

University Advising Handbook



2022-2023

Introduction

Dear Metropolitan School Frankfurt Students & Families:

For the first semester of Grade 12, the university application process can be viewed as your “eighth class”. This is an exciting but rigorous process of critical self-reflection. You will be spending the next three or four years living in a country of your choice, residing in a city and campus of your choice, while studying a major/minor of your choice. It is crucial that you take time to ask yourself the following questions: What do I really want out of my university experience? Why do I want to choose a specific field of study? Where will I feel most comfortable?

The university application process can be a difficult process to navigate. Keeping track of the deadlines, academic entry requirements, document requirements, standardized test registration, interviews, and supplemental essays is no easy feat. Each university has its own set of rules and policies that you must abide by, which are stated on the university’s website. It is vital that you research and familiarize yourself with these protocols for each university of your choice. MSF has a set of rules and policies that have been implemented to help you and your University Advisors work together to move through this process. Please take time to review this handbook to ensure that you are aware of how MSF can offer its assistance and support to you during the university application process.

Remember the University Guidance Counsellor is here to support you. We ask that you stay proactive and keep active communication with us to ensure you have a smooth and memorable application process and transition from High School to University. We wish you much success.

Kind Regards,

Ms Kari Oelkers, International University Guidance

Mr Marcel König, German University Guidance

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Goals & Objectives

This handbook is designed to inform all students and families about MSF's policies and practices relating to the University Advising Department. The intent of these policies and practices is to ensure a positive and collaborative effort to create the highest quality college application.

Following the practices set forth in this handbook will help you have a successful university application process. Your teacher recommendation will be properly written, your IB predicted grades will be up-to-date, the preparation of your other documentation will be adequately completed, and all of your documentation will arrive at your chosen university in a timely manner.

Failing to follow the policies and practices outlined in this handbook may delay the submission of the supporting documentation, jeopardize the quality of the supporting documentation, and/or put your entire application and possible admission at risk.

Official School Documentation

Official school documentation are documents that Metropolitan School Frankfurt is responsible for. This includes: Official MSF high school transcripts, IB predicted grades, teacher recommendation letters, University Advisor/University Guidance Counsellor recommendation letter (if applicable), and any school forms that the university requires MSF to complete.

Students can receive one physical copy of each document, stamped and wet signed. Any document thereafter that is produced, stamped and signed by MSF will be billed at 10 EUR per copy.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of the documentation and forms that each specific university requires and inform the University Guidance Counsellor in writing when these documents must be submitted. Universities require different types of documentation and clearly state what they are expecting and when the deadline is on their official website.

The University Guidance Counsellor will obtain the school documentation for the student, however, the counsellor is not responsible for informing students which

specific documents each university requires. Documents will not be sent nor processed during an MSF scheduled break (i.e. fall, winter, summer break) without prior agreement. Students are responsible for ensuring that any document to be completed or sent to a university is finished well in advance of any school break.

Transcripts

Official Transcripts

A high school transcript is a student's academic record. Including semester grades, a transcript is usually from Grade 9 until Grade 12.

The Secondary School is responsible for the printing of official MSF transcripts. Students and families can receive a printed version of their official (stamped and sealed) transcript if deemed necessary and all students receive their transcript upon graduation. Universities typically expect to receive the transcript to the Admissions office prior to students enrolling at the university. MSF secondary office will share digital copies of student transcripts only directly with the university during the summer break. Official transcripts, whether printed or digital copy, take at least three working days to process. Official transcript requests can be made by directly emailing Ms Kari Oelkers (oelkers@msf.education)

Students will receive their final IB transcript (hard copy) at MSF in mid September. In the Spring, Grade 12 students will work with the IB Coordinator to designate to which university they would need to send their IB final results. If a student ends up accepting an offer from a school that they did not designate, they can always arrange to have the IBO directly send their IB final results to the university through [the official IBO website](#) and search for “requesting transcripts and reports.” There is a small fee for this process. Therefore, we encourage students to make informed decisions early on if possible.

Students who request for their IB transcript to be sent to them or the university they are matriculating to must contact the IB Coordinator and provide the university contact's full mailing address, contact number, and contact name.

Transfer Transcripts

If a student has transferred to MSF from another school, it is the student's responsibility to obtain their previous school's transcript. Many universities require the academic records (the transcript) from Grade 9 to Grade 12. Students may inform their previous school to email the official transcript to the MSF University Guidance Counsellor or submit a hard copy of the document to the advisor so that they can scan this document and save this in the student's file for future sending to the university.

IB Predicted Grades

IB Predicted Grades are teacher predictions of the student's final IB exams, based on students' Diploma Programme Grade descriptors throughout the IB programme. This includes six IB courses, Theory of Knowledge, and Extended Essay. Please note that TOK and EE are not usually included in the decision making process, particularly in the US.

It is the DP Coordinator's responsibility to organize this, typically at the beginning or middle of September. The University Advisor will send the IB predicted grades to each university on the students' university list upon the student request. Students should not approach teachers to collect or request their IB predicted grades. Students may not request that a teacher change their predicted grades.

If students wish to discuss their IB predicted grades, they must first arrange a meeting with the IB Coordinator.

Recommendation Letters

A recommendation letter is written by either a teacher and/or a school based University Advisor that details a student's abilities, qualities and characteristics.

In order to receive a recommendation letter, students must first complete the "Notes for Reference Writers" form on CIALFO. Students must ensure that their response provides enough detail and specificity so that the referee can write a well-rounded and strong recommendation letter. Once completed, students must ask a teacher and/or University Guidance Counselor (applicable mostly for

universities based in the US and Japan) if they are willing to write them a recommendation letter.

If the teacher agrees, the student will then make a formal request via CIALFO. The teacher/University Guidance Counsellor will not begin writing the recommendation letter until the student has completed the “Notes for Reference Writers” section on CIALFO, asked the teacher/University Guidance Counsellor in-person, **and** made a formal request via CIALFO. These requests must be made by May 15th. No requests will be allowed after this date, except with requests made directly through the University Guidance Counselor.

Please keep in mind that teachers already have a great deal of work and writing a recommendation letter is an additional workload. Teachers have the right to tell a student that they are unable to write a recommendation for them. Students can ask any two teachers for a recommendation letter. *If the university that a student is applying to requires three recommendation letters, they must show the University Guidance Counsellor where it states that on the university’s website, and then would be allowed to request more than two letters.*

Teachers and the University Guidance Counsellor are given until July 15th to write recommendation letters. Recommendation letters are confidential documents and cannot be given electronically or by hard copy to students and families. Students would not have access to or be able to view recommendation letters.

MSF follows the best practice of many leading international schools and keeping letters of recommendation confidential is a standard practice among (international) high schools across the globe. In general, universities prefer confidential letters of recommendation because the schools assume that confidential evaluations would be more candid. Both high schools and universities across the globe recognize the importance of keeping recommendation letters confidential. The University Guidance Counselor reviews all teacher recommendation letters and ensures these letters reflect the best accomplishments and potential of our students.

If there are any teacher or University Guidance Counselor forms that are required to be filled in from the university, it is the student’s responsibility to provide those forms (electronic or paper) to either the teacher and/or the University Guidance Counselor, as well as provide information on how they should be submitted. The

University Guidance Counsellor can help the student in locating such forms, however, it is the student's responsibility to research and provide such documentation to the teacher and/or University Guidance Counsellor.

Submitting Final Transcripts

MSF will send the student's final MSF transcript to the university they will be matriculating to before the last day of the academic year. The University Guidance Counselor will send the final MSF transcript **electronically** to the university that the student will be matriculating to, **if** the initial transcript was sent via Unifrog/Common App/UCAS or the student's university portal. This includes all universities based in the US and Canada. It is the student's responsibility to inform their University Advisor in writing by July 10 as to which university they are planning to attend after graduation in order to ensure all transcripts are sent to the appropriate institutions. Once the student decides on the university that they will attend, it is the student's responsibility to notify the other universities from which they have an offer that they will not be attending.

Students who need to physically mail their final MSF transcript to their university must email Ms Kari Oelkers with the full mailing address, a contact number, and a contact name.

In order for a student's final IB transcript to be sent to the university where the student is going to matriculate to, the student must fill in a form that the IB Coordinator sends out electronically through Google forms to Grade 12 students in the Spring semester where the student lists the university they are planning to attend. Students who do not do this, or who at a later date request to have the IB final transcript sent to a university must go to [the official IBO website](#) and search for "requesting transcripts and certificates."

Student Application Submission

Early Application Schemes

Any student wanting to apply through an early application scheme should notify and confirm with the University Guidance Counsellor at least two (2) months before the application deadline (see the timeline chart at the end of this document.)

Failing to do so means students and families will take full responsibility for the quality of the student application. The pool of applicants who apply through early application schemes tend to have a strong academic and extracurricular profile so students should prepare well in advance to be able to showcase their accomplishments and submit a strong application.

The majority of early schemes fall into the U.S. system, and these schemes are often called Early Decision and Early Action (ED and EA). These ED and EA schemes are typically due on November 1 or November 15. Universities based in Asia also tend to have “early rounds.” Universities based in the UK require medical, dental, veterinary, and OxBridge applicants to apply by October 15.

An ***Early Decision*** scheme is a binding agreement between the student, families, MSF and the university. If the student applies through the ED scheme and is accepted, they must withdraw all of their offers IMMEDIATELY from ***all*** countries as well as remove any application with pending decisions by notifying these universities to which they have submitted their application. All parties sign an agreement to do this and must abide by the ED binding agreement. MSF will only send the final high school transcript to the ED university to which the student has been accepted. EA is “non-binding,” with the advantage that students receive their decision between December and early January. Typically, students would have until May 1 to make their final decision.

Regular Application

Students applying via regular decision are responsible for knowing the application requirements and deadlines, ensure that they meet the entry requirements, and communicate with their University Guidance Councillor in order for the preparation process to run smoothly and accurately. In order for the University Guidance Councillor to provide ample support to the student in their university application process, students must keep the communication lines open with the University Guidance Councillor and their families. Counselors have an open door policy where students can always drop in during one of their breaks, and where parents can email the Counselor with any questions that they have.

From the end of October until December 10 (see below), students and University Advisors will be putting the finishing touches on a high quality, outstanding

application. The student and families pay and submit the application well in advance of the deadline to ensure a high quality application.

The University Guidance Councillor expects students to have completed and submitted their university application **a week before the winter holiday**, if applying to North America, Europe, Hong Kong, and Japan. For the graduating class of 2023, this date has been set as December 9, 2022 . This allows the Counselor a few working days after December 9 to review student applications and notify students on any aspect of their application the students may have overlooked.

It is not acceptable for a student to inform their University Guidance Councillor that they are “thinking” of applying to a university without ever having mentioned it in the preceding weeks or months, and then proceed to apply. **It is also not acceptable for a student to inform their University Guidance Councillor during an official holiday and school break that they are applying to a university and need essays reviewed and/or supporting school documents sent to the university. These requests will not be honored.**

Careful and thoughtful planning of the university application process is required by all stakeholders in order to ensure that students submit the strongest application to their universities of choice. This collaborative process happens over a period of time beginning in Grade 11 and up to the end of the “application season,” which for all intents and purposes takes place between August and December for the majority of Grade 12 students.

Generally speaking, MSF University Guidance Councillors recommend that applications be submitted earlier rather than later. Once a student's application is complete, has been reviewed and approved by the University Guidance Councillor and is of a high standard, then the application is ready to be submitted.

Application Limit

At MSF, we allow students to submit up to ten (10) applications. This follows the practice at many leading international schools around the world. We recommend that students roughly break down their 10 applications as the following: 2-3 “reach or aspirational”, 4-5 “realistic/match” and 2-3 “high likelihood” schools.

*Note: University of California (UC), OUAC (Ontario), and UCAS (UK) schools count as one as they are centralized application systems. As we count University of California (UC), OUAC, and UCAS as one individual application, the number of schools students may end up applying to would be more than ten.

Some of the reasons that MSF limits to 10 applications include:

- Students have to write supplemental essays (more for the US). Each essay should be revised between 5-7 times to ensure an excellent final application.
- Students need to spend time researching and narrowing down their recommendations.
- Students have to maintain academic performance while balancing their IB coursework, extracurriculars and university applications.
- Having too many offers is stressful to narrow down to one.
- The University Guidance Counsellor is responsible for many seniors. We want to ensure that we are able to maintain the quality of personalized attention that we are able to provide for each student and university applications.
- Universities will note this on the applicants files and know students have made a thoughtful decision.

Verifying Entry Requirements:

It is the student's responsibility to carefully read about the admissions criteria and to ensure they meet the minimum entry requirements (e.g. predicted IB points total, subject-specific requirements, any standardized tests). Minimum predicted IB points total and subject-specific requirements are more common for university courses in the United Kingdom, Canada, Singapore and Europe. **Students should not apply to courses that exceed their IB predicted grades or in cases where they do not take the subject-specific requirements. This will result in a rejection from the university.**

School Documentation Submission (Electronic):

It is the responsibility of the University Guidance Counsellor to submit school documentation to a student's universities in the USA and UK, *after* the student submits their application. Submitting documentation electronically to universities takes at least three working days for the advisor to process and complete. Requests made on weekends will not be processed until working days.

Once the University Guidance Counsellor submits supporting school documents, it will take time for the university to process and update students' application status. Submission of a document does not mean that a student's portal will update immediately.

In regards to university applications to Canada, Europe, Singapore and other countries that allow/require the students to upload supporting school documents through their university application portal, University Guidance Counsellors will share with students their (watermarked) school documents in order for students to be able to upload them onto their own university application portal. The University Guidance Counsellor will work with students to facilitate this process.

Since the teacher and University Guidance Counsellor recommendation letters are confidential documents, students will NOT have access to these letters. As such, the University Guidance Counsellor will be sharing these recommendation letters directly with the universities. In case the universities require the recommendation letters to be mailed, the University Guidance Counsellor will place the letters (stamped) in a sealed MSF envelope for students to mail.

School Documentation Submission (Mail)

Any school documentation that is to be sent to the university by hard copy ***must be sent from MSF*** via express courier, DHL, UPS and/or FedEx. The University Guidance Counsellor will collect all necessary school documentation. The documentation will be shown to the student to verify, then placed in an envelope and sealed. Students must provide the University Guidance Counsellor with their university application number or student ID number, the mailing address, and telephone number of the institution, so they may be included on the school documentation envelope. Documentation will not be sent unless the student brings

the required items. Any student documentation that is the student's responsibility should be mailed by the student.

It will take at least five working days for the University Guidance Councillor to collect and prepare hard copies of the school documentation. Please keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to inform the University Guidance Councillor in writing, well in advance, to begin preparing the school documentation for mailing. The student will also provide the University Guidance Councillor, if applicable, with their previous school's transcript, certifications, and/or awards that they wish to include in the documentation envelope.

Students and families will cover the cost of mailing the school documentation to the universities. MSF does not cover these costs.

Application process at German universities

- *The application deadline **often** ends on **July 15th** if the study programme begins in the Winter semester. (Results are released on July 5th, but they are available to you online a day later, on **July 6th**.)*
- *The application deadline **often** ends on January 15th if the course of study begins in the summer semester.*
- The **exact procedure and all deadlines** of the application procedure can be found on the university's homepage.

IB Courses and Higher/Standard Levels

The choice of IB courses and Higher/Standard Levels **determines** whether the IB meets the rules of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz) - so a **precise** preliminary meeting with the relevant school counselor at the end of Year 10 is absolutely necessary. Subsequent changes are **not possible!**

German Federal States

There are 16 federal states in Germany with 16 different Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs.

Although they have all agreed to recognise the IB if it complies with the Kultusministerkonferenz rules, how the recognition process works can differ

fundamentally. In most cases, it is a state authority that must be approached. However, there are also some universities that take over the recognition. This must be clarified in each individual case.

Sometimes external providers like uni-assist take over this process - it depends on the university/programme.

Private universities can be the exception here, as they determine the application criteria completely independently.

Higher Education Entrance Qualification

If a higher education entrance qualification („Hochschulzugangsberechtigung“) is required (the IB is examined by a state agency / university), then the respective application process must be followed. A whole range of (certified) documents may be required. This is made transparent by a checklist that they publish or the universities publish.

An exemplary process for Hessen is as follows: The student finds out that a university entrance qualification („Hochschulzugangsberechtigung“) is required by the university. The university receives recognition from Hesse. The online application can be started via the website of the Ministry of Education. All documents and a fee must be submitted early (end of spring). The student informs the school about the application. On the day the Transcript of Grade is published, a copy is digitally forwarded to the Ministry of Education. If all documents and criteria are fulfilled, the student receives the university entrance qualification. This procedure is representative of the process in Hessen. In other federal states, etc., this can vary greatly.

Additional Considerations

- There are only a few centralized application procedures: Every university, every faculty makes its own rules. If you want to apply for a course of study at a university, you can usually see a requirement profile and the necessary documents on their website. All documents (curriculum vitae etc.) can usually be submitted individually (in case of uncertainty this must always be clarified with the university).

- If something is unclear, it is best to ask the responsible office at the university (telephone, email).
- It is a **bureaucratic system**, which means that it depends on the documents and not on the spoken word (e.g. things agreed on the phone verbally).

Appendices

Grade 11 University Admission Checklist

JANUARY	
1-31	Research summer programs (if applicable)
FEBRUARY	
1-28	University advisor family university planning registration & meetings (<i>meetings end April</i>).
12	March SAT registration deadline
1-28	Complete the “Activities”, “Competencies”, and “Notes for Recommendation” sections on Cialfo.
	Begin drafting statement/college essay(s)/ motivational letter in CIALFO
	Continue research for personalized list of university factors/criteria and majors/courses of study
MARCH	
1-31	Continue to review entrance requirements for universities of interest
	Continue summer programme research
APRIL	

1	Deadline for German university entrance qualification (Hochschulzugangsberechtigung)
8	SAT registration deadline
15	Personal statement/college essay(s)/ motivational letter first draft due
1-31	Confirm summer planning where possible (programmes/university visits)
	Attend university representative visits (virtual/in-person)
MAY	
1-31	Attend university representative visits (virtual/in-person)
15	All requests for letters of recommendation on CIALFO and formally are complete

Grade 12 University Admission Checklist

AUGUST	
1-31	University planning meetings with University Advisor
	Update University Selection document with final university longlist
	Register for the IELTS/TOEFL (English B students only)
13	Oxbridge & UK Medicine/Veterinary/Dentistry candidates application intent deadline (submit to University Advisor)
20	US early decision (ED) / early action (EA) candidates application intent deadline (submit to University Advisor)
27	Teacher recommendation request deadline (ask teachers)
SEPTEMBER	
1	Personal statement / college essay(s) / motivational letter draft submission deadline
1-31	University planning meetings with University Advisor
	Attend university representative visits (online/in-person)
8	University of Cambridge application submission (internal) deadline

15	Final draft for Common application and supplemental essays for ED & EA applications due
22	University of Oxford, UK Medical/Vet application submission internal deadline
OCTOBER	
1	Essays for applications second draft due for review
1-31	Discuss application process and university selection with University Advisor
	Attend university representative visits (online/in-person)
	Begin to finalize your application i.e. materials, requirements, CIALFO, etc
25	Any November 1 EA/ED application (internal) deadline
31	Submit your final draft of Personal Statement/application essay(s) to your University Advisor.
NOVEMBER	
1-31	Attend university representative visits online
	Complete your regular decision application (materials, requirements, etc)

3	Any November 15 EA/ED application (internal) deadline Hong Kong fast track application deadline
18	University of California (UC) application (internal) deadline
DECEMBER	
10	Submit/complete ALL U.S., UK, Europe, HK & Japan applications with deadline of January 15 or earlier

MSF Internal Deadlines by Country

United Kingdom (UK)	September 8	University of Cambridge
	September 22	University of Oxford & all UK Medicine/ Veterinary/ Dentistry courses
	December 9	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline or earlier deadline
United States (U.S.)	October 25	Any November 1 EA/ED official deadline
	November 3	Any November 15 EA/ED official deadline
	November 15	University of California (UC) applications
	December 9	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline or earlier deadline
Netherlands	December 9	Complete initial Studielink registration
	December 9	University applications with a Jan 15 deadline / university-specific Numerus Fixus program applications <u>must be submitted</u>
	7 full working days prior to	All other university applications

	the official deadline	
Canada <i>Some universities require supplemental materials (essay, video interview etc) when submitting initial application.</i>	December 9	Internal application deadline for universities with a January 15 deadline or earlier
	7 full working days prior to the official deadline	Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC)-affiliated schools or all other university applications with direct applications
Asia	7 full working days prior to the official deadline	All university applications are completed and due (sent to university or completed on university portal) regardless of country and/or admissions' round

Student and Family Agreement

I (student name: _____) and

my family (parent/guardian name: _____)

understand that we have access to the MSFUniversity Advising Handbook. We will read the set of policies and guidelines within. We understand that following these set policies and guidelines ensures a smooth university application process and deviating from these set of practices may negatively impact the application process and outcome.

Date:

Student Signature:

Parent/Guardian Signature: