

UNIVERSITY

# COUNSELLING

HANDBOOK

for Grade 11 and 12 students



World  
Academy



**YOUR  
JOURNEY  
STARTS  
HERE**







# YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE

XCL World Academy helps students build upon their positive learning experiences to gain admission into colleges and universities worldwide. Applying to colleges and universities is an exciting and revealing experience, allowing students to explore who they are, their values and future aspirations. It can also be a complicated, demanding and time-consuming process.

We aim to support you and your family on this exciting journey and identify courses that fit with your academic, personal and career aspirations for the purposes of university selection. Starting this process early ensures that you will already have gathered a wealth of information to make a fully informed positive choice when decisions need to be made.

Our team has developed this handbook to provide you and your family with additional information in preparation for this exciting journey ahead!

Good luck!

Sincerely,

**Leslie M. Tam**

Director, University & Careers Guidance

# Where our STUDENTS go

XCL World Academy students have been accepted to:







# Our MISSION

XCL World Academy's University & Careers Guidance Department provides a personalised career and university counselling programme to empower students with lifelong skills and knowledge and help them achieve their career and university aspirations.



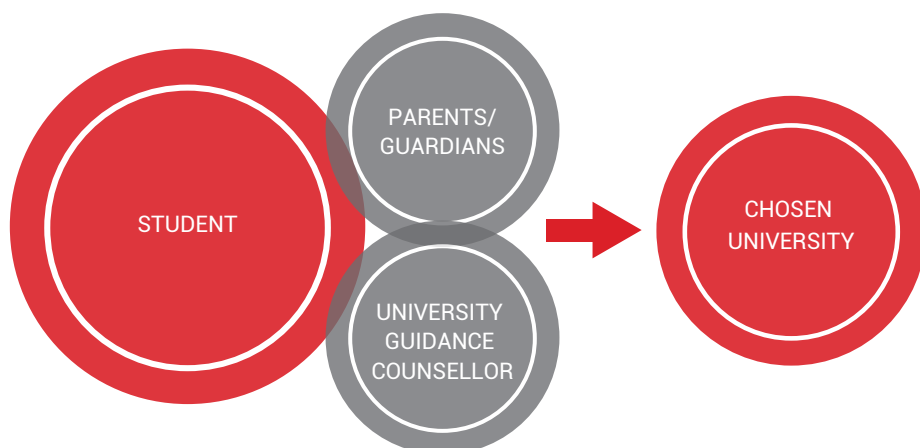


# Learning outcomes

| As IB learners, we strive to be:   | As IB graduates, we strive to:   |
|--|--|
| <b>Inquirers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research.</li> <li>● We know how to learn independently and with others.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I know the skills needed to investigate the world of work related to my interests.</li> <li>● I make educated choices regarding my future career pathway.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Knowledgeable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines.</li> <li>● We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed after high school.</li> <li>● I understand my personal qualities and how they are related to my future education and career choices.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Thinkers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems.</li> <li>● We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I think critically about the ways universities present information about their campus.</li> <li>● I go to the source for accurate information.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Communicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and many ways.</li> <li>● We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I know how to present myself professionally, both verbally and in writing.</li> <li>● I present myself independently and formally to university representatives and admissions officers.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Principled</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We act with integrity and honesty, a strong sense of fairness and justice, and respect for people's dignity and rights.</li> <li>● We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I act with integrity when presenting my achievements on applications.</li> <li>● I follow all application guidelines (Early Decision Agreements, enrollment obligations, etc.)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Open-minded</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories and the values and traditions of others.</li> <li>● We seek and evaluate a range of points of view and are willing to grow from the experience.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I understand the approaches and values of various higher education systems.</li> <li>● I understand that the idea of the "best" university differs according to each person's situation and culture.</li> </ul>                                     |
| <b>Caring</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We show empathy, compassion and respect.</li> <li>● We commit to service and act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and the world around us.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I celebrate others' achievements.</li> <li>● I respect the time and effort that family, school and teachers place into my application.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Risk-taker &amp; courageous</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination.</li> <li>● We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I take on appropriate challenges.</li> <li>● I learn strategies to build resilience when faced with rejections.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Balanced</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We understand the importance of balancing various aspects of our lives (intellectual, physical and emotional) to achieve well-being for ourselves and others.</li> <li>● We recognise our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I keep the application process in perspective.</li> <li>● I develop strategies to manage my time wisely.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Reflective</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses to support our learning and personal development.</li> <li>● We will think about and set appropriate targets for ourselves.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I know my learning styles, personal strengths, career interests and how they will help me in the future.</li> <li>● I understand that universities are not a final destination but a learning experience to assist me on a long journey.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Independent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We thoughtfully consider the world and our ideas and experience.</li> <li>● We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses to support our learning and personal development.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I do my university research and will reach out to university admissions officers on my own.</li> <li>● I complete my university applications on my own.</li> </ul>  |

# Roles and responsibilities in the university application process

The process of selecting and applying for university places involves three key parties:



The Student initiates this process and plays the lead role, with the Parents/Guardians and University Guidance Counsellor playing supporting roles.

Below are some of the most important roles and expectations for each of these parties:

| Student  | Parent/Guardian   | University Guidance Counsellor   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behave with honesty and integrity. Above all, recognise that the university selection and application process is entirely your responsibility.</li> <li>Own the process! Initiate all contact with universities and complete all applications by yourself.</li> <li>Communicate with your parents throughout the process. You will need their support for years to come.</li> <li>Be proactive in meeting all school and university deadlines.</li> <li>Check school email and Cialfo regularly to ensure that they are updated on the latest requirements and deadlines.</li> <li>Ensure that the Secondary Years Office has final copies of your transcripts from previous high schools that you have attended in the past.</li> <li>Follow all guidelines for requesting letters of recommendation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let your teenager take the lead. This should be a learning process that helps them develop the independence needed for life beyond school.</li> <li>Discuss the cost of education with your teenager at the beginning of the process.</li> <li>Be realistic in terms of aspirations for your teenagers. Remember that your hopes for them may not match their dreams and ambitions.</li> <li>Be aware of deadlines, both school (internal) and university (external). Assist your teenagers in meeting these by giving support and the time needed, especially when planning family events, such as holidays.</li> <li>Acknowledge and help meet the requirement that your teenager should research and complete the college application process for themselves. Offer support but do not do any work on their behalf, such as contacting universities!</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with students, parents and guardians individually and in groups to inform families about the university application landscape.</li> <li>Oversee and advise on the university application process.</li> <li>Submit applications and required paperwork to colleges and universities.</li> <li>Represent both individual students and XCL World Academy to universities around the world.</li> <li>Arrange visits by representatives from universities, summer schools and other relevant parties (e.g., employers).</li> <li>Monitor worldwide university application trends and changes in procedures.</li> <li>Manage the teacher recommendation letter process. Write recommendation letters wherever required.</li> <li>Assist XCL World Academy staff in the recommendation letter writing process through timely training and professional development sessions.</li> </ul> |



# College/university application systems

Applying to college/university can be overwhelming, especially if you want to submit applications to several colleges/universities. Fortunately, hundreds of them use centralised application systems to allow students to input their personal information, test scores and essays just once and send that information to many different schools. Although not all institutions accept these centralised applications, the process can be far less stressful and time-consuming if you apply to schools that do. Let's look at the different types of college applications systems you might be using in the future.

## Cialfo

[Cialfo](#) aggregates application deadlines, requirements, essay prompts and acceptance rates. It allows timely submission of application documents and quick communication on students' application status.

The platform allows students to:

- Communicate information on college/university visits, workshops, deadlines, etc;
- Research college/university and career options;
- Prepare an action plan with key goals and ambitions;
- Request, track and submit recommendation letters;
- List college/university choices;
- Link the system with the Common App to facilitate US college/university applications;
- Write a resume/curriculum vitae;
- Apply directly to particular institutions (via Direct Apply).

Students will receive individual login details to Cialfo via email. Our team will ensure that all students learn how to use the system.

## Common Application (Common App)

The [Common App](#) is the most widely used application system that serves approximately 900 colleges and universities worldwide, including Ivy League schools and top public and private institutions.

This application portal allows students will apply to the majority of their US universities. It is of utmost importance that students make sure their Common App account is linked with their Cialfo account; otherwise, we won't be able to send documents to universities.

Through the Common App, students can share their personal information, test scores, extra-curricular activities, a Common App essay and supplemental essays (if a university requires it).

## Coalition App

The [Coalition Application](#) is another platform for US university applications similar to the Common App. Some colleges/universities are exclusively on the Coalition App (i.e., University of Washington) so make sure that you check carefully.

## University of California application (The UC App)

[The UC App](#) has been designed for The University of California. You can apply to Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, UCLA, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz campus via one centralised app. Remember that the UC Application closes on 30 November every year.

## Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

[UCAS](#) is the centralised application website for applying to universities in the UK. A student may apply to a maximum of five universities via this system. The website is easy to navigate and contains all of the information needed to complete your application to the UK. This platform also provides a detailed overview of various courses and entry requirements.

Students can easily record their details, past academic qualifications, course/university selections and upload their personal statement. Your University Guidance Counsellor will add the information about your anticipated grades and upload a letter of recommendation.

## Studielink

[Studielink](#) is a single point of access for students to manage higher education enrolment data in the Netherlands. It allows students to apply through one single platform rather than to every college/university individually.

## Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC)

[OUAC](#) is the online application portal for most colleges/universities in Ontario, Canada. You may apply to as many Ontario colleges/universities as you wish; however, you are limited to a maximum of three programme choices at any one college/university (including affiliates). Some colleges/universities may further limit the number of programmes you may apply to. Make sure that you carefully read the details and instructions offered by each institution.

# Setting your goals and priorities right

## Grade 11

In Grade 11, you should be focused on achieving the best possible grades in your IB Diploma courses, the IB Career-related study and

the core elements of either programme. Both Grade 11 and 12 will be academically challenging, and you must get an excellent start to your high school studies.

Please be mindful that the grades you score in Grade 11 will be used to calculate your University Predicted Grades for your university applications. University Predicted Grades are the single most crucial factor for UK universities considering offering you a place. These grades form an essential part of your application for the US, Canada, and many other countries. The US and Canada will also look at your academic transcript (coursework and grades from Grades 9-12). Your Grade 11 grades will be a key focus for universities.

To make the most informed and sensible choices, you should:

- Meet with your University Guidance Counsellor regularly;
- Create a testing plan for Grade 11 and Grade 12 (LNAT, BMAT/UKCAT, SAT, TOEFL, etc.);
- Make sure you regularly check the University Visits calendar so you can plan to attend sessions with university admissions officers;
- Be open-minded! You may not even have considered the country or course best suited to you, but do not rule out anything at this point;
- Look at your academic subject grades to provide you with realistic feedback. For example, if you are scoring 3s and 4s in HL Physics, your goal of pursuing engineering at the undergraduate/university level may not be realistic;
- Attend all workshops and seminars on completing applications and writing personal statements, college essays, etc;
- **If you are not pursuing the full IB Diploma**, you may have additional testing requirements such as the SAT/ACT. If you are applying to the United States, regardless of which academic programme you pursue (XCL World Academy High School Diploma or the IB Diploma), you may be required to take additional testing such as the SAT/ACT. Always check the university websites for the most updated information (especially during COVID, as many testing policies have changed!);
- Use the College Search function on Cialfo to research possible university choices;
- Use UCAS for your research into UK universities;
- Use the 'Long list' and 'Short list' tabs on Cialfo to record potential choices. Update them regularly;
- Ensure that you are actively involved in CAS and other extra-curricular activities that will enhance your application.

## Grade 12

Grade 12 students should aim to maintain the best possible academic results and focus on university applications.

**The majority of applications should be completed during the first Semester. Regardless of the actual college/university deadline, you should aim to complete this process before the December/January break. Remember to research application deadlines and additional tests that may be required for your application:**

- All applications to Oxford, Cambridge, all Medical, Dental and Veterinary courses must be submitted by mid-October;
- Early Decision and Early Action applications to the United States are typically due on 1st or 15th November;
- Canadian applications are generally in Semester 2 except for the University of Toronto, University of British Columbia and McGill;
- Application deadlines for colleges/universities in Japan, Singapore, The Netherlands and Hong Kong are typically from January - March but may differ depending on the institution;
- Most Australian universities expect applicants to submit an application after receiving their IB results (July onwards).

Some colleges, universities and courses require students to take additional qualifications: LNAT (Law for the UK), BMAT/UKCAT (Medicine for the UK), TOEFL or IELTS (English language proficiency), SAT/ACT (for the US), etc. It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the deadlines, requirements and to ensure that the application and test scores are submitted on time.

You will have the opportunity to meet with your University Guidance Counsellor regularly. Remember to keep open conversations about your plans and inform our team of any changes in your goals. To make the most informed and sensible choices, you should:

- Meet your University Guidance Counsellor regularly and keep them up to date;
- Complete all application forms and required written work well in advance of deadlines so that your University Guidance;
- Counsellor can review and give feedback;
- Be aware of all the entry requirements for the courses, colleges and universities you are applying for, including any additional tests;
- Make sure you fulfil all requirements;
- Check your email accounts regularly, including your junk folder, not to miss any important information from the colleges/universities you are applying to;





- Attend college/university fairs and school visits to meet Admission Officers from colleges/universities on your application list;
- Ensure that your data on Cialfo is up to date;
- Make sure that you are on top of your application process and completing all the necessary work yourself;
- Keep your University Guidance Counsellor informed of any offers you receive and talk to them before you make any final decision about which college to attend;
- Once you have completed your application, you will receive conditional offers (mainly from the UK), unconditional offers (US, Canada, Australia, etc.) or rejections;
- Keep your Cialfo page updated, and your University Guidance Counsellor informed each time you hear from a university.

## Which college/university is right for you?

Choosing where to study and which college/university you should go to is one of the most important decisions you will make. There are many things to consider. To begin with, let's understand the basic principles of shortlisting universities:



Be realistic - know your strengths and weaknesses (in your academics, extra-curricular activities, etc.), and play to your strengths.



Be smart - maximise your admissions chances by ensuring that you have a balanced list of reach, target and safe institutions.



Be financially savvy - each university application does come with a fee, so it is important to have a balanced list rather than applying to every university in the world!



Do not shortlist universities based on their selectivity (acceptance rate) or reputation! Make sure you have thoroughly researched the institution yourself and have good reasons for applying.



Do not take all the information you get at face value. Be sceptical. Verify the data you find online.

Some key questions to consider as a starting point:

- Is there a particular career you would like to pursue? If you intend to pursue a professional degree (law, medicine/veterinary science, pharmacy), do you want to do this as an undergraduate (first) degree? (Some countries like the US and Canada do not offer professional degrees at the undergraduate level)
- What subjects do you enjoy at school?
- What are your academic strengths?
- Are you studying the full IB Diploma, IB Career-related Programme or IB Diploma Courses?
- How are you performing academically? What is your score likely to be in your IB Diploma/Career-related Programme/Courses subjects?
- Are there any personal or family circumstances that may influence your choice?
- Would you like to study in a campus environment (living and studying on the college/university premises) or prefer a city/commuter style and live outside the college/university premises?
- Are you planning on taking a single subject degree, a joint honours degree, a double degree, or a US-style liberal arts degree where you take a range of subjects with a major in one or more subjects of particular interest to you?
- Would you do better in a small college/university (500 – 1,500 students) or a larger institution (10,000+)?
- Do you envisage yourself going back to your home country, or do you see yourself studying elsewhere?
- Consider the cost. The range of tuition and accommodation fees can vary by a lot.
- How long are you planning to study? Most European Bachelor's Degrees are completed in three years. Most US and Canadian degrees would take four years to complete. Other countries vary between three to four years.
- Find out whether you will have the opportunity to remain in the country after your studies and find work opportunities.
- Look at the percentage of international students accepted into the course you are looking at. For example, Medicine in the UK is highly subsidised by the UK Government and thus accepts very few international students.
- Will you have the opportunity to study or gain work experience overseas as part of your degree?
- What are the entry requirements and application deadlines?
- Are there any additional tests that might be required (SAT/ACT, TOEFL, etc.) for your application?
- How competitive is entry to the course you are looking at?
- Are there any clubs, societies and activities offered outside the academic programme?
- Are there any housing options available to students?

## Shortlisting colleges/universities

As you go through this process, start to develop your 'Long list'. This list will contain all colleges/universities you might be interested in. Once you have selected a few, you can research more information about their courses and application timelines.

Enter your list into the 'Long list' to Cialfo. You should also sort all colleges/universities according to your interest level and chances of getting in.



Once you have found the course you are interested in, reach out to the college/university to make sure you meet their entry requirements and check if they still have vacancies. If they visit the school or hold a public event elsewhere in Singapore, make sure you meet with them.

Start shortlisting colleges/universities on your 'Long list' as you learn more about them and become more aware of what you are looking for. **Keep a maximum of 15 colleges/universities on your list. Aim to reduce it to 10 by the end of the first quarter of Grade 12.** These ten institutions will form your 'Short list'. When you are ready to apply, fill out application forms in the appropriate portal and make sure you also keep your “applying to” list up-to-date on Cialfo.

## What colleges/universities are looking for in a successful application

Applying to colleges/universities can be overwhelming, especially if you are trying to get into very competitive schools. Some Admissions Officers, particularly from the US, may tell you that they review applications holistically, i.e., interested in who you are as a person, extra-curricular activities you do and many other things. In reality, your academic record is still the single most crucial factor in application decisions.

These are the factors that Admissions Officers will consider when reviewing your academic record:

- One or more of your high school transcripts (Grade 9 – 12);
- University Predicted Grades for the IB Diploma, IB Career-related Programme or IB Courses;
- Additional tests that may be required (SAT/ACT, BMAT, LNAT, TOEFL, etc.);
- Additional factors that universities/colleges consider when looking at potential applicants:
  - Challenging extra-curricular activities
  - Volunteer and work experience
  - Quality recommendation letters
  - A well-written essay
  - Talents, passions and career aspirations.

Understanding what colleges/universities are looking for in candidates will help you make the best possible choices for your list and craft a better application when the time comes. We recommend you contact Admissions Offices, attend virtual tours and demonstrate your interest as part of your university application and research efforts.

## College/university destinations

**The US, UK, Canada and Australia** are four of the most popular countries for students to attend college/university. They are home to some of the highest-ranked colleges/universities globally. These countries are also considered destinations with high quality of life and attractive employment opportunities.

**The Netherlands** maintains its position as one of the top study destinations in the world. Combine a high-quality education with relatively favourable tuition fees and plenty of English language, and you can begin to see why the Netherlands is one of continental Europe's most popular choices for international study.

A growing number of students based in South East Asia are choosing to study in **Asia**. Established educational institutions in **Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore** are seen as new popular destinations.

### United States of America

With well over 4000 colleges/universities, the US remains the most popular destination in terms of the sheer number of international applicants. Starting to research this vast pool of colleges/universities will quickly bring you to the realisation that there is very little 'United' about their education system. Everything from costs (fees can vary from as little as USD 15,000 to as much as USD 70,000 per year) to application procedures to acceptance requirements differs dramatically. We would like to encourage you to do thorough research before deciding.

US colleges/universities, especially the most selective, have a very favourable opinion of the IB Diploma students. They consider it one of the most challenging and rigorous course loads that a student can take. Some colleges/universities will even offer substantial credit for top IB Diploma scores. As part of the application, the University Guidance Counsellor has to declare whether the student has taken the most rigorous course on offer at the school. If the student is not enrolled as a full IB Diploma student, the most selective universities (those with an acceptance rate <25%) are unlikely to consider the application further.

Most US colleges/universities practice a 'holistic' admissions approach, considering every aspect of your application with an open mind. In truth, your academic performance will be vital in getting you through the first rounds of the selection process for most colleges. Many colleges/universities use the Common App, but increasing numbers

opt for their online application portals. Most colleges still require SAT or ACT scores, but increasing numbers are going 'Test Optional'. Again, careful research is critical.

Some colleges/universities offer the opportunity to apply Early Decision (ED) or Early Action (EA). These options allow you to submit your application earlier (typically in early November) to receive an earlier response (typically latest by the end of December). While ED and EA may seem to have higher acceptance rates, partly because those applying early are usually very strong applicants. If you apply to a college/university ED and they make you an offer, you must accept that offer and withdraw from every other application you have in the process. Make sure you discuss the implications with your University Guidance Counsellor before making any decisions.

There is also an Early Application type called Restrictive Early Action (Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, Yale). If you apply to any of these institutions, you **are not allowed** to apply to any other **private US university** in an early round. Still, you can apply to public universities (i.e. the University of California, Michigan) and universities in other countries.

If you get an offer from a US college/university, it will usually be based on a condition that you will "maintain your academic performance" until graduation. Universities/colleges expect you to maintain the standards you present to them at the application stage. They reserve the right to withdraw or make conditions on their offers if they see your grades dropping. You must commit to one university by 1 May deadline.



#### Quick tips

You can always use CIALFO for university research, but there are others as well:

- [Colleges that Change Lives](#) - a group of smaller liberal arts colleges
- [Test Optional Colleges](#) - all the universities in the USA that are test-optional
- Fiske Guide To Colleges - this is a book that also provides overlap schools you may be interested in
- [Resource on ED/EA Acceptance Rates and Financial Aid](#)

There are many resources available about US colleges and universities. You can also head down to Education USA, located on our campus, to find out more.

## United Kingdom

All UK colleges/universities applications are submitted through the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Students may apply to up to five colleges/universities. It is recommended that you apply to the same or similar courses as the same application (including your personal statement) will be sent to all five. It is not recommended, for example, to apply for a Physics degree at one university/college and a Politics degree at another.

Unlike the US-style degrees, traditional UK degrees are single subject degrees and allow you to specialise from day one. You can take joint and combined honours degrees. Remember, these degrees are less common, and not all combinations are offered. Most Bachelor's Degrees from English and Welsh colleges/universities are three years long. Scottish degrees tend to be four years long.

For UK/EU citizens, your fee status will be decided by each college/university. Nominally, you have to have lived in the UK for three years to qualify for home student fees. However, this rule is rarely applied. If you think you might be eligible for home fee status, you should apply for it and wait for the university's decision. It is not unusual to receive different fee status judgements from various universities.

[UCAS](#) provides an excellent resource when selecting possible colleges/universities. The search function will provide you with all the UK colleges that offer degrees in the subject you are interested in. You will be able to look at the course content and see what the IB requirements are. The college/university will provide either a minimum score or a score range and have subject-specific requirements.

UCAS limits students to five applications. Discuss your options with your University Guidance Counsellor and choose wisely. If you are aiming for Oxford or Cambridge, remember that you can only apply to one of them. If you are applying for a degree in Medicine, only four of your choices can be for a Medicine course. The other must be in a related but less competitive area such as Bio Meds.


The UCAS application system is very straightforward. You will be required to provide a range of personal details, education history, details of the colleges/universities and courses you are applying to and submit a personal statement. It is an excellent chance to articulate why you would like to study a particular course or subject, what skills and experience you possess and show your passion for your chosen field. The more competitive the degree/college/university you are



applying for, the less interested they are in anything that does not directly contribute to your academic abilities in the relevant subject areas.

Your University Guidance Counsellor will be responsible for inputting your University Predicted Grades into UCAS and putting together your academic reference. The academic reference will be a combination of your teachers' comments, your reflections and information from your report cards.

When you have heard back from all five colleges/universities, you must pick one Firm Acceptance and one Insurance Choice. Suppose you meet the conditions issued by your Firm Acceptance college/university. In that case, you are obliged to accept the place (or withdraw your applications completely), so it is essential to think hard and discuss your choices with the University Guidance Counsellor.


 **Quick tips**

UCAS is a great starting place. You can also use the [Guardian Rankings of UK universities by Subject](#) during your research.

## Canada

Similar to the US, Canada has both Universities and Community Colleges. Most colleges/universities in the Ontario Province use a centralised application system, OUAC. Other colleges/universities, however, have their application systems (usually online). All Canadian colleges/universities accept the IB Diploma for direct access to degree programmes. Many will also award credit for each IB course. With the right combination of courses, students can gain sufficient credit and complete a degree in just three years.

Canadian colleges/universities will also accept students who have received an IB Diploma or the High School Diploma (accredited by WASC), but they may require students to submit an SAT or ACT score. For the IB Career-related Programme students, the same will apply in most cases other than Art Schools, which generally do not require standardised test scores.

 **Quick Tips**


[Maclean's Guide](#) is an excellent resource to research various Canadian universities.

## Netherlands

With a growing number of English language courses and tuition fees below €2,000 per year<sup>1</sup>. The Netherlands is becoming an increasingly popular destination, with excellent universities such as Leiden, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Maastricht.

Anyone who has completed High School education at an appropriate level is deemed deserving of a university place. For most colleges, the 'appropriate level' for international students is the IB Diploma. Some colleges (particularly University Colleges) are highly selective in their recruitment process. At the Research Universities, there are particular "fixed number programmess" (numerus fixus) which cap the number of students that can be accepted into the programme (these are usually the most popular programmes at the school). Numerus Fixus Programmes have earlier deadlines and additional requirements so check carefully.

For those students not in the full IB Diploma Programme, they can opt to apply to the Universities of Applied Sciences. Each college acts independently and should be contacted directly for its requirements and processes. Some colleges will accept applications via a centralised application system, Studielink.

 **Quick tips**

[StudyInHolland](#) is a great resource to research universities in Netherlands.

## Australia

Due to the difference in the Southern Hemisphere academic year, applications to Australian universities are usually submitted after you have received your final IB scores.

One interesting feature of Australian universities is that you can elect to take Joint Degrees and receive two different Bachelor's qualifications at the end of the five-year course. The degrees you choose can be related or as far apart as Law and Theatre.

The application system for Australian universities is straightforward. Very few will require you to submit a personal statement or reference letters from teachers. If you are a **domestic** student (i.e., Australian or New Zealand citizen) you will submit your application through a "Tertiary Admissions Centre" (VTAC) depending on the province/territory where the university is located. **International**

<sup>1</sup> for EU passport holders

students (non-Australians or non-New Zealanders) will apply directly to the university.

Many Australian universities work with agencies such as IDP Education that have offices/representatives located in Asia. Services provided by these agencies are paid by the university and if students need additional support or have questions, they can contact them and do not need to pay anything additional. Generally these agencies support international students (rather than domestic students).



**Singapore** is home to some of the world's most competitive universities. Generally, an IB Diploma score of 38 or more is required to enter the major universities, with some courses demanding even higher scores. Please be advised that if the Singapore government subsidises your tuition fees, you must commit to working in Singapore or for a Singapore registered company overseas, for at least three years after graduation.

The IB Diploma is required as a standard. Medical students are also required to sit the SATs. Singaporean universities require you to submit your predicted grade but will only decide based on your final grades. In addition, to the main government universities, many private and overseas colleges are opening up their campuses in Singapore, offering less competitive options (i.e. Global SIM, Curtin Singapore, James Cook).

**Japan** offers a number of degrees in English. Most universities have an international section and there have been several recent government-led initiatives to boost the number of international students. Unfortunately, there is no centralised application system, and each university needs to be individually researched and applied to. The IB Diploma is not required to enter Japanese universities, although some more competitive colleges now prefer it. Do note that Japanese universities require a substantial amount of paperwork from the school so it is very important that you are organised and give sufficient timing to your University Guidance Counsellor to generate and send all required documents for your application.

**Hong Kong** is home to some of the best universities in Asia and worldwide, with popular universities such as Hong Kong University (HKU), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), and Chinese University (CU) to name a few.

In general, IB Diploma candidates will need to be awarded the IB Diploma to meet the minimum entry requirement. Owing to the

competition for university places in Hong Kong, a total score above 30 points will likely be required to gain entry into an undergraduate degree programme. In some cases, the bar may be set much higher. Higher scores (38 points and above) usually attract automatic offers of scholarships. Each university has its application system and deadlines. Please be mindful when researching and applying.

## Taking a gap year and Singapore National Service

Many universities will encourage you to apply for places before the end of High School to secure your place, even if you plan to take a gap year or have to do National Service (NS). You are far more likely to submit an interesting and successful application after having some experience outside school. You may even find that your interests and ambitions change.

If you are doing NS or taking a gap year, you should ensure we have all the necessary information and references on file. This will allow us to support your application the following year or the year after<sup>2</sup>.

If you decide to apply and then request a deferral, you will need to check with the colleges in advance that they will make deferrals. Not all universities allow deferrals (i.e., University of California) but if you reach out in advance, it is sometimes possible that they will make exceptions.

<sup>2</sup> for male students serving NS

# College/university application timelines

Please refer to the below general guidelines. Specific internal deadlines will be shared with students well in advance.

| Grade 11                        |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| August - October                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on your classes and grades</li> <li>● If you feel you are in the wrong class, you must immediately speak with your teachers and Guidance Counsellors</li> </ul>  |
| November - December             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend group sessions on how to use resources to start your university research</li> </ul>   |
| January                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● University Guidance kick-off for Grade 11's (Students/Parents)</li> </ul>  |
| February - June                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group sessions for Students, Parents and Guardians on applying to the different countries</li> <li>● Work on tasks such as Building a University List, Personal Statement and College Essay Writing, Putting together an Application, Teacher References, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| April                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● University Application Agreement and List introduction - due in June</li> <li>● Teacher Recommendation Requests for US-bound students to be submitted</li> </ul>   |
| May - June                      | <p>To be submitted and have completed before the Summer Holidays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requested Teacher Recommendations (only for the US) (through University Guidance)</li> <li>● University Agreement and List (including plans to apply early)</li> <li>● Draft of a UK personal statement or US college essay (if applicable)</li> <li>● Extra-curricular activities template completed (if applicable)</li> <li>● Plan for a portfolio (if applicable - for arts students)</li> </ul> |
| Summer holidays (June - August) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students should work on their college research, write their personal statements and college essays, find internships, etc.</li> <li>● Students who need testing should be studying over the summer (LNAT, BMAT/UKCAT, SAT/ACT, TOEFL etc)</li> </ul>   |

| Grade 12   |  |
|------------|--|
| Semester 1 |  |
| August     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete What to Highlight About Me survey (for Counsellor and Teacher recommendations)</li> <li>● Check-in sessions for Early Applications students (UK - OxBridge, Medicine; USA - Early)</li> </ul>  |
| September  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submit Grade 12 University Application List (finalised)</li> <li>● Internal deadline to complete applications to Oxbridge, Medical, Dental and Veterinary universities in the UK</li> <li>● One-on-one meetings with the University Guidance Counsellor to finalise university application lists</li> <li>● Submit first drafts of your personal statements and college essays to the University Guidance Counsellor</li> <li>● Set up Common App accounts and link them to Cialfo (US applications)</li> <li>● EA/ED and any other applications due before 15 December must be communicated to University Guidance Counsellor</li> </ul> |
| October    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submission of applications to Oxbridge, Medical, Dental and Veterinary universities in the UK</li> </ul>  |
| November   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete your personal statements and college essays</li> <li>● Submit online applications via UCAS, Common App and other systems</li> <li>● Check application dates to Asian and Canadian universities</li> <li>● Complete/submit all university applications</li> </ul>   |
| December   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete/submit any remaining applications</li> </ul>   |
| Semester 2 |  |
| January    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete/submit any late applications</li> <li>● Complete/submit applications to Australian Universities for July intake</li> <li>● Request documentation in support of the application to Singapore universities</li> </ul>  |



## Letter of recommendation

**US colleges/universities** usually require students to submit one or more letters of recommendation alongside their admission application. Please be advised that all requests for letters of recommendation must be directed through your University Guidance Counsellor. Students must provide at least four weeks' notice to their teachers to write a letter of recommendation.

Grade 11 students should start thinking about which teachers they may reach out for a recommendation letter. If you are applying to the US, the letter could be written by any of your teachers. Take every opportunity to let them get to know you as a person and showcase your academic potential.

During the fourth quarter of Grade 11, students should complete the Letter of Recommendation Survey. These surveys will provide a vital source of information for the teachers writing a recommendation for them. The more details you can provide, the better. It will help them to write a comprehensive and persuasive recommendation letter.

**Letters of recommendation remain confidential between the school and the universities. Students and parents are not permitted to review them. This ensures that the teacher can write objectively and honestly.**

## College essay (US)

College essays can be one of the most critical components of your application. The essay gives the applicant a chance to demonstrate their writing style and highlight an important characteristic, ability of achievement, that may not have been mentioned in any other component of the application. US colleges/universities are well known for their willingness to see a student's personal and creative side. Although your grades/academic record are still the most important part of your application, writing an effective college essay may help you to get into the university of your dreams.

One of the main requirements is writing it creatively and expressing who you are in less than 650 words. This can be a difficult task, but it can be pretty enjoyable with a little bit of creativity. Some examples of the Common App Essay prompts include:

- Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

- The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
- Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realisation that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
- Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
- Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you have already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

We will be providing Brainstorming Essay Tasks for students to complete in order to help you with this.



### Quick tips

You can also check out [Johns Hopkins' Essays that Worked](#) for some inspiration from students who have completed essays and been accepted.

## Supplemental essay (US)

In addition to the main Common App college essay, some universities will also require an additional supplemental essay that is just for their university. These are generally shorter in length and are more focused on the specific university you are applying to. Here are some examples of questions for the supplemental essay:

### University of Michigan

- Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it. (Required for all applicants. 300 words maximum)

- Describe the unique qualities that attract you to the specific undergraduate College or School (including preferred admission and dual degree programmes) to which you are applying at the University of Michigan. How would that curriculum support your interests? (Required for freshman applicants, 550 words maximum)

## Amherst College

- At Amherst, we know that identity is more than checkboxes. If you would like to share more about your identity, background, family, culture or community, please tell us more here. (Maximum: 175 words)
- Please briefly elaborate on an extracurricular activity or work experience of particular significance to you. (Maximum: 175 words)
- If you have engaged in significant research in the natural sciences, mathematics, computer science, social sciences or humanities that was undertaken independently of your high school curriculum, please provide a brief description of the research project: (Optional, 50 - 75 words)

## Northwestern

- While other parts of your application give us a sense of who you are, we are also excited to hear more about how you see yourself engaging with the larger Northwestern community. In 300 words or less, help us understand how you might engage specific resources, opportunities, and/or communities here. We are curious about what these specifics are, as well as how they may enrich your time at Northwestern and beyond. (300 words or less)



### Quick tips

Remember to check your universities carefully to make sure you spend time on the supplemental essays as well as the main Common App essay.

## Personal statement (UK)

Students applying to **UK colleges/universities** will be required to write a personal statement. Although there is no actual word limit, you will be given a maximum of 47 lines or 4,000 characters to work with (including spaces).



### Quick tips

London School of Economics is notorious for being quite picky about personal statements. See their [Tips on Writing Personal Statements](#).

## Interviews

Many colleges/universities require applicants to interview alumni, admissions officers, university lecturers or professors as part of the admission process.

**For the UK**, these interviews will be very focused on academics (Oxford, Cambridge, University College London and any Medical Degrees).

**For the US**, the alumni interviews will be more holistic and personal. Preparatory sessions and practice interviews will be held at school.

## University predicted grades

University Predicted Grades (UPG) are used in college/university applications in many countries and systems around the world. They are of particular importance in the UK.

Teachers use Grade 11 and 12 grades to calculate students' UPG's. Each subject area will use an appropriately weighted formula to calculate an overall grade. They will then look at trends, attitudes, progress and other elements to decide on an accurate predicted grade.

Students will have an indication of how they are performing through their Interim Quarter 1 Reports in Grade 12. For those students who require University Predicted Grades, their University Guidance Counsellor will work with their teachers to provide this. Students can request to view these through their University Guidance Counsellor and if they feel that the grades are unduly low or high, the University Guidance Counsellor will liaise with the teacher(s) to ensure that the grades are a fair reflection of the individual student. **Students and parents must under no circumstances directly discuss university predicted grades with teachers. In instances where teachers are directly contacted about university predicted grades by students and/or parents, the grades may be invalidated and colleges informed.**

In cases where a student and/or parents feel that the university predicted grades are unfairly low, they may appeal directly to the University Guidance Counsellor. If a resolution cannot be reached, the matter will be referred to the IB DP/CP Coordinator and then to the Secondary Years Principal. Any decision rendered at this level is considered final.

# University application agreement

This agreement along with a university list will need to be submitted to the University Guidance Department before the June holidays.

More information will be provided to students and parents/guardians.

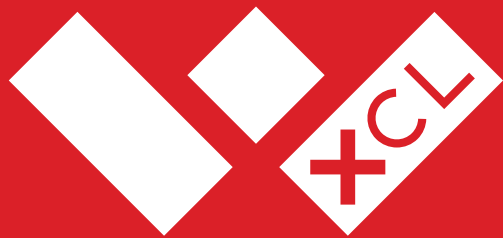
1. XCL World Academy (the school), specifically the University Guidance Counsellor, agrees to **fully support and advise parents and students through the university application process**, providing timely and accurate information and completing all required actions in terms of submission of documentation.
2. Per the **Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA)** and signed under the XWA Student Contract, the school has your consent to facilitate, process, and administer **student-related information for the purposes of university/tertiary applications** including but not limited to disclosing the student's test scores, academic transcripts and medical records.
3. The school, the student and the parents/guardians agree to work through the university application process with **absolute transparency, honesty and to the highest ethical standards**.
4. Parents agree to work in partnership with their child (-ren) and the school, particularly the University Guidance Counsellor, taking a supportive role, but **not completing any part of the process on behalf of the student**.
5. Parents and students agree to comply with the school's policy on Letters of Recommendations and University Predicted Grades, which is that **recommendation letters are confidential** and students/parents/guardians are to **respect the teachers' judgements** given for University Predicted Grades.
6. Students **agree to meet all deadlines** throughout the university application process, both those set by the school and those set by the universities.
7. It is the **responsibility of each student to identify and comply with all the requirements** of each application they are submitting. The University Guidance Counsellor must be kept fully informed of these requirements and any changes in the student's choice or plan.

8. Should the student decide to apply to colleges in the USA through **Early Decision (ED)** and is subsequently offered a place, **the school will not support any further applications** (even outside of the United States) per the ED agreement of withdrawing all additional applications.
9. Should the school feel that any documentation submitted by the student **does not meet Academic Honesty** requirements, it reserves the right to not submit it.
10. Students and Parents/Guardians **must sign that they have acknowledged** these terms before we can support applications.

We look forward to working with you through this exciting time in your life! Mark your calendar for the **Grade 11 University Guidance Kick-off in January** (January 28 Friday - 10 am for Parents/Guardians) - will be held in School for students during G11 University Guidance Sessions.







World  
Academy

☎ (65) 6230 4230

✉ [admissions@xwa.edu.sg](mailto:admissions@xwa.edu.sg)

💻 [www.xwa.edu.sg](http://www.xwa.edu.sg)

📍 2 Yishun street 42, S768039

CPE registration number: 200803726H, 19 March 2021 to 18 March 2025. EduTrust certificate number: EDU-2-2082, 27 October 2020 - 26 October 2024

The information provided in the brochure is accurate at the time of printing. XCL World Academy reserves the right to vary any specified information documented in this brochure at any time without prior notice. (V1, June 2021).