



MSF Counseling Team

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Choosing a University

Choosing the right university can seem daunting and overwhelming, but with the right planning and research, the process becomes more streamlined and simple. The goal is to find the right match for each student. Although a university name can seem attractive, the student really needs to consider the university's teaching philosophy, environment, the city or town in which it resides, the population of students as well as the list of majors and courses available.

Where to Start

An overall guide to international university admissions, which covers many application systems:
<https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/publications/international-admission/>

This portal allows you to do research on one platform: <https://www.bachelorsportal.com/>

U.K. Universities:

UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/>

The Complete University Guide: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-ta>

U.S. Universities:

Collegeboard website: <https://www.collegeboard.org/>

Education USA: <https://educationusa.state.gov/your-5-steps-us-study/research-your-options>

Canadian Universities:

Canada's Higher Education and Career Guide: <http://www.canadian-universities.net/>

Ontario University Application Center: <https://www.ouac.on.ca/>

Study in Canada:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada.html>

The Netherlands:

Studielink: <https://www.studielink.nl/>

Study in Holland: <https://www.studyinholland.nl/>

Germany:

Study in Germany: <https://www.study-in-germany.de/en/>

Guide for IB Students considering Higher Education in Germany:

<https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/5895a05412144fe890312bad52b17044/recognition-international-student-guide-germany-2019-en.pdf>

Study and Research in Germany: <https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/>

Ireland:

<https://www.studyineurope.eu/study-in-ireland/application-deadlines>

<https://www.educationinireland.com/en/>

Australia:

<https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/>

University Counseling at MSF Philosophy and Expectations

Students can meet with their counselor as many times as they need during this process. Counselors will make recommendations and give advice based on training and professional experience. Students should feel happy and excited about their choices; the counselor's role is to support their journey as well as ensure that a safety net is in place. Students will be highly encouraged to plan ahead with safety choices and choices within their academic grade range.

Parents are also a part of this exciting journey! If parents want to meet with the counseling department, then we request the student is there as well. This keeps everyone on the same page and the student actively taking part in his/her academic journey.

Deadlines are both internal and external.

- Internal deadlines are when students must have their documents and anything needed by the school completed.
- External deadlines are the deadlines set forth by the universities.

The process of choosing the right university or course is the most successful when we work as a team in the best interest of the student. We are here to facilitate this process for students to find the best match for his or her higher education.

Although we will help students in their search, we do hold the students responsible for conducting research on their own.

Students are responsible for checking that they have the right qualifications for the courses/universities applied for and updating UCAS and the chosen universities on any changes in examination subjects to be offered once the application has been submitted.

While we plan to help students with each draft of their personal essay, they are responsible for creating a first draft. From there we will assist them in the writing process.

Students are highly encouraged to begin their essays, personal statements and motivation letters before or during their 11th grade summer. The writing process can take several drafts. We are happy to help students with this process; however, if a student sends us drafts at the last minute, the student will not receive the same depth of help.

Deadlines over breaks: Students need to meet the internal deadline before school holiday breaks. Procrastination in this process is highly discouraged, as it negatively impacts the students' applications.

Researching course requirements: Students are responsible for researching and keeping track of course and testing requirements. Counsellors can't possibly keep track of every course and its entrance expectations, especially since these requirements change each year.

For the UK and most European application systems, students will receive information via email or phone depending on their preferences in their applications. The universities will not contact

counsellors or the school, as it violates privacy acts. Students **MUST** check emails for important details about their applications and keep track of requirements.

University Representatives Visiting Campus

Throughout the course of the year, we have visitors from universities all over the world. We encourage students to take advantage of these opportunities. While students may not have decided yet where they want to go or what they want to study, these visits give them updated information on courses of study, the application process in that particular country or university, what is new and exciting in the higher education world and the opportunity to ask specific questions in person. Students gain a much more personal approach to the process in a time where most applications and inquiries are done online.

It is imperative for students to visit the universities in which they are interested. Every campus has a different atmosphere, layout, etc. Getting a feel for a potential choice is an integral part of the search process. If it is impossible to visit then we can research the school environment, the city/town in which it resides, etc.

Current students are extremely helpful in gathering information about different universities. Many universities have websites in which there are students' emails listed, divided by the course or major. It is helpful to reach out to these students and ask questions about the university. There are links to professors' emails as well. This is a great way to ask questions and get to know individuals who actually work at the university.

Higher Education Vocabulary

Sandwich Course: In many career-preparatory courses, especially in engineering and business, instead of doing final exams in the 3rd year, students take up paid placements. This allows students to do serious work for the firm which employs them. The student returns to his or her university for his or her final year, and often he or she will write a dissertation or essay reflecting on his or her placement experience. A "thin" sandwich that some universities run would entail several shorter periods of placement.

Students' Union: This is an organization which provides support, food and entertainment. Some have cinemas or theaters built into them. Examples of universities with very good unions: Cardiff, Sheffield, East Anglia, Leicester, Warwick, Leeds and Birmingham.

Career Preparatory (in the UK sometimes the word Vocational is used): This is a subject, like Engineering, Medicine, Business, Law or Applied Biology, which leads to employment; however, it does not limit a graduate to its area.

UCAS: Universities Colleges Admissions Service. It acts as an intermediary between applicants and universities.

Firm Choice (text from UCAS): this is your first choice – the place you most want to go to. If you accept a conditional offer and meet the conditions, you'll have a confirmed place here.

Insurance: this is the choice you'd want if you didn't meet the conditions of your firm choice.

Clearing: In general, this affects you if you fail to get the grades needed for the universities you have chosen. Usually it happens in August when the universities find out through the examination results how many places are not filled with qualified students. They publish these in "The Independent" and on the web. *They often make offers below their normal grades to fill the places. At this point, if you

decline any offers you hold, or if your grades are not acceptable to your universities, you are “in Clearing” and can make approaches to universities with places and follow this up via UCAS.

Studielink: (description from StudyinHolland website): Studielink is the central application organisation for Dutch universities. Applications to Dutch universities should usually be made via Studielink. Every university has its own introduction page to Studielink and this will be where you first start to apply.

You can find plenty of information in answer to questions you may have on the Studielink website and the process usually works perfectly well. However, their FAQs do not cover everything that could go wrong and there is no way to contact them directly except by post.

If you have a problem during the application process, your first point of contact will usually be the university to which you are applying. Because of their approach to customer service, it is vitally important that you do not lose your login and password as it is extremely difficult to retrieve these. Also, if you create an account and do not receive prompt acknowledgement of this, something will have gone wrong.

Studielink is not the same as UCAS and it serves a slightly different purpose. You can apply for up to four courses at a time, of which only two can be subject to a lottery (Numerus Fixus). (You can only apply to one medicine course.) However, you can change the courses you wish to apply for at any time before the enrollment deadline. This gives you the flexibility to ensure you actually end up studying where and what you want.

College Board: For students taking the SAT or SAT Subject tests, this is the organization where you register. The site can seem overwhelming, as it contains a wealth of knowledge; however it is very helpful in narrowing down one’s search within the US. A helpful tool is the “where do I stack up?” link that shows you scores and grades of typical applicants at a particular university.

Rolling Admissions: Some universities, like IE University in Spain, offer rolling admissions. This means that you can apply to the university any time of year.

Numerus Clausus: In Germany, there are numerus clausus courses offered. This means that there is a fixed number of places available, therefore making the programs under numerus clausus more competitive.

Numerus Fixus: In the Netherlands, there are numerus fixus courses offered. This means that there is a fixed number of places available, therefore making the programs under numerus fixus more competitive.

BMAT Exam (definition from the Medicportal:<https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/bmat/>): The BioMedial Admissions Test is a two-hour pen and paper aptitude test required by a handful of medical, dental and veterinary schools in the UK.

UCAT (UKCAT, definition from <https://www.ucat.ac.uk/>): The UCAT is an admissions test used by a consortium of British universities for their medical and dental degree programs.

LNAT (definition from <https://lnat.ac.uk/>): The Law National Aptitude test helps you understand if law is the right career path for you, and it helps universities check that you will be able to succeed on a law course.

[Worldwide University Application Calendar 2020](#)

Factors About Yourself to Consider When Choosing a University

Examine your interests, abilities, goals and expectations. The process begins and ends with you.

Your Goals and Values

- What part of your secondary school experience has been the most enjoyable to you? What would you do differently?
- What do you value? What do you care most about? What concerns occupy your time, effort and energy?
- How do you define success? Are you satisfied with your accomplishments thus far? What do you want to accomplish in the future?
- What kind of person would you like to become? Of your unique gifts, attributes and strengths, what would you most like to develop? What would you most like to change about yourself?
- If there was a year to go anywhere and do whatever you wanted, how would you spend this year? Is there anything you have secretly wanted to do or be?
- What events or experiences have shaped your growth and way of thinking?

Your Education

- What are your academic interests? Which courses have you enjoyed the most? Which courses have been the most difficult for you?
- What do you choose to learn when you can learn on your own? Consider interests you have pursued outside of the classroom. What research topics have you chosen? What jobs or volunteer work have you done? What do your choices show about your interests and your learning styles?
- How do you learn best? What methods of teaching and style of teaching engage your interests and effort the most? *Higher education encompasses a wide spectrum of learning styles, philosophies and approaches. It is important to know where you thrive to ensure happiness and success at the university you choose.
- What has been your most stimulating learning opportunity? How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues and exchange ideas?
- How well have you worked with your school to prepare yourself for university? In what areas of skills or knowledge do you feel confident? Is there any area in which you feel inadequately prepared for higher education? Have you been challenged by your classes?
- Do you think you have worked up to your potential in secondary school? Is your academic record an accurate measure of your ability and potential? What do you consider the best measure of your potential for university work?
- Are there any outside circumstances that have interfered with your academic performance? Consider the following factors: after school job, home responsibilities, personal difficulties, excessive school activities, illness or emotional stresses, outside pressures, problems scheduling courses.

Your Activities and Interests

- What activities do you enjoy outside the daily routine of school and other responsibilities? Which activities have meant the most to you? Looking back, would you have made different choices?
- Do your activities show any pattern of commitment, competence or contribution?
- How would others describe your role in your school or home community? What do you consider your most significant contribution?
- After a hard, long day, what do you most enjoy doing? What do you do for fun, for relaxation?

The World Around You

- How would you describe your school and family? If you have lived in different places, what city or town did you enjoy the most and why? Has your environment influenced your way of thinking? Have your interests and abilities been acknowledged or limited in any way?
- What do your parents and friends expect of you? Have their expectations influenced the goals and standards that you set for yourself? What pressures have you felt to conform?
- What has been the most controversial issue in your school or community? How does this issue concern you? What has been your reaction and what is your opinion?
- Have you ever encountered people who thought and acted differently than you did? What viewpoints have challenged you the most? How did you respond? What did you learn about yourself and others?
- What distresses you the most about the world around you? Assuming the obligation and the opportunity to change the world, where would you start?
- Do you have any current heroes or heroines? Historical ones? Literary ones?
- What books have you read that have challenged your way of thinking?
- What kind of surrounding is essential to your well-being? Are there certain places, activities, countryside terrain, weather or pace of life which would make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced environment where you can join a wide variety of planned activities? Would you prefer a more relaxed and serene environment where you can go your own way?
- How would you feel about going to university where the other students were quite different from you? How would you react? Would you find it exciting or intimidating? Would you prefer to be with people who share your viewpoints and lifestyle, or who challenge and make you question your values?
- How free do you feel to make your own university decisions?

Your Personality and Relationship to Others

- How would someone who knows you describe you, i.e. your finest qualities, your most conspicuous shortcomings? Would you agree with his/her assessment?
- Which relationships are most important to you and why? Describe the people whom you consider to be your best friends. Your best critics? In what ways are they similar or different from you?
- How do you respond to pressure, competition or challenge? How do you react to failure, disappointment or criticism?

Questions to Evaluate Your University Preferences

- What satisfactions and frustrations do you expect to encounter after grade 12? What are you looking forward to? What worries you the most? What do you hope to gain from university? What is your overriding consideration in your choice of higher education?
- How do you want to grow and change in the next few years? What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth you would like to see?
- Which interests do you want to pursue? Consider all your interests in terms of fields of study, activities, community and cultural opportunities. Are you more interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge and skills of inquiry thinking?
- What balance of study, activities and social life suits you best?
- How would you feel about going to a university where you were rarely told what to do? How much structure do you need?