



School of the Nations
University Guidance Counseling Handbook
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Introduction

The university selection process can be exciting, challenging, nerve-wracking, and difficult. This handbook is a tool that you can use to help manage the complexities of finding the right university for you and your family. I have compiled numerous resources, consulted my experience and various guidebooks, and have attempted to synthesize the information that you must know as you begin or continue this search. Many of the topics included in this handbook are meant to be illustrations of the types of information that you must have to conduct a successful university search. Given that School of the Nations students are considering university options all over the world, it is impossible to create a guidebook that addresses every question or concern. However, through perusing this handbook, your process should become a bit easier and you should be able to refine the questions that you ask me, university representatives, and explore with your own research.

As you delve into the handbook, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, or feedback. This document will be revised every year and will help future SON students and families. Let's work collectively to help make this process effective and exciting for everybody. I have used the following resources (along with my experience) to create this document. Consider visiting these sites for more detail on your own:

- National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC for the US mostly)- www.nacacnet.org
- The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS for the UK): www.ucas.com
- The Common Application (for the US): www.commonapp.org
- The College Board (administers the SAT): www.collegeboard.org
- Singapore American School College Guidance Handbook: <http://www.sas.edu.sg/page.cfm?p=535>
- QS World University Rankings (a good ranking website for universities across the world): <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings>

Sincerely,

Guidance Counselor

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Choosing a Country

One of the biggest decisions facing you is where in the world do you wish to study. There are many great university options that may suit you, but different countries can have significantly different concepts of higher education. With your experience at School of the Nations, you have been exposed to students, faculty, and staff from every corner of the globe. While this may seem normal to you, many students across the world will not have had the exposure to so many cultures. Also, your IB Programme provides you the most flexibility to be a successful candidate in multiple countries. It is an internationally-recognized curriculum that is appreciated due to the external verification that happens. While it can be difficult to speak in universal terms, these general guidelines may help you decide which countries best match your academic aspirations. One thing is universal, the better your IB results (or SAT results), the more options you will have for university. With all of these overviews of regions, you must keep your marks as high as possible to be able to go where you want to go. It is also important to know that you and your peers will all have different needs for university. Not everybody is a good fit for the US or UK. It is perfectly normal and expected that every student will have different lists with different priorities. Please be respectful of each other and each other's wishes as you all make exciting decisions about where you plan to go to university.

United Kingdom

The UK has universities in Great Britain, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Universities or “Unis” are the bachelor degree-granting institutions in the UK. “College” in the UK generally refers to secondary schools (Forms 5-7) or technical postsecondary programmes. The majority of bachelor degree programmes in the UK (except for Scotland) take three years to complete, and students focus solely on the one or two subjects they have chosen to study. If you are someone who is certain of the subject you want to study in university, studying in the UK could be a great fit for you. Particularly, if you are someone who loves one or two subjects, but doesn't ever want to take another class in some other areas, the UK system would provide you with that very specific type of education. If you are undecided about your major or programme, be aware that in order to apply to the UK, you would have to make a decision about what to study, and that transferring to a different subject usually entails starting your degree over from the beginning. If you are a student who wants to explore multiple subjects, you may want to be hesitant about studying in the UK. There are some more general, liberal arts degrees, but they are not pervasive in the UK.

In Scotland, degrees generally take four years to complete, and can be more general – for example, a student can study humanities or social sciences in general, rather than needing to focus on a specific field such as psychology.

The cost of attending university for a year in the UK is evolving upward – although one less year is required to obtain a degree than 4-year degree programmes. If you are a marginal student for a particular programme or university, you may be admitted to a foundation course, which will add an additional year of study, but will allow you to enter your programme of choice after a year of sufficient academic progress. So, there could be some cost savings if you attend a UK University, but if you have to do a Foundation Course, it will be a similar cost to going to other countries.

Applying to study in the UK is done through a process called the Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS). We will go over the UCAS process in more depth in the “Admissions Processes” section of this guidebook. **If you are applying to Medicine, Pharmacy or Veterinarian programmes, you are also required to do an admissions exam prior to an October 15th deadline. Make sure you are aware of when and where you must do these entrance exams.**

United States

The US is a much different university experience than the UK. The terms “college” and “university” are interchangeable in the US, with both referencing bachelor degree-granting institutions. It is somewhat of a misnomer, but in some cases “colleges” are strictly undergraduate with smaller enrollments compared to “universities” being larger institutions with undergraduate and graduate programmes. This is not universally true in the US, but is a way to distinguish the two.

The US has four main types of postsecondary options. Community colleges are the technical schools in the US and typically offer two-year Associate’s degrees and a cheaper cost. You may consider a community college if you do not have the marks to be a competitive applicant to a four-year university. One advantage of community colleges is that after completing your two-year Associate’s degree, you can then transfer to a bachelor degree programme at another university, while saving some tuition money. Liberal arts colleges are typically smaller institutions with enrollments less than 3,000 students. Class sizes are small and there are typically no graduate degree programmes offered, so you have an intimate undergraduate experience. Often times, liberal arts colleges have average class sizes in the low-20s, so if you imagine your classroom experience at School of the Nations, that may be similar to the experience you can have in the classroom at liberal arts colleges. Mid-sized comprehensive universities tend to have larger enrollments (up to 10,000 undergraduates) and undergraduate and graduate programmes. Some of your classes will be larger and some will be smaller. This type of university could be a good option if you think you want to study education or Business in the US. Finally, large research universities are the other options for US postsecondary study. Many of the big name universities that you have heard about are research universities. The big sport programs, the huge enrollments, and the international brands are all part of the experience. While this may be appealing to you, make sure you are considering the academic experience you will have. Often times, undergraduate courses are taught in huge lecture halls with graduate students doing the majority of your teaching. These institutions are great choices for graduate or professional school.

Applying to the US is different than the UK. Many universities have their own applications that you must complete, but there is a tool called the Common Application (www.commonapp.org) that over 500 universities in the US all use together. For the most part, I encourage you to do a Common App, if you are considering going to the US. If you are considering not going for the IB diploma and wish to take only the SL courses, you can still be a successful applicant to the US. Your SAT or ACT admissions exams will be in used in conjunction with your report card marks to decide your success as a candidate. There are also different types of applications that can be made. You need to pay attention to each university because deadlines for each may be different. Early Decision is binding application. You apply to one school, and if you are admitted, you must attend that university. Early Action means if you apply early, you will have a decision more quickly (sometimes preferable scholarship consideration, too). However, Early Action is not binding and you may apply to multiple universities in this way. Regular Decision is the last deadline where you will get full admission consideration for a particular school. Rolling Admissions is where a university will make an admission decision as soon as your documents are received. This is typically for less-selective universities.

Hong Kong

Many SON students apply to universities in Hong Kong. Hong Kong University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology are two well-regarded international institutions. There is also SCAD-Hong Kong which is an American art and design university with a Hong Kong campus. SCAD is one of the best art and design schools in the world, so it could be a great fit for those of you wanting to explore that option. There are other universities in Hong

Kong that you may want to consider having on your university selection list because they are well-respected and closer to home and family (Chinese University of Hong Kong and City University of Hong Kong come to mind). For those of you who are concerned about living in the US, UK, Canada, or Australia because of distance or because of comfort with language/culture, Hong Kong offers a great destination. Bachelor degrees in HK typically take 4 years to complete. Studying Mathematics in HK might be a particularly good option for those of you interested in it.

Obviously, the proximity to home can be a great benefit to you and your family. There are world-renowned university options very close to you. While studying in Europe or North America may be more exciting to you, do not discount the opportunity, value, and convenience of some of the HK options. Unless you have a HK passport or ID, you will apply as a non-JUPAS applicant, so make sure you follow the directions associated with that category. Your IB results will be extremely important in your application to HK. Costs for HK universities can be a bit more economical, too. If finances or distance from family are concerns, I encourage you to include at least one HK university on your final list.

Canada

In Canada, there is a very real distinction between a university and a college. Institutions granting bachelors and advanced degrees are universities. Colleges only focus on vocational and technical training. To make it just a little more confusing, a school within a Canadian university (such as arts, science, or commerce) is called a faculty or a college, similar to the system in US and UK universities. If you are a Canadian passport holder, Canada offers some great university options that may be at a lesser cost to you.

Canadian universities actively welcome international students. While weaker students may not hear of their admission decision until final grades are available in June, most students hear about acceptances March and April. Universities in Ontario use a centralized application process much like the UK, called Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC). Students submit a single application to OUAC, which is then forwarded to students' chosen universities. The OUAC application should be filed no later than the end of November in order to ensure it reaches the university in plenty of time for them to request supporting documentation. In all other provinces, students apply directly to the university. Universities in other provinces typically have their own application that you must fill-out.

Canada has some great university options for you to consider. Many Macau students consider universities such as University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, and many others.

Australia

Because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, the school year begins in February. Some programmes will do a mid-year intake in July, but the general start to the academic year is in February. Applications are usually submitted in September, a few months after you have graduated from SON. If you are considering Australia, think about how you would occupy yourself from the time you graduate until university begins. Making use of that time with internships, work experience, or language coursework would be a really good idea. Video games and sleeping until noon every day will not get you in a good frame of mind for going back to school and will also mean you have missed a chance to improve your CV relative to your peers.

Admission to Australian universities can be a big different than the other Western institutions. Often, you will need to explore working with an agent in order to get all aspects of your application complete. You are able to apply directly to individual institutions, but it is more common to use other help. Explore online any Australian agents, if

you are serious about studying there. Since the applications to Australia occur after final IB results are received, you will know your competitiveness as an applicant from the outset. **If you are an Australian Permanent Resident, you should be warned that you may be required to have higher marks than your peers. There are admission policies in place that may force you to have 2-3 IB points higher than other applicants. Consult your particular university admission representative for more information and details.**

Macau

For some of you, staying in Macau is the best choice. Proximity to family, interest in living and working in Macau, or finances are completely reasonable reasons to go to university in Macau. Many of you are familiar with U-Mac, USJ, IFT, MUST, Poly, and City University of Macau. Each institution has quality programmes that may be good for you to consider. As you might expect, if you plan to work in the gaming or hospitality industries, you will find wonderful options in Macau. If you plan to work in Macau, a degree from a local university may give you more opportunities than international universities. All of these reasons are good to consider when deciding if you want to stay in Macau for your postsecondary study. Also, if you have family financial constraints, consider having a Macau university on your final list to give yourself flexibility when making a final decision.

There are a couple ways to apply to Macau universities. Many have direct admission, which means if you get the IB diploma, you are automatically admitted. Some have Principal/Director recommendation admissions, which means that if you are in the top of your class at SON, you can be admitted without any other documentation. Finally, the most common method of application is through entrance exams. Most programmes require you to take exams in English, Math, and Mandarin. You may be exempt from the Chinese exam, if your transcript does not include Chinese Language and Literature in your secondary career. If you are applying to a Macau university, make sure you speak with Mr. Leong or Mr. Bryan about any exemptions for which you need to submit documentation. This process typically happens in February through April, so it is sometimes overlooked.

Other Countries

There are hundreds of other universities across the world that could be good for you. Europe, China, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, and the UAE might have campuses that appeal to you. I strongly encourage you to explore these options, too. However, creating enough universal information becomes increasingly difficult as you expand to places where most SON students do not go. This does not mean, however, that you should not apply to these places. There are great universities in other countries and also satellite campuses of stellar UK and US institutions (NYU- Abu Dhabi/Shanghai, Yale-NUS in Singapore, Nottingham-Malaysia, etc.) which could be quality options for you. The satellite campuses, in particular, may be great compromises for those of you who want to study in the US and UK, but family or financial considerations may make that difficult. Most of these campuses include time studying at the “home” campus, as well. We can explore these options together and find the necessary information you may need.

Creating Your University List

There is no linear process to find the “perfect” university option for you. Realistically, there are many options across the world where you can be happy and successful. Creating a university list needs to be a strategic project. First of all, you should cast your initial research net very wide. Look at the various countries that may interest you, visit with university representatives for places you have never heard of, think of places further abroad and closer to home, and basically make sure you have a sense for what all of your options may be. The important thing to not do is limit yourself to one option in the beginning. The fact of the matter is that if you only apply to Ivy League institutions in the US or Russell Group universities in the UK, you are very likely going to end up with no options in April, regardless of how amazing you might be. In this section, we will discuss the kinds of information you need to consider as you finalize your university application list. Ultimately, we want to start with a large number of schools to do initial research, then pare down your final list to about 6 applications. It may be reasonable to apply to up to 10 schools, but applying to more than that is not helpful to you. Creating a university application list that is strategic, includes a range of academic standards, and includes only places where you can actually see yourself going is incredibly important. These questions and considerations will help you create that perfect list.

Where to Start

You may find it hard to jump into this process. Often times, the first step is the hardest one when it comes to the university search. You may have family encouraging you to apply to a specific school or country, you may hear that all of your friends are going to a particular university, or you may think that you have to go to Harvard, regardless. Frankly, this is not the best approach for anybody. You should definitely consider places that family and friends know, but you should be more open-minded in the beginning. There are a myriad of guidebooks and resources online that can expose you to university options across the world. US News World Rankings could be helpful to you, Cappex.com may be helpful for you to learn what US colleges could be good for you, or a university representative from Austria may come to campus to tell about her university options. Take advantage of all of these opportunities. You should start researching by the beginning of Form 5. Waiting longer than that will make your process more difficult. You have until the end of Form 6 to make a final decision, but most applications are due early in Form 6, so having your final list needs to be done.

Main University Variables to Consider

Academics

Obviously, you need to make sure that you consider universities that have academic programmes or majors that you want to study. Even if you change your mind, you want to start with where you think you are now. However, also look at what the other requirements are. Some schools have robust general education programmes, while others do not. Understanding the academic structure to the best of your ability will help you know how much flexibility and options you will have while attending. It is impossible to know everything, but is a good thing to try and understand.

Another facet of academics that is important in researching universities is the academic profile for the students. For the US, what SAT or ACT scores do you need to have? For the UK, Canada and HK, how many IB points must you have? Do you have to get the full diploma to be considered? Every school to which you apply will get your transcripts from Forms 3-5 with official IGCSE marks. The UK and others will ask for your predicted IB results from your teachers. Knowing where you stand, what chance you have for improvement, and being realistic will allow you to choose university options that are strategic and appropriate.

Location

One of the most important questions is what location works best for you. We have already spent time talking about country differences, but there are even more variables to consider. Proximity and access to home/friends/family is one of the most important, but that largely applies to what country you choose to go to. Campuses can be located in urban, suburban, and rural areas. What type of location is most appealing to you? Urban campuses may have more crime issues, but also may have more international populations and cultural experiences off campus that could be good for you. Rural campuses may be safer, but what will you be able to do off campus? Is there enough on campus to keep you happy for 3-4 years? Suburban campuses may be a bit of both. Easy access to city life, but maybe not the same negative aspects of the city. It is really hard to say which location is best for you, but you need to spend time thinking about this. Once you decide what location type is best for you, you can begin to narrow down the large number of initial options. There are amazing university options in every location type. You just have to decide what overall experience is best for you. Macau may seem like a small place, but in comparison to the rest of the world, it would be considered a mid-sized city (at worst). If you think that there is not enough to do here, you may really want to focus on universities in urban or suburban environments. If you want a quieter and more relaxed location, the rural universities may be better.

Size

This is one of the most overlooked and undervalued considerations in university selection. The majority of the universities to which you have been exposed are larger institutions. Many of them with enrollments of 15,000 students or more. This may be the perfect environment for you, but you really need to think about your priorities. Larger institutions are more likely to have a strong international student presence and support measures, but you are likely to have many classes with more than 100 students that are taught by graduate students. Smaller universities can have enrollments as low as 1000 students. In these places, you are probably going to be the only student from Macau, but you also may never have a class with more than 20 students and virtually all of your courses will be taught by PhD faculty members. If you like the academic experience of SON in terms of being able to know your teachers and have discussions in class, a smaller university would be better for you. If you want to be anonymous and more a “face in the crowd,” larger universities could be a better fit. One thing to strongly consider is that the larger the university you attend, the more independent you have to be. You will have to be willing to ask for help and get support on your own. Retention rates are many larger institutions are quite low because they don’t have the time and resources to focus on every student. Even though you may have heard of the name, or watched its sports team, doesn’t mean it the best environment for you. If you can visit a campus, location and size can be greatly impactful for your search.

Institutional Type

There are many types of postsecondary options across the world. We have mentioned some of them already, but you need to decide if you want a four-year or two-year college. Do you want a school that specializes in Hospitality or Art/Design? Do you want a liberal arts programme or a research institution? What about a men’s or women’s college? These illustrate some of the different types of schools that may exist for you.

Most UK universities and US specialized schools (Hospitality, Art/Design, as examples) should be considered in the same vein. Do you want to focus on one or two subjects and likely never take courses outside of those disciplines? If this sounds appealing to you, you can eliminate a lot of options very quickly. However, be careful that you are absolutely sure you want to pursue these very specific fields. Changing your mind as you get older can have

significant consequences. You may have to start a new programme at the same school or leave to go somewhere else entirely. While you may want to say that you never want to take another Math course in your life, picking a specialized institution to avoid those courses may not be right for you down the line. However, if you know that you want to only study Physics, a programme in the UK may be a great choice for you.

Liberal Arts and Sciences colleges are pervasive in the US. Nearly every city and every state have multiple of these institutions. They tend to be smaller and have much more general academic programmes. By their very nature, you will be exposed to many different disciplines and begin to become more focused in your junior and senior years. You likely won't be able to avoid that Math class, even if you take the most basic course, but you will have a more well-rounded education. The advantage of liberal arts colleges is that you have time to make sure you are actually committed to Physics before majoring in it. However, if you find that you actually much prefer Psychology or a programme about which you have never heard or considered (e.g. Philosophy, Neuroscience, Accounting, or Environmental Science), you can explore them, too. The trade-off with liberal arts colleges is that you typically will need to explore graduate or professional schools to be a strong candidate in the job market. Before you write off liberal arts colleges as too general and not preparatory, Ivy League schools use a liberal arts approach with its undergraduates. If you go to Harvard, Princeton, or Yale, you are going to study the liberal arts. It is highly valued, particularly in the US. Finally, graduation and retention rates at liberal arts colleges tend to greatly outpace other university types. The flexibility of the curriculum, the size of the classes, and the strength of the campus community tend to work together for students to be successful.

Research universities are your larger-scale universities with major research initiatives. Most state universities in the US and larger universities in the UK and HK would be considered research universities. They tend to have graduate programmes, as well. Most "big-name" universities are research universities. You will find more options for study, but also much larger classes. There can also be issues with changing majors as you get into a programme. You will have more flexibility than the specialized schools we have discussed, but much less than the liberal arts colleges. Also, graduation and retention rates are much lower than liberal arts colleges because of that lack of flexibility and support structure for all students.

Finally, for most of you, a traditional bachelor degree programme is the best fit. A 2-year college in the US would be good for you if you do not have the marks in IB to be successful to a 4-year university because you would have time to prove you are college-ready before transferring to the 4-year programme. A foundation course in the UK may be offered to you before the traditional programme, which means that you are close to being a strong candidate for that university, but that there is some weakness in your academic profile they need you to address. Foundation courses make sense if you are applying to a more prestigious university in the UK because you will be admitted if you are successful with the course.

Campus Experience

What will your life be like when you are on campus? You are committing to 3-4 years of living in a different place with people you have never met. When making your pro-con list for which schools are best for you, do not discount how your life on campus will be. Academic prestige is great, but if you are miserable at a campus, you will not be successful in the classroom. Similarly, if you choose the cheapest option, but it is a place that you don't want to be or doesn't have extra-curricular experiences that you enjoy, it will be a lesser experience than you might have elsewhere with more investment.

Housing and Safety

The first aspect of the campus experience you need to explore is the safety of the campus and what are the housing options. Your basic needs are most important, so research whether you live on campus for the entirety of the programme, only first first-year, or do you choose? Every university has different housing policies and options. You may be able to get your own room or you may have to live with 3 other people. What about safety? Are there issues with theft, drugs/alcohol, sexual violence, or other crimes? These questions are fair to ask any university representative. In the US, these statistics should be posted as part of the Clery Act. You may have to do more investigating for your other countries, but your safety is a major consideration for you and your family. Feeling comfortable on campus is the first step in a successful transition to university.

Support Services

Every student will need support in university. It may be as simple as academic advising to make sure you are taking the right courses to graduate, but you may need other services. Learning differences may need to be accommodated, physical disabilities may be a concern, or you may need counseling services or tutoring. Being honest with yourself and your university choices will be paramount in making sure you find a place you can be happy. University is a huge time of growth for you as a person and a scholar. Make sure you choose places that can give you a good foundation and support network. As an international student, you will need to have help from your respective universities. Visas will have to be procured, housing and meals during shorter holidays/breaks may need to be arranged, and you may need help finding off-campus religious institutions or even hospitals. You should expect a university you attend to have some infrastructure in place to help you. The more robust the international student services that a university has, the more likely they are to have dealt with any problem or concern you have. These offices also help connect international students, so you can find people who may be going through the same transition issues that you are.

Extracurricular Experiences

You need to find a university that has activities outside the classroom that interest you. It may be sports, student government, or community service, but make sure you know what options exist for you at your university choices. You will find options for yourself when you get there, but if you know that you want to play varsity volleyball, you need to be communicating with the coaches about your ability to participate well before you apply.

Prestige Factor

It is very easy to overemphasize prestige as a reason to go to a school. Please be careful not to do so or you risk applying to schools that are not good fits for you. Yes, reputation is important and I encourage you to attend the best academic school that is a good fit for you. However, that does not mean that Harvard is a good fit for you. As I mentioned before, even if you go to Harvard as an undergrad, the vast majority of those students attend graduate or professional school before entering the workforce because it is a liberal arts experience. However, the classes are much larger than other liberal arts colleges and you are not going to have access to the faculty in the same way as you will at other places. If the culture of Harvard and the student experience of Harvard is not good for you, Harvard is not good for you. Also, name recognition does not mean it is the right place for you. You could attend the University of Texas because you have heard of it, but if you realize that it is too big or you don't fit with the student body, you will not be successful, when TCU is down the road and could be an amazing fit. The other important thing to remember is that a graduate or professional degree from an Ivy League school is MUCH better than an undergraduate

degree from those places. So, you may find a smaller school that does a great job at getting graduates into one of these prestigious graduate or professional programmes, but also has a better undergraduate experience for you.

Admissions Office Representatives and University Fairs

I cannot express the importance of these events enough. Starting in Form 4, you really need to be taking advantage of as many of these programs as possible. Admissions representatives who come to SON show that they and their institutions are committed to working with you and help you transition to university. University fairs are huge and a bit awkward, but if you do not go, you may never meet face-to-face with anybody from these schools before deciding to go there. Hong Kong has multiple university fairs and TIS hosts one in October that we will attend. Moodle and Managebac will be updated with announcements about individual university visits and also big university fairs. Make these a priority. The different considerations we have been discussing can become more real when you speak with somebody who has direct knowledge of the institution and how you may fit. These interactions, emails, and conversations are invaluable to your search.

Campus Visits On Your Own

Once you have identified your priorities and begun to narrow down your choices, visiting campus can be a great way to make the final cuts and final decisions about universities to which you will apply. I know that it can be very challenging to visit all of the campuses you are considering. However, if you are going to the US for a holiday, it would be a great idea to incorporate a visit or two, if you can. Similarly, if you know that you are going to apply to schools in the UK, planning a family holiday to London over the summer may give you enough proximity to incorporate university visits, too. There is no reason that you cannot visit any HK or Macau schools that interests you, so make sure you do so. The campus visit is so helpful in confirming or disproving your notions about a university, its location, its culture, and whether it is a good place for you. You will know when you walk on campus if it is a place you can call home. In fact, some universities will want you to show interest (demonstrated interest) in them before admitting you and the campus visit can be the highest form of interest. While it is likely not possible to visit all of the universities that interest you, finding a way to see campus for yourself could be the deciding factor in where you finally attend.

Finding a Range

Once you have done all of the research and paring down that you can, the last step is to decide where you wish to apply. Finding a range of 6-10 schools is more than adequate and shows that you have done your due diligence in selecting schools that are good fits for you. Once you have decided location, size, academics, and campus experience, you can now put a list together that makes sense and lets you have options that are all appealing to you. Here is my goal for a perfect list:

2-3 Reach Schools	“Reach schools” are ones where you may not have all of the necessary credentials, but you are close. Being admitted to these school is not likely, but you have a chance.
2-3 Fit Schools	“Fit schools” are ones where your academic profile match nicely with that of the institutions, making you a good fit for admission.

1-2 Likely Schools

“Likely schools” are ones where you definitely meet requirements for admission and are almost assured to be admitted. For some of you, this may be a Macau university or a less selective US or UK university.

Don't forget that I am here to help you understand how these categories apply to you. Every student is different, so we have to work together to build lists that make sense and give you the best chance for success. Applying to 5 Ivy League schools and 1 likely school means that you may not be happy with the final result. Applying to 15 schools will make your final decision incredibly difficult because you will be comparing very different options. And applying to a bunch of schools where you are a better academic student than the profile is selling yourself short. We want to create a list that gives you a few good options and maybe a good surprise or two. School of the Nations will not send your transcripts to more than 10 universities, so you will be forced to be thoughtful during this process.

Admissions Processes

Applications for the UK and US

Since these countries are the most common application destination and they have the most centralized processes, I want to explain the UCAS and Common Application.

UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the only way to apply to universities in the UK, except Scotland. You are allowed to apply to 5 programmes and only 1 of those programmes can be at Oxford or Cambridge (Oxbridge). In the past, some students have applied as independents, but we will require all students applying to the UK to apply through the school portal. This will allow the guidance office to be able to more efficiently make sure all of your documents are submitted. You will fill out the necessary demographic information and the school will send one reference along with your predicted IB results. You are also required to submit a personal statement that is relatively short and includes clear reasoning about why you want to study that particular programme in the UK. You should not have any university-specific references and everything in the personal statement should point towards your love and passion for the subject you want to explore. If you apply to Oxbridge, your application is due in early October, but otherwise you will have until December 1st to submit everything.

UCAS also has three additional processes that may be useful for you. Extra, Clearing, and Adjustment processes occur after the initial application decisions are made. If you are unsuccessful with receiving any offers, you can add one additional programme for consideration (Extra). Or if you do not do as well on IB exams as you were predicted, you can apply via clearing to find a spot. Conversely, if you do markedly better on IB exams than predicted, you are able to submit applications to more selective or prestigious options than you may have considered via the Adjustment process.

The UCAS website (www.ucas.com) is a great place to visit to learn more about the application.

Common Application

Roughly 500 universities in the US use the Common Application (“Common App”). You fill out the demographic information once, like UCAS, and send it to multiple universities. There are no restrictions on the number of universities to which you send your application and you do not necessarily apply for a specific programme. However, unlike UCAS, you may incur application fees for each school to which you apply. The Common App is also a bit different because you will need both a teacher and counselor recommendation. Instead of submitting predicted IB results (unless an individual university requests them), SON will submit official transcripts through the point of application, which will be your Form 3-5 grades along with your first term of Form 6.

You will also do a personal statement for Common App, but it is different than UCAS because the goal is to learn something about your personality, not necessarily your commitment to a particular academic programme. US universities are more concerned with the holistic person you bring to a campus than is the UK. Deadlines for Common App are university-specific, but we will require that all applications are made by December 1st to ensure the majority of deadlines are met.

Standardized Tests

TOEFL/IELTS

These are the two main English proficiency exams. TOEFL is generally for the US and IELTS is generally for the UK, but you may find that universities will accept either result. As an international student, you will be asked to prove your English ability. Often times, a score of 5 or better on IB English is considered sufficient, but you do not have the luxury of waiting to see if you get that result. I encourage you to plan to take either test (you really shouldn't need to do both unless your application list requires it) during September or October of your Form 6 year. There are testing centers in Hong Kong and sometimes Macau.

TOEFL website- www.ets.org/toefl

IELTS website- www.ielts.org

SAT/ACT

These two popular exams are required for many, but not all, US universities. You have likely heard about them. Both are more general knowledge or aptitude tests. The SAT makes more sense as an international student because the ACT may involve a curriculum that you may receive at SON. College Board, the creator of the SAT, is remaking the SAT for 2016 and beyond, which means that it will be different than the current test. However, it is impossible to know how different it will be until the tests are administered. As you begin to research institutions that you wish to consider, some US institutions have adopted a "test-optional policy" where you are not required to submit SAT or ACT results for your application. The philosophy is that universities can garner how good of a student you are from your marks and references, so if you are not happy with your scores and you do not think they are an accurate representation of your ability, you do not have to submit them.

SAT website- sat.collegeboard.org

ACT website- www.act.org

SAT IIs

These are different SATs that are subject-specific. Some schools ask for SAT IIs because they care about how you do on a more in-depth exam. Often times, if you use SAT IIs, you will need to send at least 2 SAT IIs for your application.

SAT II website- sat.collegeboard.org (search for Subject Tests)

Entrance Exams for Macau Universities

If you are applying to local universities and will not be a Diploma candidate, you will likely have to take entrance exams. These happen in March and April of your Form 6 year and include tests of Math, English, and Mandarin. You may be asked to do others or you may be able to be exempted from the tests, particularly the Mandarin exam, but you need to do your research to make sure you know the requirements.

Personal Statements

As we have discussed before, there are two main types of personal statements you may be asked to submit. UCAS asks for a personal statement that highlights your commitment to a particular subject. What activities outside the classroom do you participate in that proves your love of a particular subject? Do you read a lot of books about your subject on your own time? Do you take college or university coursework on top of your SON load that is related? Did you do summer academic programs related to the subject? What internships or work experience have you had that

have cemented your love of a particular subject? These are the types of questions you need to address. If you do not have good answers for these questions, you should begin to focus on outside experiences that can enhance your resume and application. Also, you need to make the personal statement general because you only get to submit one statement. Therefore, you do not need to make comments about particular universities, but show your love for a topic and your commitment to working hard on it in university. Remember, since you are applying to one programme at a particular university, they don't care much about your love of other subjects, so be specific about your particular application.

The US wants more information about you as a person than your commitment to a particular subject. Personal statement questions for the US universities will be more personal: talk about a time you have overcome an obstacle; tell us about your favorite fictional character; talk about your hero or inspiration. These topics want you to show the university that you had depth and self-awareness that you may not be able to expand upon in other aspects of the application. Restating your resume or talking about your love of a particular university are not helpful personal statements. You are able to be much more creative and illustrative with US personal statements than you are with UK ones. This also makes them a bit harder because you have more freedom. Also, as part of the Common App, you will only do one personal statement that gets sent to all universities. This essay needs to also refrain from references to individual colleges because all will read it. Some universities have "supplements" that you will need to do to complete your application. A university supplement may include additional essays or demographic questions.

In the summer of Form 5, you will be asked to finalize your personal statements and resumes. This will allow you to focus on reference letters and get your applications done quickly and early in the first term. The longer you wait to do applications, the more stress it will cause.

Reference Letters

Another key component of your application will be your reference letter(s). If an application requires reference letters (not all will), a teacher recommendation is going to be one of them. There are some applications that ask for a counselor recommendation or a School report. In the summer before Form 6, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that you will give to referees. This will include information that will be helpful to teachers and the guidance counselor to include in your reference. Teachers are trained on how to write effective reference letters, but they need your help to remind them about some of your individual circumstances, so please fill out the Reference Request form fully. You should also know that you will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement that will preclude you from being able to see the references. Universities value true representations of you as a student, and we have to be able to allow teachers and the guidance counselor that freedom. It is always a good idea to ask a referee if he/she can write a positive recommendation about you. This should make you feel comfortable with the confidentiality.

Choosing the right teacher to do your reference is also very important. First of all, the teacher needs to be from an academic core subject. A coach who has never had you in class would not be a good choice. You also should choose a teacher who knows you well, not necessarily the teacher who gives you the best marks. If you are applying for Business to the UK, you probably need to ask Ms. Jones to be your referee. If you are applying as an undecided major to the US, any teacher who can speak to what kind of student you are in the classroom could be appropriate. Try to select a teacher who has had you for multiple classes and knows you outside the classroom, if possible.

You will need to ask your referees to do your references at least 3 weeks prior to your application deadline. Teachers will have the right to refuse your request if you do not give them enough time to write your letter. As an applicant,

you have a vested interest in giving your referees enough time to do a good job on your reference. Asking a teacher a week before something is due to do something well, is simply unreasonable. Your teachers will have multiple students from Form 6 asking that they write references and that is on top of their other teaching responsibilities. Give them adequate notice and you are much more likely to get a well-written and effective reference done for you.

If a university requires a counselor recommendation or School report, it will include information that puts you into context of your peers. Things like class rank, your personality relative to others, and your special circumstances that may exist are typically included in a counselor recommendation. It is important to make sure the guidance counselor knows of any extenuating circumstances that could have had a negative impact on your attendance or performance while in Secondary school. Universities value the greater context and want to understand SON, as well. We submit School Profiles with every transcript to give admissions officer's knowledge about SON in case they do not know about us.

Interviews

Some students will be asked to do interviews. This could be for admission or scholarship considerations. Interviews can be very difficult, but the more you practice, the better you will be. Universities will use interviews to learn more about you as a person. They want to see how you interact with others, your passion for a topic, your personality, and also your English-speaking ability. There are numerous resources on the internet that can help you be prepared for a good interview, but you should practice having answers to the following questions because nearly every admissions interview will include some version of them:

1. Why do you want to study this particular programme at this university?
2. Why is this university a good fit for you? What challenges may exist in your transition to our university?
3. What are your biggest strengths? Weaknesses? (this could be academic or in general)
4. What do you do outside the classroom? How might that help you in university?
5. Tell us about a time that you had to work in a group? What role do you take in a group?
6. Tell us about an obstacle you have had to overcome in your life.
7. Do you have any questions for us? (Always have a couple thoughtful questions written down that you can ask!!! This shows an extraordinary level of passion about the university and subject)

These questions are not an exhaustive list, but this gives you a sense for the type of preparation you need to do prior to interviewing. Other things to prepare include:

- Thoroughly researched the university, programme, faculty, and mission statement. This will allow you to be as prepared as possible. Also, have at least one thoughtful question written down that has come to you during your research. This will greatly impress the committee.
- Interviews may be done via Skype. Check that your Internet connection, technology and background are all working and appropriate.
- Have your parents or other interview you beforehand. Practice making eye-contact and speaking clearly.
- Think about your dress. School uniforms make sense during school hours, but otherwise, dress nicely.

Agents

Some of you will hire outside individuals to help with university applications. While this is absolutely your prerogative, the guidance counselor's main role is to be that person for you. Before you commit resources to an outside person, please speak with the guidance counselor as to why your student needs an agent. With a relatively

small graduating class, the guidance counselor can devote significant time to each student, so an outside agent may not be helpful. If you are applying to study in Australia, however, you will have to hire an agent due to their admissions structure. There are some ways that adding an agent to your university selection search makes things more challenging, but if the peace of mind is helpful to you, that is reasonable. School of the Nations will not give any official documents to an agent. Transcripts, reference letters, and/or predicted grades will only go to universities directly, students, or their parents. If an agent is in control of a student's application, this may delay getting documents where they need to go,

How They Decide

Students and families want to know the exact formula for being admitted to university. Unfortunately, there is not one. As a student, you can only focus on getting as good of marks as possible and making sure that you have extracurricular activities that enhance your university application are the two things that you need to make priorities in Secondary school. Fluency in English is also very important, if you plan to attend an English-speaking country. That being said, here are some general things to know about the admissions decision process.

Universities want to admit students who can be successful.

Your marks and curriculum will be the biggest predictors for how you will succeed in university. International Baccalaureate is particularly useful for university admissions because it is standardized across the world. Simply put, you will be compared against other applicants based on your marks and curriculum. Make sure you are thoughtful about curriculum choices in Secondary school because universities will use curriculum choices as deciding factors, if needed. Standardized tests (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, and IELTS) may or may not matter in admission. Some universities do not use these exams, particularly for IB students, while others will want them. Often times, as long as performance on these exams mirror performance on your transcript, you are fine. It is when there are drastic differences between the standardized exams and your school marks that can be problematic. Obviously, you want to get as high of SAT scores as possible, but if your transcript marks are not strong, even a perfect score will not be valued much.

Universities will compare you to other international students.

For those of you with passports to the countries to which you are applying, you may get domestic student treatment (tuition, etc.), but for the majority of your applications, you will be considered in comparison to other international students. For less-selective institutions, this will not be a big deal. If you are a good candidate for admission, you may even have a higher chance for being admitted due to your financial contributions. For more-selective institutions, however, there are sometimes limits to the percentage of international students who they want in each incoming class. While competition is always more difficult at these places, you may find that things outside your control may impact decisions (e.g. number of Chinese applicants and financial situation of family). Also, some universities include demonstrated interest in admission decisions. Therefore, if you have had a chance to visit a campus on a family holiday or speak with an admission rep at a university expo or via email, these things could help improve your application relative to others.

Your financial considerations as a family matter.

You should not let financial considerations preclude you from considering or even applying to a university. That being said, for every institution to which you apply, you will be required to submit financial documentation as part of the student visa application. Some universities will not pay attention to this information during the application process, but others might. As an international student, you are often looked at as a “full-pay student,” so your ability to pay for all costs without scholarships or financial aid can be required before admission is possible. This can work in your favor if you are applying to a school who needs the funds and you can afford it. However, if you are relying on financial aid or scholarships from a particular university to make it feasible, you may find that your process is more competitive. Again, this should not dissuade you from applying to a school, if you are interested, but finances may work for you or against you in the admissions process.

Personal statements and recommendations MAY matter.

Personal statements and essays are the most difficult aspects of an application to know how it will impact decisions. For some universities and students, they are crucial to an admission decision. Perhaps your essay proves your English ability and your teacher explains why you did poorly on a term grade, but made huge improvements. These factors could absolutely impact your admission decision. For other universities, they may not even require these aspects or they may never get read. In general, the more selective a university, the more important the personal statements and recommendations are. The admissions offices at highly selective universities are charged with pouring over applications with great scrutiny and every minor detail could make or break an admission decision. Admissions offices at less-selective universities do not have the time or resources to devote to reading every piece of documentation, so decisions are usually based solely on marks. The moral of the story is that you need to do as good of a personal statement, as possible, but do not be disappointed if you speak with your admissions rep at a particular university and he or she does not seem to remember your topic. It is possible that he or she never read it or that it was one of thousands of personal statements. Either way, you should do a good one.

Your attention to detail REALLY matters.

Following deadlines, proper grammar on documents, and responding promptly to emails or other communication are all very important in giving good impressions to admissions officers. This is one of your first forays into adulthood and university admissions offices expect you to do your part. Ignorance about rules and deadlines, writing emails using text language or emoji, having an unprofessional email (ilikegirls@gmail.com, for example) as your main contact information, and using poor English in any communication are all sure-fire ways to give poor impressions to admissions staff. Make sure you have perused all fine print on the website and letters, have your application completed fully and accurately, and that you have a firm grasp on deadlines. This process has to start as early as possible. You are in a very supportive environment at School of the Nations, where you may not be too worried about being a day late on an assignment or not meeting other expectations, but that is not appropriate for the university admissions process.

General University Selection Timeline

This timeline is to give you and your family a general sense of what you should be doing to make yourself as competitive and complete of a university applicant, as possible. The particular dates may fluctuate year-to-year, but the general themes will remain the same. Start to think about universities in Form 2 and you'll notice that as you advance, you get more detailed directions. The more work you do earlier in the process, the easier your life will be at the end of it. Check to see that you are doing these things and ask for help from your parents, guidance counselor, teachers, or other mentors, if you are confused at any point. You are not expected to do this alone, but you have to be willing to ask for help.

Forms 2 and 3

- **Work hard on your marks.** You get a chance to start fresh in Form 3 for the transcript that universities will see. IGCSE is your chance to prove that you are a student of an international-caliber, so focus on being successful in these courses. No marks from prior to Form 3 will be seen, but every official mark will be reported to universities starting in Form 3.
- **Choose courses that may apply to your university studies.** You will begin to get choices for the courses you wish to take starting in Secondary school. Being thoughtful about course selection is very important. If you think you may want to pursue Medicine in university, you need to make sure you are taking Biology and Chemistry every chance you can. If you think you want to study History, though, you need to take as many cultural/humanities classes (History, Global Perspectives, Psychology, Art, or Drama), as you can. If you have no idea what you want to study, a diverse course selection is important.
- **Begin exploring extracurricular activities.** If you do not already have activities that you do outside of school, now is the time to start. If you think you want to study in the UK, finding activities that are clearly connected to the courses of study you are considering is important. Summer academic enrichment programs and internships could be a great way to do this. If you think you want to study in the US, finding activities that make you well-rounded is appealing. Activities like community service, leadership activities, sport, and the arts are all positive for your university applications.
- **Create time management structures for yourself.** While this is not something you need to do to apply to universities, you are beginning to have more work, more activities, and more demands on your time. Whether you make to-do lists, use a calendar, or some other approach, you need to begin to get yourself and your time organized before you get much further in school.

Form 4

- **Keep working hard on your IGCSE courses.** Your exams at the end of the year will be official and included with transcripts to universities. If you had a rough Form 3 year, you have to start making improvements now. If you did well in Form 3, you need to maintain a high level of performance. Also, be prepared for the exams at the end of the year.
- **Begin researching university options.** If you have not begun thinking about where you may want to study, now is the time to do so. This will allow you the chance to visit universities during family holidays and also spend time going to university expos in Macau or Hong Kong. Also, you are invited to any presentation by university representatives who come to SON. Take advantage of these times to learn about what universities have to offer you.

- **Understand the difference between A-Levels and IB Diploma Programme.** These are two very different curricula for your upper Secondary experience. You will need to decide if you plan to go elsewhere to study A-levels or perhaps an American curriculum. The IB curriculum is going to prepare you for university incredibly well. Your writing skills will be better than those of your non-IB peers and you will have done more research than others. However, the IB Diploma Programme may not be for you. Even if it is not, pursuing a non-Diploma Track certificate at SON is possible, particularly if you want to study in the US. Every student's situation is different, but please make yourself informed before making a choice. Here is a good resource to help you.

<http://independenteducationconsultants.co.uk/evaluating-ib-vs-a-level-for-sixth-form-study/>

- **IB course selection.** Late in Form 4, you will be asked to choose in which IB courses you wish to enroll. These are very important choices for your university applications. You need to be thoughtful about which courses you take and also which ones you take at the Higher and Standard levels. Work with the guidance counselor and your teachers to make a plan for which courses will set you up for success in school and also with university applications.
- **Summer after Form 4 is a good time to try your SATs.** SATs, ACTs, and other standardized exams are challenging. If you are going to the US, you should plan to take the SAT at least 3 times before October of Form 6. Taking it too many more times than that is usually unnecessary due to the predictability and reliability of the exams. However, you need to practice them. Online practice tests are very helpful, but do not create exam conditions. Don't be concerned about the score as much as getting the experience of the test itself.
- **Begin signing up for university mailings.** Almost all universities will share print, electronic, and social media communication for marketing purposes. You will get some of these things without knowing how you signed up, but I encourage you to find some universities in which you have particular interest and get on their respective mailing lists. You can begin to see what messages are disseminated and see what aspects of different universities draw your attention. Along with this, make sure your university application email is appropriate and that you check it consistently. I encourage you to use one that includes only your name in the email (e.g. firstname.lastname@gmail.com) so that you will be easily identifiable in email communication.

Form 5

- **Begin working hard on your IB courses.** Your marks from Form 5 will be the last ones that really impact your GPA for university applications to the US. Your performance in IB during the course of the year will greatly inform teachers as they do predicted IB exam grades for you for other university applications. In many ways, Form 5 is your most important year for a successful university search process.
- **Visit as many campuses and meet with as many admissions representatives, as you can.** You have to make it a priority to spend time with admissions staff and visiting campuses that interest you. If you wait until Form 6 to start doing visits, it will be way too late. You should sit down with your family and try to plan family holiday trips in locations where you may wish to study. Please take advantage of university representatives who come to campus. They are investing a lot of time and money to share their respective campuses with you. While I do not expect you go to all of them, you need to make an effort to go to some of them.

- **This is your last chance for extracurricular activities.** If you have not already invested heavily in extracurricular activities, you really need to do so. Remember, where you think you want to study could impact the type of activities you pursue. Summer after Form 5 is your last chance to do a summer enrichment program that can be directly attributable to your university study. If you have been investing in extracurricular already, you need to begin to show leadership capacity within the groups. Keep progressing and working hard.

October

- Attend TIS University Expo with class.
- Take the Fall SAT, if you are going to the US. It is usually September or October.

December

- Use your winter holiday to do significant research about university options.
- If you are traveling for winter holiday, incorporate campus visits to places you may not otherwise visit.

Term 4

- Parent Night for Form 5
- Personal statement workshops
- Resume' writing workshops
- Finalize your plan for the summer before Form 6.
- Take the March SAT. You should begin to see trends in your scores. (US only)

Form 6

This is the crunch time for university selection. You have invested so many hours of time in selecting appropriate universities to which to apply, in working hard on your courses, and finding ways to make your application well-rounded. The hope is that the efforts we have put in up to this point will make your Form 6 life a bit easier to allow you to focus on doing well with IB exams.

- **Work hard on your IB courses.** Your universities will be sent predicted IB exam grades. Even if you get predicted a perfect score, you will still have to actually get those marks for them to matter. So, work hard.
- **Keep attending university presentations.**
- **Finalize your university application list.** Remember, no more than 10 schools. You need to have a mix of schools along your talent range.
- **Take leadership roles.** You are the oldest ones in the school. You are the longest-tenured players, members, etc. within these groups. It is time for you to be a leader.

September

- Complete University Application Boot camp. This will happen the week before school starts.
- Submit forms to referees for recommendations.
- Look at the TOEFL/IELTS dates to figure out when it is best for you. Do not wait until the last minute to do these.
- Keep the guidance counselor updated with how you are doing. Communication is key.
- Individual parent and student meetings for finalizing university application list. It is a team effort.

- If you are applying to Oxford, Cambridge, or medical/dental/veterinarian programs in the UK, you need to submit applications this month. Also, if you are applying Early Decision to some schools in the US, your applications can be due as early as 15 October. Make sure you have done everything you need.

October

- Take the Fall SAT for the last time. If you do not do as well as you would have hoped, you may have one more chance to re-take before deadlines pass.
- All reference requests should be submitted to referees before 15 October. This will give teachers six weeks to prepare your letters before the 1 December deadline.
- Visit the guidance counselor for any questions or concerns during this time. Be proactive and do not wait until issues become a crisis before speaking with the guidance counselor.
- Attend the university expo at TIS.

November

- Complete all final drafts of your resume and personal statement.

December

- All applications will need to be submitted by 1 December, except for local university applications.
- **Relax** and devote all attention to IB coursework.
- If your US University will allow it, you have one more chance in December to take the SAT for admission purposes.
- If you have not taken the TOEFL or IELTS, you need to schedule it.

January

- You should be able to relax now.
- Focus on finishing strong with IB courses. Avoid the temptation to begin to become lazy and unmotivated that comes with being near the end of secondary school.
- As you get conditional or unconditional offers, communicate with the guidance office.

February

- An interview skills workshop will be provided.
- Some universities will request financial documentation (bank statements, lists of assets, etc.) if they have not already done so. If you are applying to a university and your status as a domestic or international student is in question, you may receive requests to verify your status. This are completely normal requests.
- Local university deadlines for exam exemptions are due by mid-February. Pay attention to individual university deadlines to make sure you haven't missed any.
- Local university applications begin being due by late February.

March

- Interviews for local universities occur in March.
- Conditional offers from UCAS and most US universities should come out by 1 April. Many will be out earlier than that. Read the fine print of offers in terms of when you must make a final decision. Universities typically

will hold you to that final date and forgetting to submit an enrollment deposit or proper forms is not acceptable.

April

- This is typically your last month to make a final decision regarding your university home. If you need to ask any pressing questions of admissions staff members, you should do it.
- Make sure you have any documentation required for your student visas identified and submitted, if appropriate.
- Last push of IB exam studying occurs now. You should have a sense for how close you are to your needed marks for conditional offers from your mock exams.

May and June

- Form 6 will wrap up. You will take your IB exams, finalize your university selection, and get ready for your transition away from SON.
- University Culture Conversation. The guidance counselor will sit down with you as a Form 6 class to discuss some things to expect at university.
- GRADUATION!!!!

Glossary

This glossary of terms attempts to explain any words within this guidebook that may not be understood. Please let Mr. Bryan know if that are any other words, phrases, or references that you do not understand.

A

Academic advising- support program where universities match students with advisors for course selection and academic programme considerations.

Adjustment- UCAS process where your final IB results exceed your predicted ones, so you may include an application to a more prestigious university before deciding.

Agent- outside person employed by families to support university admission process.

Associate's degrees- two-year degrees in the US.

C

Common Application (Common App) - the centralized application for the US with over 500 universities accepting it.

Community colleges- two-year colleges in the US. After completing the Associate's degree, students can transfer to Bachelor degree programmes.

Clearing- if your conditional offers from UCAS are higher than your actual IB results, you may apply to other options that match your results.

Clery Act- law in the US that requires universities to publicize crime statistics for every campus.

Comprehensive universities- mid-sized universities in US that offer many programmes of study.

Counselor recommendation- is a reference by the guidance counselor that speaks to who you are as a person. Contextual questions such as class rank, grading scale, and General SON information is also included.

D

Demonstrated interest- ways that applicants have shown their desire to attend a particular campus. Can include visiting campus, university expos, phone conversations with admissions, etc. Some universities, particularly highly selective ones, use this as part of the review process.

E

Early Action- application type in the US that is non-binding. Students apply for an earlier application deadline with an agreement to hear responses from universities earlier than Regular Decision applicants. Can also be a deadline for scholarship consideration?

Early Decision- application type in the US that is binding. Students apply to one university and if they are admitted, they must enroll.

Extra-if you are not offered any spots with your initial list with UCAS, you may add one programme at a time to be considered for admission.

F

Fit schools- universities where your academic profile matches the institutions', making admission probable.

Foundation course- up to an extra year of course work for UK universities. Is offered as a bridge between secondary school and the full academic programme at a particular university.

Full-pay student- is a student who does not qualify for financial aid. Most international students are considered to be full-pay.

G

Graduate programmes- refers to upper level degrees (Masters, PhD, Law or Medical degrees).

I

International student services- infrastructure at respective universities to help international students with issues and transition to campus. Can include visa, insurance, housing, and other services.

Ivy League- refers to group of elite universities in the US that includes Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and others.

L

Liberal arts- a comprehensive curriculum that gives students a breadth of study.

Likely schools- universities where your academic profile meets or exceeds general admission standards, making admission likely.

N

Non-JUPAS- In Hong Kong, JUPAS refers to local applicants and non-JUPAS refers to international students.

O

Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) - centralized application system for universities in Ontario, Canada.

Oxbridge- slang that refers to Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the UK.

P

Personal statement- also known as admissions essay. Your narrative aspect of an application for admission.

Predicted IB results- UK (and others) universities will want your teachers to predict what your final IB results will be. This allows them to make conditional offers based on what your teachers believe you will end up getting.

R

Reach schools- universities where your academic profile makes admission possible, but unlikely.

Regular Decision- Normal deadline for university applications.

Research universities- large universities in the US with major research initiatives. Typically also have law and medical schools.

Rolling Admissions- process where universities make determinations about admission as materials are submitted. No fixed deadline.

Russell Group- slang that refers to group of 24 prestigious UK universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

S

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) - one of two main university admissions exams in the US.

School Profile- document that outlines the history and mission of SON. It also includes grading scale, information about curriculum, and other universities that SON graduates consider. This gives universities a lot of good information to put SON in context of other schools.

SAT IIs- subject-based exams. Typically, universities will require two of these for admission in place of the SAT.

Specialty schools- colleges that focus on particular industries (e.g. Hospitality, Business, and Art/Design)

T

Teacher recommendation- reference from an SON faculty member that speaks to your ability as a student. This shows universities your academic self in another way beyond transcripts.

Test-optional policy- US universities do not require an SAT or ACT for admission. www.fairtest.org can be used to find such institutions.

TOEFL/IELTS- English-proficiency exams. Both are used widely. However, TOEFL tends to be used by US and IELTS by the UK.

Transferring- process by which students change universities or academic programme.

U

Undergraduate programmes- refers to bachelor and associate degree programmes.

Unis- slang for university in the UK.

Universities and Colleges Application System (UCAS)- the centralized university application system for the UK.

US News and World Report Rankings- one of the most popular university ranking systems across the world.