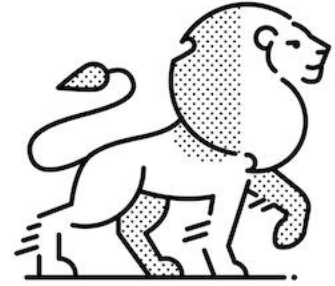


ISD

Counselling Department

INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL OF
DÜSSELDORF

SINCE 1968



**Preparing for the
Higher Education
Research & Application
Process**

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PREPARING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IS A 4-YEAR PROCESS

<http://www.admissions.umich.edu/prospective/8-11thgrade/preparing.php>

Preparing for higher education is something that you need to be thinking about sooner rather than later. A Bachelor degree means a great deal in today's world—more career opportunities and better earning potential. But it takes some planning and preparation to find the right institution. It is also becoming more and more important for you to make sure that you have done as much as possible throughout high school to make yourself competitive for admission to the institution of your choice. We hope this guide will assist you throughout high school as you begin researching institutions and preparing yourself for the journey ahead!

Things to consider when researching institutions

- Cost
- Location
- Opportunities for financial aid and scholarships
- Number of students enrolled
- Admissions criteria
- Affiliation (public or private, religious or not, etc.)
- Type of community
- Diversity/student profile
- Number of international students
- Male/female ratio
- Types of housing
- Campus activities/organizations
- Athletic programmes
- Specialized programmes

Where to begin

- Visit institution websites
- Begin to list and compare institution characteristics
- Meet with school counsellors and teachers to find out the type of institution where you might be competitive for admission
- Consult parents, current students, and alumni
- Attend higher education fairs and speak to institution representatives
- Make campus visits and attend information sessions for prospective students at institutions you are interested in

Higher Education preparation checklist

Get started now! Take charge and plan your high school programme with this checklist.

9th & 10th Grade

- Develop an organization system to log your assignments, exams, social events, appointments, job interviews, etc. This will help you manage your time effectively and develop organizational skills.
- Be sure that the courses you sign up for prepare you for higher education. Select an academic programme that will challenge and interest you, and courses that meet institution entrance requirements. Seek the advice of your parents and counsellors. Try to take any accelerated, honours, or advanced classes that are available in subjects that you excel in.
- If you plan on applying to the U.S., take the PSAT 10 test in the spring. This is a good practice test and will help identify areas to work on in preparation for taking the SAT in grade 11.
- Begin to explore careers and institutions. Talk to people who work in career fields that interest you. What education do those careers require? You can research information online, during the Career Unit in Life Skills, and plan your 10th grade Praktikum to gain experience in a career field of interest.
- Get involved in school and community activities. Develop leadership skills – involvement may lead to scholarships and/or summer jobs.
- Start discussing higher education costs with your parents. It is never too early to start creating a financial plan for your post high school education.
- Record your activities, awards, and accomplishments in the '**Portfolio**' section of **MaiaLearning** so when you are asked for this information on applications in your senior year you will have it at your fingertips!

11th Grade

- Continue to take challenging courses and to explore careers. This is a VERY important year. Institutions around the world generally base their admission decision on your year 10 and 11 grades.
- Choose DP courses that fit with your higher education plans and work hard from the start. If you are unsure if your courses fit with what and where you want to study, see your counsellor.
- If you plan on applying to the U.S., take the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) in the fall. This is a good practice test and will help identify areas to work on. Strong scores may lead to a scholarship for US citizens and residents.
- Begin to shop around; not all institutions are the same. Gather as much information as possible through institution websites or brochures (available in the North Building LRC). Compare entrance requirements, cost, size, unique programmes, facilities, your intended field of study, athletics, and extracurricular activities. Talk to friends or relatives who have attended institutions that interest you.
- Attend at least one large higher education fair. It is a good time to gather information about several different institutions and ask questions. They can be fun and informative!
- Check the Counselling Department bulletin board in the North Building regularly to see when institution representatives will be visiting ISD and then attend these very useful information sessions.
- Take the SAT and/or the ACT Plus Writing during the spring semester. Find out which test(s) are required by the institutions you are interested in. Speak to your counsellor if you are unsure if your score is strong enough and ask them if you should re-take the test.
- Search for scholarships, both institution-specific and private. Every institution maintains a Financial Aid page and there are several independent websites with lists of scholarship that you can receive regardless of which institution you choose to attend.
- In the spring and summer before your senior year, visit as many campuses as possible. Many institutions allow you to register online for campus tours and information sessions.
- Create a filing system to organize all of your higher education research and application materials.

12th Grade

- Avoid “Senioritis”! Your grade 12 courses and grades make a difference. Notify the institutions that you have applied to if there is a change in your grades or course schedule.
- You can still take or retake the SAT and ACT Plus Writing but make sure the test scores can be sent to your chosen institutions before the application deadline. See your counsellor for a list of standardized testing dates and application deadlines.
- Apply to 6-10 institutions. Competition for admission varies every year. Work hard and apply to your “dream” institutions, but be prepared by applying to a “safety” school, just in case. Do not feel that you have to go overboard – apply only to institutions you would be excited to attend.
- Continue to visit institutions that you are interested in.
- Send your applications in early. Provide all requested materials, e.g., recommendations, transcripts, test scores, and essays.
- Applying for financial aid in the U.S.? Send in the required forms (FAFSA and/or CSS Profile) by the stated deadlines. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/afsa> | <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>
- After you have made the final decision about which institution you plan to attend, you should notify all other institutions to which you have been admitted that you will not be accepting their offer. This is a common courtesy and a good practice that will smooth the road ahead for future ISD applicants.

ACTION PLAN: YOUR GRADE 10 YEAR

Adapted from: <http://www.collegeboard.org/parents/plan/getting-ready/26397.html>

Now that grade 10 is in full swing and you are ready to make some decisions about your future, it is time to put the pedal to the metal and get serious on strengthening your academic profile. From taking challenging electives to discovering extracurricular activities, there are many important steps you should take this year.

FALL

- Review your child's four-year academic schedule together with them. Ask questions such as:
 - Are they fulfilling the minimum requirements for admission?
 - Are the electives they are enrolled in challenging and related to what they want to study in the future?
- Help your child update their four-year extracurricular and athletic activity schedule in **MaiaLearning**. Encourage them to think about new sports, instruments, school/community service projects or other activities they may be interested in exploring.
- Considering the U.S.? Contact the counsellor about whether or not your child should register for the PSAT 10 and/or the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).
- Meet with your child's teachers for a brief chat at the beginning of the school year.
- Your child will complete the **Interest Profiler** assessment in Life Skills in the fall, plus the follow-up investigative workbook that includes researching three career fields of interest.
- Complete the other **free personal and career assessments** available in the 'Explore' section of **MaiaLearning** and compare the results to the Interest Profiler. www.maialearning.com
- Follow your child's progress with the **MYP Personal Project** and encourage them to explore an area that could relate to a future study/career path. The Personal Project is a great way for your child to demonstrate their early interest in a particular subject to institutions.

WINTER

- Together with your child, review their January report card and how they are doing in each of their key subject areas. Encourage them to keep up the good work, and help them set goals for improvement in subjects where they need more support. Learn how to help your child develop more effective homework skills by using the Pomodoro Technique. <https://www.developgoodhabits.com/pomodoro-technique/>
- Read the latest news on today's higher education costs and how the financial aid system works in different countries.
- Estimate how much money your family will need, how much your family can reasonably be expected to pay, whether you are on track to save enough and what you need to do to reach your goal.
- Read! Read! Read! Reading helps prepare your child academically, while developing their interests, expanding their knowledge and improving the vocabulary and reading comprehension skills needed for university and for standardized tests such as the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT and TOEFL/IELTS. Get ideas for reading from **101 Great Books**. <https://www.listchallenges.com/college-boards-101-books-for-the-college-bound>
- Visit the Higher Education section of the North Building LRC to begin informing yourself about the admissions process in various countries, learn more about specific institutions that your child is interested in, read about recommended institutions for certain programmes, and much, much more!

SPRING

- Encourage your child to keep up the good work in subjects they are strong in and help them set goals for improvement in subjects that require more attention.
- Request a meeting with your child's counsellor to discuss their Grade 11/12 academic programme and course choices and how they fit with your child's higher education plans.
- Encourage your child to start making summer plans. Consider jobs, internships, volunteer opportunities (particularly if you will visit your home/passport country where your child speaks the language), or athletic programmes.
- Register your child for the Spring ACT/SAT preparation course offered at ISD (for U.S. institutions).
- During your child's Praktikum, encourage him/her to make the most of the experience and to take the opportunity to investigate one potential career path.
- Check with the Counselling Department, read the Weekly Announcements and search online for summer learning programmes offered to high school students.

SUMMER

- Review your child's summer reading list. Ask teachers for recommendations. Encourage them to read at least four books this summer.

THE ROAD TO YOUR FUTURE CONTINUES

Laying the foundation for Higher Education

- **Explore** your abilities, interests and possible careers options by completing the career and personality assessments available in the 'Character' section of MaiaLearning – www.maialearning.com
- **Consider your goals and aims for the future, after graduating from ISD.** Think about your interests, skills, abilities, personal preferences and goals:
 - What are your academic strengths and interests?
 - In which country would you like to study?
 - What subject or major do you wish to pursue?
 - Would you prefer a higher education programme that is more theoretical, more practical/applied, or a mix of both?
 - In what type of learning environment are you most successful?
 - What degree of academic challenge and/or admissions selectivity suits you best?
 - What size of institution would suit you best?
 - What career do you wish to prepare for?
 - Where do you think you might want to live and work after completing your further/higher education programme?
- **Keep your higher education options open** by choosing a grade 11/12 academic programme and courses that fulfil the entrance requirements for the subject(s), major(s) and/or programme(s) you are interested in.
- **Higher education entrance requirements change yearly and vary widely from country to country, institution to institution and even programme to programme.** Country specific DP policies and guidelines for higher education admission can be found on the IBO website: <https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/recognition-of-the-ib-diploma-by-countries-and-universities/country-recognition-statements/>. This information should only be used as a guideline. **It is essential that you contact each institution you are interested in to request information regarding admission policies, procedures and requirements.**
- For DP entrance requirements to UK institutions, visit the "Course Search" or "Subjects" sections of the **University and College Admissions Service (UCAS)** website at <https://digitalucas.com/search> | <https://wwwucas.com/explore/subjects>. **Entrance requirements are updated yearly on the UCAS website and subject specific requirements vary from institution to institution.** For example, if you wish to study Chemical Engineering in the UK at the University of Bath or the University of Birmingham both require DP Mathematics and DP Chemistry at the Higher Level. If, however, you wish to study the same subject at Imperial College London, DP Mathematics, DP Chemistry **and** DP Physics or DP Biology are required at the Higher Level. Information found on UCAS should always be confirmed directly with the institutions.

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

- **Challenge yourself academically and work hard to achieve the strongest academic record possible.** The most important factor in the admission decision for institutions in the U.S., Canada and the majority of EU and international institutions is your **ISD Senior School Transcript**. The SRS Transcript lists all of the high school courses you have taken in grades 9 to 12, as well as the final achievement grade for each course. Individual institutions will review your SRS Transcript and evaluate the level of difficulty and your success in the courses you have chosen. They will be looking for strong and consistent achievement throughout the four years. Regardless of where you are planning to pursue your higher education you must remember that **the grades you earn now do count!**
- **Institutions in the UK will review the UCAS application making sure that you have selected the required DP courses for your chosen programme and that you meet or exceed DP predicted score requirements.** Working hard throughout high school will help you to achieve strong DP predicted grades in your senior year. For example, if you are interested in studying Economics at the University College London, they will be looking to see that you have Mathematics Higher Level and are predicted to achieve a minimum of 38 points overall with a minimum score of '6'. Admission tutors will consider giving a qualified candidate (a student who meets all subject prerequisites) a conditional offer of admission based on predicted grades and the quality of the personal statement.
- **It is never too early to begin thinking about your future.** Browse the higher education resource section of the North Building LRC. Explore the 'School Resources' section of MaiaLearning and talk to your parents, friends, teachers and former ISD students about the variety of options available to you following graduation.

- **Meet with institution representatives visiting ISD.** Check the Weekly Announcements, the Daily Bulletin in Schoology, MaiaLearning and the TV screens for announcements.
- **Begin preparing for any required standardized tests such as the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT Plus Writing and/or TOEFL/IELTS.** If required, you will be taking one or more of these tests in grade 11 and again in grade 12. Both the SAT and ACT offer free online preparation and practice, plus ISD offers an online SAT preparation course in partnership with Higher Ground Learning: <https://highergroundlearning.com/classes/p/isd> | <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat> | <https://academy.act.org/>
- **Some UK institutions have additional testing requirements**, particularly for students considering Oxford or Cambridge, and for students interested in Medicine/Veterinary Medicine, Law or Mathematics. Inform yourself now which tests may be relevant for you and start your preparation and review early. Visit the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests>
- **Get involved in extracurricular activities.** Take part in activities that interest you or develop a new interest. Many institutions consider your involvement in the classroom and in the community. The emphasis is on the **3 D's: Dedication, Diversity and Depth**. Devote your time, energy and enthusiasm to a few key, meaningful activities and work towards taking on a leadership position.
- **Keep a record of your extracurricular involvement, volunteer or community service activities, work experience and honours/awards received.** When it comes time to complete your applications for admission, you will be asked to detail the above information. **MaiaLearning** has an excellent '**Portfolio**' feature where you can record and track your activities and upload any certificates/awards/participation statements.
- **Get on the email list and use social media to engage with institutions.** Now is the time to start contacting institutions you are interested in to request brochures, catalogues and prospectus guides. In the digital age, '**Demonstrated interest**' is a new term used to describe students who show an interest in attending a specific institution. <https://www.thoughtco.com/demonstrated-interest-788855>
- **Begin researching scholarship opportunities and requirements.** Consult the Financial Aid section of each institution website for more information.
- **Visit institutions during the school holidays or the summer break.** A campus visit will be the single **most important factor** in helping you to decide if an institution is a good match for *you*. Schedule campus tours or attend 'Open Days' to meet with staff, faculty, athletic departments and currently enrolled students.
- **Explore your career interests and possible subject/major choices through work experience.** Work experience is often highly valued in the higher education admissions process, particularly in the United Kingdom. Consider using time during your school holidays to gain hands-on experience in a career field of interest. **For some programmes in the UK, experience will be expected** – Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Science and Education/Teacher are some examples.
- **Consider taking a university-preparation summer course or a MOOC (<https://www.edx.org/course>) in an area of interest.** Most institutions offer summer programmes designed for high school students. These programmes will not only give you an introduction to campus life but may help you to discover more about an academic area of interest (Architecture, Engineering, Art and Design, Theatre Arts, etc.). There are also a number of pre-DP programmes on offer in the U.S., the UK, and the EU: <http://www.isdcounselling.org/summer-programmes.html>

CHOOSING A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Where do I begin?

As a Diploma Courses (Certificate) or IB Diploma (DP) student, you have the opportunity to study anywhere in the world. With so many options, the task of selecting where to apply to can be daunting. However, if you start the process early you can relieve a lot of stress. The best advice we can give you is to organize yourself now and to invest time and energy into the self-evaluation process and research process. Finally, inform yourself about the admission policies and procedures for each institution on your list and complete all applications well ahead of stated deadlines.

It is your future. Your goal is to discover a range of institutions well suited to **your** unique talents, skills, abilities, interests and personal preferences, not those of your sister, best friend or boyfriend/girlfriend. In the end, you want to choose an institution where you will be happy to live and study for the next three to four years.

STEP ONE – SELF-EVALUATION

Before you can even begin to find institutions that are a good match, take time to evaluate yourself as a person and as a student. A realistic, thoughtful and thorough self-evaluation can help you to determine the type of institution where you will be most satisfied and successful. Without this foundation, it will be impossible for you to make good decisions about the types of institutions that will be right for **you**. Gather copies of your ISD SRS Transcript, standardized test results, a list of activities you have participated in since grade 9 and a list of any awards or special recognitions that you have received. This information will help you to focus on your abilities, skills, interests, values and goals. To begin the self-evaluation process, ask yourself some basic questions:

- What are my educational goals?
- What are my personal goals?
- What are my strongest subject areas?
- What size of institution would I be most comfortable in?
- Do I prefer a big city, a suburb, a small town or the countryside?
- Is my academic record an accurate reflection of my abilities?
- What do I hope to do in the future?
- How has studying at an international school influenced me?
- What are my academic interests and strengths?
- What level of academic challenge is best for me?
- How much structure do I need in an academic programme?
- Will cost be a major factor in my decision?
- Where do I want to live and study for the next several years?
- Is it important to attend an institution that values diversity and enrolls a large number of international students?
- In which type of academic environment do I learn best?
- What activities or interests do I wish to pursue or develop?
- Where do I want to eventually live and work?

Taking the time to do a thorough self-evaluation will help you to focus your higher education search more clearly and to identify those institutions that will best suit your needs and future goals.

STEP TWO – WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN AN INSTITUTION?

Now that you have completed your self-evaluation and are prepared with a personal inventory of your unique strengths and preferences, you are ready to consider those factors that are most important to you when selecting an institution. Everyone will have their own individual set of standards for determining what they are looking for in a higher education experience in terms of size, location, academic programmes, competitiveness, activity offerings, cost, etc. Your goal is to **select those factors that are most important to you** so that you can begin the research process with a clear idea of what you are looking for.

STEP THREE – RESEARCH

Once you have done the self-evaluation and determined the factors that are most important to you in choosing an higher education programme, you are ready to start your research and develop an initial list of institutions. As you begin this process, try not to focus solely on 'brand name' institutions and do not limit your choices with preconceived ideas. There are many wonderful institutions out there to choose from so keep an open mind!

WHERE DO I FIND HIGHER EDUCATION INFORMATION?

When researching institutions, you should use a variety of resources. A few suggested resources are listed below and more ideas and suggestions follow on the next few pages.

- **MaiaLearning** (<http://www.maialearning.com/>)
 - This comprehensive website has many excellent features you can use to support you with your higher education research. It contains the application history for all ISD students since 2005 and can provide you with valuable admissions data for institutions in countries where ISD students apply the most. There are also relevant links organized by country.
- **You are surrounded by people eager to help you** find institutions that are a good match for you. Talk to your counsellor, parents, friends, teachers, former ISD students and visiting institution representatives and for advice.
- **The internet** is a great source of information (Duh!).
 - Individual institution websites provide the most up-to-date information about admission requirements, course offerings, fees, financial aid and campus life.
 - There are a number of sites that provide information about institutions, careers, standardized testing and admissions:
U.S. – The College Board & Peterson's <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/> | www.petersons.com/
UK – UCAS www.ucas.com/undergraduate | <https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects>
Canada – Universities Canada www.univcan.ca/universities
The Netherlands – Study in Holland & Studyfinder www.studyinholland.nl | www.studyfinder.nl
Germany – DAAD & Hochschulkompass www.daad.de/de/ | www.hochschulkompass.de/home.html
The International Baccalaureate website
www.ibo.org/university-admission/recognition-of-the-ib-diploma-by-countries-and-universities/
- **Contact institutions** on your list and request that they send you information about their admission policies and procedures, departments, subjects offered, fees, extra-curricular offerings, etc.
- If you are applying to the UK, subjects with the same name may be quite different in their academic content. If for example, you are applying for Psychology, what is the focus of the programme? Will you achieve a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) or the more scientific Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree? What courses are required? How will you be assessed?
- **Nothing can replace the knowledge you will gain by visiting an institution that you are interested in.** Visits to a number of diverse institutions can help you to clarify the type of campus environment where you will be comfortable personally and successful academically.

STEP FOUR – DEVELOPING AN INITIAL LIST OF INSTITUTIONS

Now that you know yourself well, know what you are looking for in an institution and have researched your options, it is time to develop your initial list. Your initial list may contain as many as 20 or more institutions that you are interested in and wish to explore further. You can keep track of your initial list in the 'College Plan' section of MaiaLearning.

STEP FIVE – REFINING YOUR LIST

By the end of grade 11, your goal will be to narrow down your initial list of institutions to a more manageable number. This step is slightly more difficult because your research must become more in-depth and focused. Consider how the institutions on your list will evaluate you. Look realistically at your academic statistics (how challenging are your high school courses, what grades have you earned, what are your test scores, how involved are you in the extra-curricular life of the school, etc.) and compare your profile to the admission requirements of each institution you are interested in.

DEVELOPING A PROSPECTIVE LIST OF INSTITUTIONS

Factors to consider when researching an institution

With so many higher education options available, how do you determine if an institution is right for you? As there are a number of factors to consider, you need to decide which are *most* important and then determine the institutions that best suit your academic goals and personal needs. Not all of these factors will be important to you, but considering your preferences in the following areas is a good place to start.

LOCATION

- In which country would I like to study?
- Is there a particular region that I am interested in?
- How far away from home or from Germany am I willing to live?
- Do I prefer a large city, a suburban area or a small town?
- In what type of climate will I be most happy?

SIZE

- Do I want to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?
- Would I be happy at a small (under 5,000), medium (5,000-15,000 students), large (15,000-30,000 students) or extra-large (30,000+ students) institution?
- What is the size of the first-year class?
- What is the average class size?
- What is the student/teacher ratio?

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

- Am I interested in attending a single-sex or co-educational institution?
- Do I want to go to a public or private institution?
- Do I want to attend a 2-year, 3-year or 4-year institution?
- Do I want to attend a large institution with many faculties/schools or a smaller institution?
- Do I want to attend a religiously-affiliated institution?
- Do I want study at a specialized institution (business, liberal arts, technical, music, art, etc.)?

ADMISSION PROGRAMMES

U.S. applicants

- What admission programmes does this institution offer? Early Decision? Early Action? Regular Decision? Rolling Admission? Open Admission?
- How many students are accepted under each admission plan?

DP applicants

- What is the minimum required DP predicted score for this course?
- Do I have the required level of Mathematics?
- Do I have the prerequisite DP Higher Level courses?
- Does my current IB Diploma (DP) programme and predictions meet or exceed the standards set by the institution for my particular course?
- What is a typical conditional offer for this course?

STUDENTS

- Is a diverse student community important to me?
- Would I like there to be a large number of other international students on campus?
- Do I want to attend an institution with only Bachelor students or a mixture of Master and PhD students?
- What is the male/female ratio?
- What are the primary interests of the students (arts, sciences, business, etc.)?
- What campus groups, clubs or activities are most popular?

DEGREE OF COMPETITIVENESS/SELECTIVITY

U.S. applicants

- What are the admission standards of this institution?
- How selective is the admission process?
- How difficult is it to gain admission?
- Is my academic record competitive enough for admission? (high school grades, DP predictions, level of courses, test scores, extra-curricular activities, etc.)
- What standardized tests are required and what are the average scores of admitted first year students?
- How many students who applied were accepted last year?
- What is the average rank/grade point average of currently enrolled first year students?

UK applicants

- What is the minimum required predicted DP score for this course?
- What DP Higher Level subjects are required?
- What is the typical conditional offer for my subject?
- How *popular* is this course?
- How many applications do they receive vs. the number of available spaces?

ACADEMIC PRESSURE

- Do I thrive under pressure or would I prefer to work at a more comfortable, less competitive pace?
- How competitive are the students with each other?
- What is the level of work expected of me?

MAJORS/COURSES & SUBJECTS OFFERED

- Am I interested in a career-oriented programme or a more general Liberal Arts programme?
- Does this particular institution offer a wide variety of subject areas to choose from or do they focus on specific areas such as Engineering or Business?
- Do I know what major or subject I would like to study?
- How flexible are the course requirements?
- How diverse are the course offerings?
- Is this course more theoretical or applied? What are the core requirements?
- Looking at the specific course requirements for the subject(s) I am interested in, would I be happy studying those subjects over the next 3 or 4 years?
- Does this institution offer a strong programme in my field and do they have adequate facilities?
- Is there an opportunity to do internships, cooperative education or research in my chosen field?
- How is this course assessed (project work, dissertations, exams, etc.)?
- What percentage of students from this particular subject, programme or course go on to graduate school and where do they go?
- What percentage of students find jobs in their field immediately following graduation?

UK applicants

- How flexible is this course?
- Can I take subjects outside of my programme?
- Is there an opportunity to gain work experience (sandwich programme)?
- What exchange or study abroad programmes are available?
- Is it possible to do research as part of my studies?

FACULTY

- What is the student/professor ratio?
- What are the average class sizes of introductory courses?
- Who teaches introductory courses, faculty members or teaching assistants?
- How available are faculty members outside of class time?

SPECIAL PROGRAMME OFFERINGS

- Does this institution offer study abroad, internship and cooperative education programmes, self-designed majors, double-majors, community service, ESL and honours programmes, etc.?
- Is this institution part of a consortium, allowing me to take courses at other institutions?

UK applicants

- Does this institution offer sandwich courses, modular courses, or combined subject programmes?

EXTRA-CURRICULAR OFFERINGS

- Is this an active student community?
- Are there a number of sport programmes, clubs or activities I am interested in?
- Does this institution offer an intramural as well as intercollegiate sports programme?

SOCIAL LIFE ON CAMPUS

- Are there theatres, bars or restaurants, concert halls, sport complexes or galleries nearby?
- Does this institution regularly sponsor parties, concerts, guest speakers, etc.?
- Is this a safe campus?
- Are cars allowed on campus?
- Is public transportation readily available?
- What are the institution rules regarding alcohol on campus?
- How politically active are the students?
- How religiously active are the students?

STUDENT SERVICES

- What support services are available to students?
- Is there an international student advisor on campus?
- Is there an orientation programme for first year students?
- Is there a special orientation programme for international students?
- Is career counselling available?
- Does the institution offer assistance with job placement following graduation?
- Is there assistance with graduate school applications?
- Are personal counselling services available?
- What kind of student well-being initiatives are available?
- Is there a learning development centre or is tutoring available if necessary?
- Are ESL classes available?
- Will I be assigned a faculty member, tutor or academic advisor to help me select my courses?

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- In what condition are the campus buildings?
- Does the campus feel like a comfortable place to live and study?
- How well equipped are the classrooms, labs, library, computer rooms, sports fields, etc.?

HOUSING AND DINING FACILITIES

- Do most students live on campus or do they commute?
- How active is the campus during the weekend?
- Is there a variety of housing options available (co-ed, single sex, single rooms, double rooms, self-catering, etc.)?
- What is the quality of the housing?
- What are the dorm rules regarding alcohol, visitors and quiet hours, etc.?
- Can I see myself living here?
- Does this institution guarantee housing for first-year students?
- Does this institution guarantee housing for international students?
- Does this institution offer specialty housing such as non-smoking, honours, international, etc.?
- Am I required to live on campus my first year?
- Will the institution assist me with locating off-campus housing?
- How close are the dorms to my classes, the dining hall and other facilities?
- Are there a variety of food plans available?

ACCREDITATION

- Is the institution accredited by the state and/or national government?
- If I am planning to apply to a career-oriented field, is the programme I am interested in approved or recognized by professional organizations in that field?
- If I study in one country and want to work in another will my degree be recognized?

COST

- What is the total cost to attend this institution (tuition, room and board, books, travel and living expenses)?
- Will I be able to obtain work rights in this country?
- Are there job opportunities on campus or in the local community?
- Does this institution offer financial aid or scholarships to international students?
- How many students receive financial aid?
- Is merit/scholarship aid available?

WHICH FACTORS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

A Checklist

Use this checklist to select the most important factors that will guide your higher education research. Check as many boxes that apply to your preferences. What are you looking for in the right institution for you?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic competitiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Internship possibilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation/housing options | <input type="checkbox"/> International student numbers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation | <input type="checkbox"/> International student services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admit rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Job placement services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admission programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning development/enrichment services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admission selectivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Length of academic programme |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Application deadlines | <input type="checkbox"/> Location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Majors/subjects offered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campus clubs, organizations and student societies | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy/mission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career advising | <input type="checkbox"/> Private or public institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class size | <input type="checkbox"/> Public transportation availability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Climate/weather | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious affiliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community service opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation of faculty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative education programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation of the institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Core requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation of the programme/course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost | <input type="checkbox"/> Research opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Course requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Retention of first-year students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Degree of competition | <input type="checkbox"/> Rolling admissions plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Degree requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Sandwich course/Internship options (UK) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance from airport/train/bus station | <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship availability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance from home | <input type="checkbox"/> School calendar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity of the students | <input type="checkbox"/> Setting (urban, suburban, rural) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dormitory options/quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-sex institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dual majors/Joint courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Size of the first-year class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Action admission programme | <input type="checkbox"/> Size of the institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Decision admission programme | <input type="checkbox"/> Size of the surrounding community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exchange programmes | <input type="checkbox"/> Social life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra-curricular offerings | <input type="checkbox"/> Specialized institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities/buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports offerings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial aid availability | <input type="checkbox"/> Standardized test requirements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fraternities/sororities | <input type="checkbox"/> Strengths of programme/subject/course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grading system | <input type="checkbox"/> Student/professor ratio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate school opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Student support/well-being services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Study abroad options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IB Diploma (DP) credit policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching qualifications of professors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IB Diploma (DP) minimum point requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Type of institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IB Diploma (DP) prerequisite requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Wait-list policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent study options | <input type="checkbox"/> Work permit possibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institution affiliations | |

CREATING YOUR INITIAL LIST OF INSTITUTIONS

Doing the Research

The South Building Main Library contains a large section dedicated to higher education research materials. You will find viewbooks and catalogues of institutions from around the world. There are objective guidebooks, such as the *College Board Handbook* or *Peterson's Guide* for institutions in the U.S., and *The Complete Guide to Canadian Colleges* for institutions in Canada. These guidebooks contain information about location, cost, size, majors, types of degrees offered, admission requirements, admission statistics, sport and activity offerings, special academic programmes and application procedures. Also available in the LRC are subjective guidebooks such as the *Insider's Guide to Colleges* and the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, which are written by students, for students, and are filled with information about the academic and social life at institutions in the U.S. *The Good University Guide* and the *Guide to UK Universities* are similar books focusing on the academic and social climate at various UK institutions.

The internet is the most up-to-date and comprehensive tool you can use to conduct your research. Each institution has their own homepage where you can find information regarding admission, programme offerings and campus life. There are also a number of comprehensive search databases on the Internet where you can create a personalized list of institutions by identifying the factors most important to you (size, location, degree of selectivity, etc.). **A comprehensive list of helpful websites divided by country, subject area and topic is available in the 'Resources' section of MaiaLearning (<http://www.maialearning.com/>).**

Use the internet to research financial aid and scholarship opportunities, read campus newspapers, access student clubs and organizations, take practice SAT, ACT, TOEFL and/or IELTS tests, contact professors in your subject, take virtual tours, download applications and communicate via email with professors, currently enrolled students, ISD alumni, department heads, international student advisors, athletic coaches, admissions representatives and financial aid officers.

Contact the institutions on your list to request catalogues, prospectus guides, viewbooks, applications, financial aid information and any other information that is important to you. Keep in mind however, that the materials are produced by the institutions and are created to sell the institution to prospective applicants. It is important to balance this with information from a variety of other resources.

Institution representatives are another great source of information. ISD hosts representatives from a wide range of institutions. You should take the opportunity to meet with all representatives that visit ISD. Even if you are not planning to apply to their institution, the representative may be able to provide you with information about other institutions in their area. More importantly, learning about a variety of institutions can help you to identify what it is you are looking for. These representatives will be available to meet with you during set meeting times. Be sure to check MaiaLearning, the Daily Bulletin in Schoology and/or the TV screens for announcements of upcoming visits.

Other important sources of information about institutions are your counsellor, teachers, parents, friends, and former ISD students. We have all been through the higher education search process and are willing to share our experiences with you. Keep in mind that someone at ISD just might be able to give you some *insider* information about an institution you are interested in!

The best source of information about a particular institution comes from the first-hand knowledge gained from a campus visit. Visits to a wide variety of campuses (big vs. small, city vs. country) will help you to clarify the type of campus environment where you will be happiest and productive. Visiting an institution will give you the opportunity to see the facilities up close, to get a *feel* for the campus and to meet with members of the faculty, admissions staff and currently enrolled students. **Most students and counsellors agree that visiting a campus has the greatest single impact in determining which institution you will eventually choose to attend.**

Use multiple sources and the most up-to-date publications available to verify your information. When in doubt, contact the Admissions Office of the institution directly with any questions you may have. Again, there is a wealth of information available about the higher education research process. The key is to start early, use a variety of resources and keep an open mind.

A SELECTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESOURCES

IN THE NORTH BUILDING LRC

Objective Guidebooks

These resources list information about: Location, size, cost, majors and subjects offered, admission requirements and statistics, sport and activity offerings, special academic programmes and application procedures. For example:

- *The College Handbook (U.S.)*
- *Peterson's Guide (U.S.)*
- *The Canadian Directory of Universities (Canada)*

Subjective Guidebooks

These books are opinion driven with information about the academic and social life on campus. Some guides are written for prospective students by currently enrolled students. For example:

- *Rugg's Recommendation on the Colleges (U.S.)*
- *Fiske's Guide (U.S.)*
- *The Virgin Guide to British Universities (UK)*

Catalogues, Prospectus Guides, Videos

There is a large selection of institution catalogues, viewbooks and prospective guides available for institutions from around the world.

Career Reference Materials

- *College Board Guide to Jobs and Career Planning*
- *A-Z of Careers and Jobs*
- *Careers with a Science Degree*
- *Careers in Law*
- *Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados & Other Multilingual Types*

Test Preparation Books

There is a large selection of books to help students prepare for the SAT & SAT Subject Tests, the ACT and/or TOEFL standardized admission tests. For the UK there are books available to help you prepare the National Law Admissions Test (LNAT), the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) and the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT).

INFORMATION FROM THE INSTITUTIONS

Contact the Admission Office at the institutions you are interested in to request application materials, catalogues, viewbooks, prospectus guides, financial aid information, scholarship information and subject guides or departmental information. At most institutions in the UK, currently enrolled students produce an *Alternative Guide* or the *Alternative Prospectus*, which gives inside information to prospective students.

CAMPUS VISITS, OPEN DAYS & INTERVIEWS

Attending an open day or arranging for a campus visit is the best opportunity to get a *feel* for the academic and social climate of an institutions. During a campus visit, you will have the opportunity to see first-hand the campus and institution facilities and to meet with admission staff, faculty members and currently enrolled students. If you have the opportunity to interview, do so. It is a chance for the admissions representative to learn more about you and for you to learn more about the institution. **Research has determined that a campus visit has the single greatest impact in determining which institution you will choose to attend.**

HIGHER EDUCATION FAIRS

There are a number of organized tours and higher education fairs that take place each year, including ISD's International College Night every September. In our area, Frankfurt International School hosts a UK and a U.S. fair each year. There is also a large fair, *EINSTIEG Abi*, which takes place in Cologne each year.

U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION Which Ballpark Are You In?

<http://www.isdcounseling.org/standardized-testing-for-us-universities.html>

Most Competitive – Tier I

Unweighted Grade Point Average of 3.70+ (6.50+)

SAT 1500+ (EBRW and Math)

ACT Plus Writing – 32 and above

Special talents, achievements, and community service **beyond** the local level.

Highly Competitive – Tier II

Unweighted Grade Point Average of 3.50+ (6.00+)

SAT 1350+ (EBRW and Math)

ACT Plus Writing – 27 and above

Special talents, achievements, and community service.

Competitive – Tier III

Unweighted Grade Point Average of 2.70+ (4.75+)

SAT 1200+ (EBRW and Math)

ACT Plus Writing – 23 and above

Community service and activities.

Minimally – Tier IV

Unweighted Grade Point Average 2.30+ (4.00+)

SAT 1000+ (EBRW and Math)

ACT Plus Writing – 19 and above

Non-competitive – Tier V

Unweighted Grade Point Average 2.00+ (3.50+)

Usually do not require SAT or ACT

RECOMMENDED STANDARDIZED TESTING TIMELINE

U.S. Higher Education Admission – PSAT 10 / PSAT / SAT / ACT Plus Writing

9th/10th Grade

Students should begin their **ACT/SAT** practice and review using the **FREE** resources from [Khan Academy](#) and/or the [ACT Academy](#). By practicing for **both** the **SAT** and the **ACT**, students can determine which test suits them best and make the choice to concentrate on one or the other going forward.

9th/10th grade students can take the [PSAT 10](#) in order to experience the types of questions and information they should be familiar with. In addition, it is a great way to simulate the SAT test environment for students who are not familiar with these types of standardized tests. We recommend that 10th grade students pair the **PSAT 10** with the [SAT Preparation Course](#) in the Spring. The preparation course can help students determine the areas they need to work on and support them with creating a study plan for their practice and review.

- **Khan Academy Official SAT Practice** and/or **ACT Academy Practice**
- **PSAT 10** – Spring of 9th/10th grade
- **SAT Preparation Course** – Spring of 10th grade

11th Grade

Take the [PSAT](#) in October of 11th grade ([NMSQT scholarship consideration](#) - U.S. citizens/residents) followed by the [ACT](#) in February and/or the [SAT](#) in March. **All institutions accept both tests equally and have no preference for one test over the other.** 11th grade students should begin their **ACT/SAT** testing as early as possible as that allows for a 2nd or 3rd attempt at improving their score. We also recommend (re)taking the **ACT/SAT Preparation Course** in the Spring prior to (re)taking the **ACT/SAT** in April, May and/or June.

- **PSAT** – October of 11th grade
- **ACT** – February and/or April of 11th grade
- **SAT** – March and/or May of 11th grade (Could also be in December of 11th grade)
- **SAT Preparation Course** – Spring of 11th grade

Summer between 11th & 12th grade

We recommend plenty of preparation during the spring and in the summer between 11th and 12th grade. If the summer will be busy, then students should begin their practice and review as early as possible after the new school year starts. Review test scores from the February, March, April, May and/or June session(s) and focus on areas that need improvement.

12th Grade: Re-take SAT and/or ACT if necessary

Answering these questions can help determine the ideal testing timeline in 12th grade.

- Will you apply [Early Action or Early Decision](#) to one or more U.S. institutions?
- Will you apply to **highly selective** U.S. institutions?
- Are your current scores within the expected range of the institutions on your final list?
- Do you plan to take both the **SAT** and the **ACT**?

If the answers are mostly “**YES**”, then **November of 12th grade** should be your last SAT/ACT attempt.

If the answers are mostly “**NO**”, then your final sitting may be in **December** of 12th grade.

- **ACT** – September, October and/or **December of 12th grade
- **SAT** – August, September, October, November and/or **December of 12th grade

*Language with Listening ONLY offered in November.

December is the final acceptable test date for **regular applicants (applications due by January 1st).

SAT Preparation Course

[Higher Ground Learning](#) runs an online SAT preparation course in the spring. Course information and registration is announced via the Weekly Announcements in January.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Below is a shortlist of the numerous websites available related to the higher education search and selection process. Given the nature of the Internet, these sites may change or even disappear with time. **Direct links to these and other helpful websites are always available in the 'Resources' section of MaiaLearning! www.maialearning.com**

Australia

www.studyinaustralia.com

Canada

www.univcan.ca/universities/
www.highered.cois.org/CHEC/Canada.htm
www.edu-canada.gc.ca/
www.ouac.on.ca
www.oncampus.macleans.ca/education/

France

www.campusfrance.org/en

Germany

www.daad.de/de
www.hochschulkompass.de/home.html

Ireland

www.educationireland.ie/
www.cao.ie

Japan

<https://www.jpss.jp/en/>
<https://www.studyjapan.go.jp/en/>

Netherlands

www.studyinholland.nl
www.studielink.nl
www.studyfinder.nl

Norway

www.studyinnorway.no/

Sweden

www.studyin.sweden.se
www.universityadmissions.se

Switzerland

www.swissuniversities.ch/en/

United Kingdom

www.ucas.com
www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide
www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
www.unistats.direct.gov.uk/
www.educationuk.org/A-UK-education
www.ukcosa.org.uk/
www.push.co.uk/

United States

www.collegeboard.org
www.petersons.com
www.collegenet.com
www.collegeview.com
www.gocollege.com

Global Institutions

www.braintrack.com

U.S. Admissions Applications

www.commonapp.org | <http://mycoalition.org/>

Standardized Admissions Testing

www.collegeboard.org
www.actstudent.org
<https://academy.act.org/>
<https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>
www.ets.org/toefl
www.ielts.org

Career Information

www.myroad.com
www.mycooljob.org/
www.nycareerzone.org/
www.careerkey.org/

College Counselling Links

www.carpedm.com/

Fees/Scholarship Info (UK)

www.educationuk.org
www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm
www.scholarship-search.org.uk/

Financial Aid/Scholarship Info (U.S.)

www.fastweb.com
www.collegeanswer.com/
www.finaid.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov/

Gap Year Opportunities

www.gap-year.com
www.gapyear.com
www.lattitude.org.uk/

International Baccalaureate Organization

www.ibo.org

University Bound Athletes (U.S.)

www.ncaa.org

UK Open Days

www.opendays.com

Virtual Campus Tours (U.S.)

www.campustours.com