more short essays and/or provide a list of extracurricular activities. Letters of recommendation are rarely required.

How to Apply

The application process for Canadian universities is very straightforward. For most universities, it is simply a matter of completing the individual university’s application and then sending in the high school transcript. Ontario universities have an online application form, OUAC, that allows students to apply to multiple universities and programs in that province using one application form.

When to Apply

Canadian universities tend to have later deadlines than some US colleges and universities. The deadlines vary between early January until the end of March. A few of the most selective universities recommend that students apply in early- or mid-November; make sure to check deadlines on each school’s website and talk with your college counselor if you have questions about this.

JAPAN

Most universities in Japan are liberal arts based, meaning that students usually spend their first two years pursuing a broad range of courses and then spend the final two years studying courses related to their major. Japan has both private and public universities. Most universities in Japan teach all of their courses in Japanese, but some offer a few select programs entirely in English. The English-speaking programs are generally very small and highly competitive.

Application Considerations

Japanese schools read applications holistically, just as US schools do, though Japanese schools place a much greater emphasis on standardized test scores. The primary drivers in the Japanese application process are SAT or ACT scores (the SAT may be preferred over the ACT in some places) and your GPA. Every student will be required to submit a high school transcript.

You will also be asked to write an essay, usually about your fit with a particular school and intended major, and to submit recommendations. It is also possible that you will be invited to sit for an interview with a panel of professors.

SAS students who are Japanese citizens are usually classified as *kikokushijo*, or “returning students.” For most programs at most of the Japanese universities, these students must take centralized university examinations scheduled during the months of October, November, or December. You will need to read each school’s application to see whether that school will consider you a returning student in the application process.

Programs that are taught entirely in English generally do not require that you take any Japanese language exams. You may be asked to take the TOEFL, even if you are a native English speaker.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Japan. Some Japanese universities still operate on a paper-based application system, and it is important to read the detailed directions on each university's application website carefully as you complete your paperwork.

When to Apply

The universities in Japan do not have one single admissions deadline or intake date; some schools have multiple admissions rounds. Very generally, you can expect that intakes for Japanese-speaking programs will be in April (nearly a year after you graduate), and that intakes for English-speaking programs will be in September. You will need to check the admissions deadlines of each university individually. Some SAS students begin applying to schools in Japan as early as December or January of senior year, but most applications will be due in the spring or early summer.

If you are applying to universities in Japan, please see the college counseling secretary for a supplementary request form; you must complete one for each school to which you are applying.

SINGAPORE

There are many university options in Singapore. All courses are taught in English. The traditional public universities are extremely competitive, and you must know what you intend to study when you apply. Other options here in Singapore are the five public polytechnics, several foreign universities, and art and design schools. Most degree-granting programs in Singapore take three years to complete.

Application Considerations

Public universities in Singapore want to see very high test scores. They will require SATs or ACTs and may also require AP exam scores. Application requirements at Singapore universities vary from school to school; please check individual university websites to see what you will need for your intended course of study.

How to Apply

There is no one centralized application system in Singapore. You will need to check each school's individual website and follow the instructions on how to apply.

When to Apply

Each school in Singapore has its own application deadlines. Make sure to check the websites carefully for these deadlines (and pay careful attention to start dates to make sure that you are applying for the intake period that you want). You are most likely to apply at some point between December and February of senior year for the July/August intake period or at the end of senior year for the January/February intake.

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has a wide range of universities, most of which offer their programs only in Korean. Currently, there are four private international universities and one public university that offer all of their degree granting courses in English.

There are three different application tracks for Korean nationals:

- **Domestic**—students who have never left South Korea or who have studied outside of South Korea for fewer than three years.
- **Overseas: "3 Years"**—students who have studied outside of South Korea for more than three years, but fewer than 12.
- **Overseas: "12 Years"**—students who have studied outside of South Korea for all twelve years of school.

In general, it is easiest to apply as a 12-Year student, because the Korean government places a quota on admission rates for Domestic and 3-Year students.

You may apply as an international student if you do not hold a Korean passport and you do not have Korean parentage. Please check university websites for specific details.

Application Considerations

Many schools in South Korea are moving toward a holistic review process, meaning that they will review high school transcripts, test scores, a list of extracurricular activities, recognized accomplishments, awards, letters of recommendation, and interviews as part of the admission process. You may also be asked to write several essays.

As with admission to several other countries, academic performance and test scores play a significant role in the admission decision.

If you are applying to a Korean-speaking program, you may be required to sit for the TOPIK, a Korean language test. International students applying to English-speaking programs may be asked to sit for an English-language test (IELTS or TOEFL).

How to Apply

Each university in South Korea has its own application process. Korean schools sometimes require an enormous amount of paperwork—even if you are using an online application system. Each university will provide a list of documents they will need for the course to which you are applying in their application guide. Sometimes this includes transcripts and report cards from every school you have attended. The process is complicated, and you must follow directions carefully. SAS will only send required documents directly to the universities.

You usually do not need to get any documents stamped at the embassy as part of the admissions process. You may, however, need to have documents stamped at the embassy when you plan to matriculate.

When to Apply

The timeline of applications in South Korea varies from school to school and from year to year. Please check deadlines carefully. In general, if you are applying to a university for entry into the first semester (which will usually start in March), you will apply sometime in June or July. Korean citizens may only matriculate in spring. Some students may choose to apply for a second semester intake; this semester will usually start in August or September.

Most students may apply to Korean universities in two separate rounds. This means that if you are not admitted to a university in the first round, you may be eligible to apply in the second round.

If you are applying to universities in South Korea, please see the college counseling secretary for a supplementary request form; you must complete one for each school to which you are applying. Since our office will need to handle a great deal of paperwork for the Korean schools, we ask that you give our office at least a month's notice before you apply. To ensure that you meet that deadline, it is encouraged that you begin gathering the documents you need far ahead of the application deadline.

UNITED KINGDOM

The UK is home to over 125 different universities. Universities in the UK usually ask that students choose, apply to, and then focus on a single area of study (though you may also have the chance to combine two areas of study, such as French and History or Business and International Relations). If you are someone who is certain of the subject you want to study in college, a UK university could be a good choice for you. If you are undecided about your major, be aware that in order to apply to the UK, you will have to make a decision about what you will study. Note that transferring to a different subject will usually entail starting your degree over from the beginning.

Most degree programs in the UK take three years to complete; the notable exception to this is Scotland, where many degree programs are four years long.

Application Considerations

The primary factor that UK universities use in making admissions decisions will be your AP exam scores. Most UK universities are looking for a minimum of three specific AP scores in areas related to your intended area of study. You can go to each university's website, look up the program in which you are interested, and see whether you have qualifying AP scores. Fortunately, UK universities are very transparent in their requirements, so the results are more predictable than the US. But note that qualifying test scores do not guarantee an offer of admission for the most selective universities.

Some UK schools may also consider SAT or ACT scores. You are required to submit all of your test scores if you are applying using the UCAS, a centralized application system. A few UK universities may request and review your high school transcript.

Students without qualifying test scores can often apply to a one-year foundation course in order to qualify later for entry to a degree program at a UK university.

Universities in the UK will ask you to write a personal statement about your interest in and commitment to your intended course of study. This may involve writing about relevant high school courses you have taken, internships or other work experiences, material you have watched or read, and/or pursuits you have engaged in outside of the classroom.

Some courses of study may require you to take specialized admissions tests as part of the application process (e.g., the LNAT for law or the UCAT for medicine). Please look carefully at the requirements of each of the programs to which you are applying. Some universities may also require that you take the IELTS, an English language test. You may contact The British Council about registering for these tests.

How to Apply

Most UK universities use a nationwide system called the UCAS for their applications. UCAS is an online portal where you can search for programs and also apply to universities. UCAS only allows students to apply to a maximum of five programmes, or courses, so students must select carefully. We will send all students interested in UK schools an extensive document on how to complete the UCAS at the beginning of senior year.

Check to see whether the UK universities to which you may be interested in applying use the UCAS. If they do not, you will need to follow each individual school's application requirements, which can be found on their websites.

When to Apply

The UCAS has a deadline of January 25 for most schools; however, the deadline for Cambridge and Oxford and courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine is October 15. We require that all UCAS applications be submitted prior to the deadline to ensure that the college counselors have time to

review and submit applications in a timely manner. The deadline for student submission of UCAS will be shared at the start of the fall semester.

SINGAPORE NATIONAL SERVICE

If you are a male Singaporean citizen or Permanent Resident, you must complete National Service (NS) before beginning university. Regardless of whether you plan to apply to a few universities during your senior year and defer your start date or if you plan to wait and apply to college while in NS, you must request your teacher recommendations while in high school.

When to Apply

Young men in NS have the option of an extended college application timeline. You might submit applications:

- In your senior year; or
- In your first year of NS; or
- In your second year of NS; or
- In both senior year and while you are in NS.

Most students headed for NS will apply to just one or two schools in their senior year and then, if necessary, will apply to the bulk of their colleges during the second year of NS. You do have the option of applying during your first year of NS (or in the fall just before you enter), but this is less common.

You will want to have conversations with your parents and your college counselor before you decide whether to apply to college during your senior year or wait until after graduation (or some combination thereof).

Applying during senior year will keep you in step with your classmates and will—if you are admitted—provide you with more immediate gratification. Waiting to apply to college after enlistment in NS will give you all of grade 12 to focus on getting great grades, improving your scores on the SAT/ACT and AP, and giving more thought to career and college pathways. US colleges also may have a preference for young men who apply during NS, because they are often more mature and thoughtful applicants.

Please note that, if you apply to college in your senior year and are admitted, you will have to ask the school for a two-year deferral. All universities in Singapore permit two-year deferrals, and most (but not all) US colleges do as well. UK and Canadian universities, on the other hand, rarely allow two-year deferrals, so you should plan to apply to universities in those countries only as your time in NS is drawing to a close.

If you are applying in your senior year, please make sure before you apply that the institution(s) to which you are submitting an application will allow you to request a two-year deferral should you decide to attend. When you make an enrollment deposit, you will again need to confirm with that university that you are requesting that your space be held for two years. You should only hold a space at a university for two years if you are confident you will ultimately matriculate to that institution.

During your NS service, the SAS college counselors will continue to assist you and your family with any questions that might arise. If necessary, we will support you as you finalize your college list, write your essays, and complete and submit your applications during NS. We will be here to meet with you and to help with the submission of transcripts, teacher/counselor recommendations, and other supporting materials.

NS TIMELINE: JUNIOR YEAR

Requirements:

- Meet with your college counselor, first individually and then with your family, to discuss your college application plan, process, and timeline.
- Ensure that all enlistment requirements/tasks associated with NS are completed in a timely manner.
- Attend all sessions mandated for the junior class (e.g., essay writing workshop).
- If you are planning to apply to college in senior year, complete all tasks assigned to juniors (e.g., securing teacher recommendations; taking SAT/ACT at least once).
- If you are not applying to college in senior year, secure at least one teacher letter of recommendation.

Recommendations:

- Develop a standardized testing plan with your counselor.
- Attend luncheon for NS-bound juniors and seniors at SAS.
- Register to attend an Open House visit to the Basic Military Training Centre to learn what the basic training phase of NS will be like.

NS TIMELINE: SENIOR YEAR

Requirements:

- Meet with your college counselor at the start of the year to either (1) begin finalizing your college list and work on essays, or (2) if you are not applying to college as a senior, confirm a timeline that will suit your specific needs.
- Ensure that all enlistment requirements/tasks associated with NS enlistment are completed in a timely manner.
- Complete your standardized testing by graduation (in rare cases, students may plan to take some type of test while completing NS, but this can pose problems based on the scheduling demands of being in the field and the possibility that you may start to lose math and other academic skills when you are in NS).
- If you need a second teacher letter of recommendation, secure that letter before January.

Recommendations:

- Complete a Common Application (or a UCAS application for the UK) in order to familiarize yourself with the types of essays and other information that will be required of you at the time of application.
- Attend luncheon for NS-bound juniors and seniors with NS alumni hosted at SAS.

GAP YEAR

Even if you are certain that college is in your future, a gap year can be a wonderful way to explore new experiences or new parts of the world. For most students, there is little downside to a productive gap year. This may involve working a full-time job, volunteering for an organization, or pursuing independent projects. A gap year may allow you to become more independent, gain real-world experience, and oftentimes, focus on what you want to achieve in college.

If you plan to take a year off, we still recommend that you take part in the bulk of the application process during your senior year. Take the required tests, request recommendations, and explore college choices while you are a senior here at SAS. If you apply and are admitted, at most colleges you can then defer the starting date for a year.

Most US colleges will allow deferment if you write a letter of explanation and give them proper notice (usually by May 1).

AFTER YOU APPLY

Once you apply, be certain that you regularly check your email and access your college admission portals. We suggest that you check your status with each college, making sure they have received and processed everything. Also, please allow your colleges a couple of weeks to update your information since they are processing documents simultaneously for thousands of applicants.

Once the college has reviewed your application, they will notify you about their decision. Students applying to colleges with rolling admissions usually receive notification six to eight weeks from the time they have a complete application. Students applying early decision or early action will typically hear by mid-December. Students applying regular decision will typically hear no later than April 1.

Most students receive one of two decisions from their colleges: offers of admission or denials. But a few students may find themselves deferred or waitlisted.

Defer

Students who apply early decision or early action are sometimes deferred, which means the college will wait until the regular decision cycle to decide whether or not to admit you. Deferrals can be due to the need to see your first semester grades from senior year, or because the admissions office is unsure of the strength of the rest of the applicants. If you are deferred, you should talk with your college counselor about how to proceed.

Waitlist

One potential admission outcome is an offer of a place on a waitlist, which a college may use to fill its incoming class should space remain after the enrollment reply date has passed.

If you have been offered a spot on a college's waitlist and you wish to accept it, please follow the institution's instructions to secure your place. Additionally, notify your college counselor, and they will ensure that your final high school transcript is sent to that institution for consideration for any spots that may need to be filled.

As waitlist offers may not be made or may not come until well into the summer, students remaining active on waitlists should accept an offer of admission from another school where they would be happy to attend, and follow all of the next steps to enrollment laid out by that institution.

Reply Date

You usually have until early May to notify a university about your decision to attend. Please check each school's reply date carefully to ensure that you do not miss a commitment deadline.

GLOSSARY TERMS

There are many terms and abbreviations that are commonly used during the college research and application process. It is important that you understand what all these terms and abbreviations mean.

ADMISSION TERMS

Common Application—A single application accepted by over 900 colleges and universities, mostly in the US. Some of the schools that accept the Common App also require a school-specific supplement. The application and all instructions are available at www.commonapp.org.

Early Action (EA)—This is one way for an applicant to apply early to and to receive early notification from a college. EA application deadlines are usually November 1 or November 15, and a decision/notification is usually made prior to January 1, but some may be released in January. If admitted, the decision is non-binding. In most cases, a student may apply to more than one college EA. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Defer.”

Early Decision (ED)—This is another option for early application to and notification from a college. ED deadlines are usually November 1, and a decision/notification is usually made prior to December 23. If admitted, the decision is binding (see our policies on the next page). A student may only apply to only one college ED. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Defer.”

Early Decision II (ED II)—The same policies as ED, but the deadlines fall later in the academic year. Typically, ED II deadlines are January 1 or January 15. Students are typically notified mid-February.

Regular Decision (RD)—Candidates are required to submit their applications by a specific deadline (usually between January 1 and February 1) and are notified of decisions in the spring. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Waitlist.”

Rolling Admission—Institutions review and make decisions on applications as application files are complete. Spaces are often awarded to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis. Typically, when applying to a college with rolling admission, the earlier in the academic year you apply, the better. Decisions could be “Admit,” “Deny,” or “Waitlist.”

Restrictive Early Action (REA)—The same non-binding policy as early action, but college policy dictates that generally a student may not apply to any other colleges EA or ED. Colleges and universities may offer specific conditions under which a student may apply and these will vary from school to school. It is the student’s responsibility to check the policies of each school.

UCAS Application—A single application accepted by universities in the UK. You can apply to up to five courses of study using this application. The college counseling team sends out a “buzzword” to all students to connect their personal account to the SAS UCAS Centre in order to later be approved. UCAS requires you to upload all test score results from your completed exams (SAT, ACT, AP’s) and teachers provide a confidential predicted AP exam score for twelfth grade AP exams. Please note that the college counseling office has set deadlines for your submission of UCAS since your designated college counselor has to “approve” your qualifications and oversee the final submission.

Waitlist—When colleges have more students they want to admit than they have spaces for in the incoming class, they may choose to place some students on a waitlist. If admitted students decline their admission offer, the colleges may go to their waitlist to fill open spots in the class. Students should not expect to hear about waitlist offers until late April or later.

GENERAL TERMS

College—In the US, an institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training. A college generally does not offer any graduate programs, so all students will be preparing for four-year bachelor’s degrees.

Liberal Arts and Sciences—The academic course of instruction at a college intended to provide critical thinking and reasoning skills and general knowledge comprising the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, as opposed to professional or technical subjects.

Major—A subject or field of study chosen by a student to represent his or her principal interest and upon which a large share of his or her efforts are concentrated. Also called “course” or “programme” in some countries.

University— In the US, an institution of learning, having both undergraduate programs and a program of graduate studies. A university often also has several professional schools, such as theology, law, medicine, and engineering.

COLLEGE APPLICATION POLICIES

INTEGRITY IN COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

The Singapore American School core values of compassion, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect are also the core expectations for college applications. SAS has positive relationships with many universities around the world. For these trusting relationships to continue, students must agree to abide by these core values along with the agreements listed below.

EARLY DECISION OBLIGATIONS

If you choose to apply to a binding early decision (ED) college or university, you are indicating that this institution is your first choice for further study for all universities worldwide. No matter where else you may have applied, whether in the US or other countries, if you are admitted ED, you must immediately withdraw all other applications and enroll at your ED institution. SAS will not process additional requests for transcripts.

APPLICATION NOTIFICATION FORMS

When SAS students apply to college, we require that they let us know about their plans using Application Notification Forms (ANFs). We will only support applications to schools for which students have submitted ANFs following the deadlines outlined on the ANF form.

WAIVER OF RIGHT TO VIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

SAS teacher and college counselor recommendation letters advocate for the student truthfully and are always confidential. Since confidential recommendations are given significant weight by admission officers, it is helpful to your admission chances to agree, when asked, to waive your right to view your application materials. It is required of all SAS students.

DISCIPLINARY REPORTING POLICY

SAS will disclose any disciplinary infraction resulting in an out-of-school suspension when asked about disciplinary infractions by colleges.

SAS COLLEGE COUNSELING PHILOSOPHY

Each student's college counseling process is unique. The college counselors meet students where they are: we respect each student's individual perspectives, needs, and aspirations, and we recognize that each student and their family will approach this from their own unique set of circumstances. We strive to ensure that every family receives the level of service that is appropriate to their needs. Extraordinary care at SAS means that the college counseling office emphasizes each of the four following pillars:

Responsibility

At SAS, students are at the center of the college counseling process. We ask students to take charge as they reflect on their desires and aspirations, thoroughly consider their options, and then engage in an

application process that will allow them to find a great college fit.

Education

Every student should have the opportunity to grow and learn as part of the college process. Each student should develop real-world skills such as self-reflection, decision-making, task completion, deadline adherence, and resilience in the face of unknowns. Most students will also learn skills involving exploration, analysis and synthesis, communication, and personal growth. We encourage students to find their own voice in the application process and to use that voice honestly and effectively.

Support

The college counselors are here to support students and their families — our focus is on building and fostering those relationships. We will ask questions, provide information, encourage, and offer counsel and suggestions where appropriate. We endeavor to do all of this enthusiastically and with respect for each student's decision-making process. Our goal is to encourage students to grow and persevere while also helping them to find joy throughout their journeys.

Empowerment

Students should be empowered to make decisions about the course of their individual college application journeys. We believe in putting students at the center of this process, especially given that pastoral care and personalizing learning are at the heart of the SAS mission. Our learning goals suggest that we must strike a careful balance: allowing students to take individual risks as they forge their own paths while providing them with guidance and support along the way.



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