

College Handbook



ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOOL
Rome





contents

Section 1

Responsibilities During the University/College Selection and Application Process

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| • Student responsibilities | 07 |
| • Parent responsibilities | 08 |
| • College counselor responsibilities | 09 |
-

Section 2

Overview: the US and UK Higher Education Systems

- | | |
|---|----|
| The American system of higher education | 11 |
| | 12 |

- Types of institutions in the US 12
- Institutional funding 13

The UK system of higher education

- How it works 14
 - Types of institutions in the UK 14
-

Section 3

Applying to US Universities

- Activities to assist you in beginning your research 16
- Examine yourself 17
- Research to determine your college choices 17
- Take your research further 18
- Plan your college search 18
- How many colleges should a student apply to? 18
- Two philosophic points 19
- Selectivity: Choosing and being chosen 22
- What is most important in the selection process? 22
- St. Stephen's university attendance history 25
- College planning calendar - Grade 11 28
- College planning calendar - Grade 12 29

Section 4

Applying to UK Universities

• General information: UK higher education	30
• Location	31
• Courses	31
• Qualifications	31
• Degrees	34
• Duration of study	34
• Minimum entry requirements for universities	34
• Methods of study	34
• What is the best course?	35
• Tuition fees and living costs	35
• Cost of living	36
• Plan your college search	36
• A brief summary of the UCAS scheme	37
• Application dates	38
• League Table of Universities	39
• College planning calendar - Grade 11	40
• College planning calendar - Grade 12	41

Section 5

All About Testing

• What is the PSAT?	43
• What is the SAT?	46
• How important is the SAT?	46
• What are the SAT Subject Tests?	47
• When should you take the SAT Subject Tests?	47
• How can you study the SAT Subject Tests?	47
• What is the ACT?	47
• Registration and fees	48
• Special accommodations	49
• TOEFL and TWE	49
• Prep courses for college testing - what to do?	50
• Frequently asked questions about college test scores	50
• Suggest time table for college testing	52
• Ten test taking tips	53
• Getting to the two test sites	53
• All students must bring to the exam center	53

Section 6

Written Components of the Applications

• Essays: make your essays count	55
• What do colleges look for?	58
• US college essay-writing tips	59
• UK university personal statement - writing tips	60
• Obtaining teacher and counselor recommendations	61

Section 7

US Financial Aid

• Financing an Education in the US: How Much Does a College Education Cost?	63
• College costs	64

Section 8

Helpful Miscellany

• Regarding Summer Activities	67
• Some useful websites for applicants	68
• Glossary: the vocabulary of US/Canadian Degrees	71
• Glossary: the vocabulary of British Degrees	73

Section 9

Homework for Students

• Summer assignment	74
---------------------	----







Introduction

Being an advisor is immensely satisfying work for an educator. The opportunity to have an ongoing relationship with a student that transcends the classroom can have significant impact on the life of the child and may create a bond that will last for years after the completion of school. Like all relationships, those between students and their advisors depend on time spent together. Because of our demanding schedules, this can be difficult to manage. However, finding ways to fit this relationship-building into our busy weeks is worth the effort. As the year unfolds, the student learns that you are both an advocate and an adult confidante that they can rely on. Furthermore, the expectation is that a relationship will also develop with that student's parent(s) or guardians. By serving as the point person for the advisee's parents, an advisor begins to learn not only more about how that student functions both in and out of school, but how different parts of the St. Stephen's School environment have impact on each of the students in their advisor groups.

An advisor serves as an adult presence in a child's life. Whether day students or boarders, adolescents are negotiating a tumultuous time in their lives and need adult guidance. The advisor serves to do this in an intentional way, while also providing caring support and extra attention. Advisors also often serve as the conduit of information between school and parents. The advisor is expected to be aware of their advisee's academic, social, athletic and extra-curricular progress and to be able to pass on school concerns to the parent and vice versa. Advisors also need to be knowledgeable about the School's policies, procedures, health and wellness resources, the learning center, and other supportive programs so that they may advise on these issues when necessary.



1

section 1

Responsibilities During the University/College Selection and Application Process

Gaining admission to a college or university is a complex process which can become even more so from abroad. If done effectively, it takes a considerable amount of time, energy and discipline. For the student to be as successful as we would like him or her to be, special assistance must be provided.

The St. Stephen's faculty and staff will be as supportive as possible during this exciting period in the student's life. Nevertheless, we view the entire process as a team effort. In the past, St. Stephen's students have been successful in their college and university choices. By working together, we will have continued success.



Student responsibilities

Give the college counselor as much information about yourself as possible. Submit your answers to the Student Questionnaire before your first college meeting. Also, make sure to give your CV to the counselor. Get all of your forms in on time.

Set up a meeting with the college counselor to initiate your university/college search. Be ready to share your ideas and work out an individualized program to research the right college options for you.

Be organized. Keep good files and folders of important information and deadlines. Often, Excel spreadsheets or electronic calendars can be very useful for keeping track of deadlines.

Keep your teachers informed of your progress and give them the information they need. Many of you will need a teacher recommendation letter, and so your teachers need to be aware of their deadlines; they also might need your CV for further information about you.

Keep your parents informed of what you are doing. Your parents are an integral part of this process and it is important that they are involved in the university/college selection process.

- *If they are not able to attend your meeting with the college counselor, share with them the information on colleges you received.*
- *Throughout the year, share information from the college counselor with your parents. Make sure they know about college fairs, open houses and parent evenings at the school.*

Keep the college counselor informed of what you are doing. Students and the college counselor work together to complete applications. The college counselor needs to be aware of where you are applying and what your deadlines are in order to make sure applications are completed on time and properly. This process is tracked through Naviance, so students are expected to use Naviance regularly.

Parent responsibilities

Continue to be loving, caring, supportive and understanding. If a son or daughter does not seem to be taking an active approach, it can be tempting for parents to step in and take charge. Instead, try contacting the counselor for advice on how to motivate the student.

Try to stand back a bit. Although it may not always be easy, we urge parents to encourage the student to take the lead in this process.

Help out where you can. Parents can help by staying informed about deadlines (including financial aid deadlines, in which parents are responsible for filling out the forms), attending meetings, communicating with the counselor and, let us not forget, providing credit card details for application fees and standardized tests!

Visit schools. Parents can also help by taking their children to visit colleges. We find that students often return with new impressions about places that they knew only from written materials, photos, the web, and what people had told them.

College counselor responsibilities

Get to know the students while providing a positive, constructive and supportive approach throughout the university/college selection process.

Conduct individual and group sessions on pertinent topics concerning the university/college selection.

Write counselor reports and Secondary School Reports for each student.

Submit supporting documentation to colleges (transcripts, recommendation letters, IB predictions, etc.).

Keep as up-to-date as possible on information relating to the university/college search.

Advise the student on the most appropriate academic program for university/college admissions.

Advise parents on issues of cost and financial aid.

Communicate with parents in meetings, via email and through the website.

Communicate with students during morning meeting contact EVERY week and via regular e-mail contact.

Be available to students and parents for drop-in and scheduled appointments.



2

section 2

Overview: the US and UK Higher Education Systems



Overview: The US and UK Higher Education Systems

The American system of higher education

Higher education refers to post-secondary institutions (after high school) that offer Associate, Bachelor, Master or Doctoral degrees. Because everyone in the United States is encouraged to get as much education as possible, there are many colleges and universities in the country (over 3,000) and the differences among them may be extensive. If you think seriously about where you apply and do the right research, you will not only find colleges that suit your needs but you will also find a greater range of choices than if you only focus on what you've heard of through friends or relatives.

Types of institutions in the US

Junior and Community Colleges

These schools offer two-year academic programs of two basic types: either technical training in a specific profession or a general academic program for students planning to transfer to a four-year degree program. Students graduating from junior or community colleges receive Associate degrees.

Colleges

In the United States, the term “college” refers to either a small liberal arts institution offering liberal arts majors, or a collection of departments in one specific area within a larger university. In terms of the independent institutions that call themselves colleges, all offer academic programs leading to a Bachelor's degree in liberal arts areas such as language, history, and science. Others, however, do grant professional degrees in fields such as teaching, social work, business, and sometimes engineering. The four or five years leading to the Bachelor's degree are the undergraduate years. Some colleges also offer Master's (advanced) degrees in selected fields of study depending upon the strength of the faculty and the specialization of the institution, but for the most part colleges do not have graduate programs.

Universities

Universities offer advanced degrees as well as Bachelor's. On university campuses there is more specialization among the faculty and more emphasis on research and publication. For administrative purposes, many universities, such as Boston University, Columbia, New York University, Syracuse, and the University of Pennsylvania have schools or colleges which grant degrees in specific areas such as the College of

Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Law, College of Business, College of Medicine, etc. The degree awarded by the college depends upon the level of the program and external requirements for professional degrees.

What's the Difference?

No matter whether you attend a college or a university, the phrase “going to college” means the same thing. The main difference between a college and a university is that a college offers a collection of degrees, while a university is a collection of colleges that offer degrees. When you go to a university you are going to be graduating from one of their colleges, such as the business college. As to which is better, it depends on your goals and preferences. Single colleges tend to be smaller with smaller class sizes and more personal attention from faculty, while universities are bigger, with faculty time and attention divided between research and teaching. Universities often, but not always, have more resources in terms of art galleries, science facilities, and more.

Liberal Arts

Liberal arts refers to the educational program of a college where the emphasis is on broad preparation across several academic disciplines, non-technical courses, or majors such as biology, economics, English, history, mathematics, philosophy, etc. Many liberal arts colleges claim that their strength lies in the priority given to teaching by the faculty rather than research or publication. Students attending a liberal arts college do not have to declare their “major” or area of concentration until the end of the second year. The intent is to prepare students for “life.”

Institutional funding

Unlike many other countries where higher education is supported primarily by the government, in the United States there are both public and private institutions.

The Public Institution

Since the state or municipality in which they are located finances them, public institutions are either required to admit or give priority to students from within the funding area. Tuition is lower than at private institutions, but only marginally so for out-of-state or international students. Because the support is primarily through tax dollars, public pressure and financial exigencies often have a direct impact on the goals, policies and programs.

The Private Institution

The private institution receives most of its financial support from the tuition paid by students, funds provided by individual donors (called endowments), and grants from private and public foundations and programs. Tuition is much higher than at public institutions. The strength of many private colleges comes from the autonomy of the institution and the flexibility to develop and offer new programs to meet identified needs.



Overview: The US and UK Higher Education Systems

The UK system of higher education

How it works

Undergraduate Degree Courses

Universities and some institutions of higher education offer degrees at the undergraduate level (first degrees) such as Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), Bachelor of Education (BEd), or Bachelor of Engineering (BEng). Undergraduate degrees typically last for three years. Sandwich courses, which involve a period of work experience outside the college between periods spent in academic study, courses that include a year abroad, some more technical degrees, and Scottish degrees, normally last for four years. Unlike the system in the United States, you do not apply as a generalist to a specific university. Instead, you must select a specific subject or course to study and meet the qualifications for your selected subject. (Scotland is different; you declare a major at the end of the second year of study, and the degree lasts four years.) Most universities publish their qualification requirements for each subject in its prospectus, on their website, and most importantly, on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com).

Types of institutions in the UK

There is a wide choice of educational institutions in Britain, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, often offering very similar courses. Before deciding on where to apply, you must decide which type of institution will suit you best. This will partly depend on the level of qualification you hope to gain.

Further and Higher Education

Higher education includes advanced courses of a standard similar to, equal to or higher than an undergraduate degree. Further education describes other courses from basic numeracy and literacy up to pre-degree level.

Colleges of Further Education (FE)

FE colleges offer a broad range of courses including GCSE and A-levels (SCE in Scotland), access courses, professional and English language qualifications.

Colleges of Higher Education (HE)

Colleges of HE, including colleges of education, offer courses leading to degrees, postgraduate qualifications, professional and vocational qualifications, and higher education diplomas.

Universities

Universities offer higher education qualifications, including undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and professional qualifications. Many also offer access programs, which prepare adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds and under-represented groups for admission to undergraduate education. The former polytechnics in England and Wales, and most central institutions in Scotland, now have university status.

Private colleges

There are many private or 'independent' colleges whose courses are independent of government funding. They offer various courses to prepare students for professional, technical or vocational exams, English language exams and, in some cases, degree courses. The quality and efficiency of private colleges are not officially monitored, but there are a few organizations that accredit colleges whose standards have been inspected and approved. Accreditation is carried out by the British Accreditation Council (BAC), which provides a list of accredited colleges.





section 3

Applying to US Universities

Activities to assist you in beginning your research

You are about to enter a period of self-examination, research, and planning that will lead to a decision that will have a marked impact on your future. This is a two-pronged decision: deciding which colleges you will apply to and deciding which college you will attend.

Examine yourself:

How do your dreams and views of yourself match what you have done?

- What subjects do you like best? In what courses do you do well?
- What are your hobbies or interests outside of school? What talents or skills do you use?
- What are your strong points? Do you have strong organizational skills? Leadership ability? Creative ability?
- What are your values? Are you competitive? Adventurous? Do you aspire to fame? Money? Power? Are family life, service to others, religion, etc. important to you?

Many of you may have taken the career assessment test offered through the company Step One that helped you identify your future career and course interests. Another step in examining yourself was in answering the questions in the Student Questionnaire that you completed last semester. Answering these questions and articulating your ideas in writing help you clarify your needs.

Research to determine your college choices:

There are several criteria that may influence your decision about the colleges that you consider:

- **Size:** small (less than 4,000), medium (4,000-10,000), large (more than 10,000).
- **Location:** metropolitan area, suburb of a big city, small town, rural area, compact campus or different centers in the same city, convenience and distance from home, weather, nearby and off-campus recreation and opportunities.
- **Country or region:** Italy, Great Britain, Scotland, East Coast (US) or West Coast (US), etc.
- **Type of Institution:** Public or private, religious or non-sectarian, co-ed or single-sex, comprehensive university, liberal arts college, art school, technical school, traditional or progressive.
- **Academic Program:** Liberal arts offerings, majors offered, pre-professional programs, cooperative programs (work/study), wide range of offerings vs. specialized courses, strict requirements or wide freedom in study program, freshman seminar programs, research opportunities, Advanced Placement / International Baccalaureate credit or advanced standing, study abroad program.
- **Facilities:** On-campus housing available? Guaranteed? Required? Sports facilities (intramural possibilities or only competitive sports)? Library facilities (adequate resources in area of interest, hours, easy access to books and periodicals)? Computer facilities in residence halls, in the main library, in the academic department?
- **Students:** Homogeneous vs. diverse backgrounds, high percent of commuters (live at home), fraternity /sorority influence on student life, % of international students, minority students, or non-traditional students (older, often part-time).
- **Student Life:** Large residence halls, apartments, houses. Availability of rooms, system of housing allocation, meal plans. Campus activities, clubs, and organizations. Cultural opportunities on campus or in community.
- **Atmosphere:** Competitive? Relaxed? Religious emphasis? Artsy? Strong social consciousness? How tough will the work be? Will I be at the top or the bottom of the class? Career or graduate school oriented?



Applying to US Universities

- **Cost:** Can I afford it? Is it worth it? What financial aid is available? Are there non-institutional scholarships available for which I'm eligible? Loans vs. work/study?
- **Getting in:** How competitive is admission? How have other St. Stephen's graduates fared in the past? Do I have any family ties to the university/college? What kind of recommendations will I get from my teachers and college counselor? What kind of external examination results do I expect? How are my standardized tests: SAT (SAT-I), SAT subject tests, TOEFL? Do I have a strong activities and/or community service record? What special talents or abilities can I present to strengthen my application?

Take your research further

- Meet with the college counselor to review your academic credentials, set a schedule for taking college entrance tests and develop a preliminary list of colleges.
- Become familiar with the resources in the College Office.
- Meet with visiting college representatives who are an excellent source of firsthand information about their colleges.
- Find out if you can have an interview at the colleges you are interested in.

Plan your college search

Follow these logical steps:

- Write or email colleges that interest you.
- Review college guide books and websites about the colleges.
- Decide which colleges you would like to visit.
- Schedule campus visits and interviews where possible.
- Prepare for visits and interviews.
- Discuss your impressions of the college visits with the college counselor.
- Review application materials.
- Decide upon the final list of colleges.

How many colleges should a student apply to?

As the process of college selection is an individual one, based upon the student's interests, accomplishments and needs, there is no one answer that applies to everyone. However, applying to more than eight colleges may be superfluous.

Although the schools to which you will be applying may vary in selectivity, each should meet the general criteria that you have established.

There are four broad categories into which colleges under consideration should be placed:

- **SUPER REACH** – These are schools that are extremely difficult even for the student with straight A's and perfect SAT scores. Think Harvard, Yale, Princeton. If you are a possible candidate go ahead and put one on your list, but do not put more than two, and do not stack your list with Ivy League or other schools that accept only up to 10% of their applicant pool.
- **REACH** – The most selective schools representing your ideal choice, a possible risk, but still within a realistic range for you in terms of academic survival at college.
- **TARGET** – Schools that usually accept students whose credentials tend to match yours. To determine which schools fit into this category, you should search the scattergrams in Naviance, and review the entering class profile of the college, which is available for US applicants in reference books on file in the College Office and the college websites.
- **LIKELY** – A school that still embodies all the qualities you are seeking, but is a confident choice in terms of the type of student that the college tends to admit.

As a general rule, applying to two “reaches,” three or four “targets” and at least one “likely” college should be sufficient. Students applying to the US may decide to apply to one or two more, for a total of eight schools.

Two philosophic points:

1. The junior and senior years of high school require a decision from you that will have a significant impact on the next three or four years of your life: choosing a college. To the extent that the college choice shapes other choices—lifestyle, values, occupations, place of residence, even a spouse—it may be a very important decision of your life.
2. You will go through six related but distinct stages of your college search:
 - unaware --> interested
 - interested --> inquiry mode
 - inquiry mode --> campus visitor
 - visitor --> applicant
 - applicant --> accepted
 - accepted --> enrolled

Note that while the college chooses at one stage (the stage that gets most of the attention), you choose five times. Also, in all likelihood, both your criteria and your judgments will change somewhat as you move from stage to stage. For example, you may at stages 1 and 2 consider large universities like Michigan State and Ohio State, but eliminate them from stage 3 and 4. You may look more carefully at curricular differences, location, and campus atmosphere at schools like Bates, Middlebury, or Bowdoin that seem at least initially “alike.”







Applying to US Universities

Selectivity: Choosing and being chosen

What is a “good” college or university? Too often, it is equated with a handful of names and great competition for admission. Competition for admission and quality of education are not necessarily synonymous, and there are numerous examples of well-regarded colleges that accept 40%, 50%, 60% of their applicant pools as opposed to the 6%-25% accepted by most highly selective institutions. For example, University of Michigan in the US is widely acknowledged as a distinguished university. In 2010, it accepted 50% of its applicants. This is to say that if one qualifies (i.e., meets the demanding criteria outlined in the guidebooks) for admission, the chances are good that one will be accepted, whereas Cornell University, which shares many applicants with Michigan, accepts about 20% of its candidates. In other words, students must compete for admission.

If you work on matching the institution to your preferences, interest, and abilities, you will find that you will have a list of very good choices that range across selectivity criteria but are all a good fit for you. Making these matches asks for active investigation by you and by your counselor but it is this approach that will generate six or seven sensible application choices next fall, all of which are colleges or universities you would be happy to attend. The following books, which can be borrowed from the College Office, or can be ordered online, may assist you in this process:

- *The College Admissions Mystique*, by Bill Mayher
- *The College Hook*, by Pam Proctor
- *Colleges that Change Lives*, by Loren Pope
- *Fiske Guide to Colleges, 2014*, by Edward B. Fiske
- *The Hidden Ivies*, by Howard Greene, MA, MEd & Matthew Greene, PhD
- *Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years*, by Karen Levin Coburn & Madge Lawrence Treeger
- *Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Finding the College That's Right for You*, Loren Pope

What is most important in the selection process?

The following is a short list of the major criteria used by selective colleges in the United States in a general rank order. Keep in mind, however, since there are no standardized criteria for schools to follow, individual institutions may differ concerning which of these areas

they consider to be of greater importance than others. UK universities consider the same criteria overall except that they do not generally look at transcripts; instead, they consider International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and SAT scores.

The candidate's academic transcript record.

(grade point average, approximate rank in class, rigor of course load).

US college applicants normally have to present their transcripts for grades 9 through 12, from which their GPA (grade point average) may be calculated. St. Stephen's uses the conversion: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D+ = 1.3, D = 1.0, D- = 0.7, F = 0 (grades of A+ and F+ are not given). Each grade on the student's transcript can be converted to a number according to this scheme and the average is then computable.

St. Stephen's does not rank students by GPA. Small class size, high rates of turnover among international school students, and the wide variety of marking systems from which our students come to us make meaningful ranking impossible. In lieu of a ranking scheme, we prepare a grade distribution chart of classes that the juniors took, showing the grades that were received in each class. This chart is included in the school profile, and sent out to schools in December with the other supporting documentation (transcript, recommendation letters).

The Essay.

Here you have an important opportunity to say something about yourself that moves beyond lists and more quantified data. It is the single aspect of the process over which you have total control. Think about it as a way to add a new dimension to your application. Write about something important to you. Use your own voice. Small incidents yield powerful stories. Exploring the seemingly mundane in your essay can reveal telling and significant insights to both reader and writer. It is short so make every word count.

There is no forgiveness for essays that are not very well-written, carefully edited, and proofread.

SAT and SAT Subject Test scores.

These standardized tests are widely used by college admissions officers as a kind of control or verifier in conjunction with transcript grades. While they are not by themselves crucial to a candidate's admissions chances at a selective college, SAT scores for a successful candidate usually fall within a band or range that the college demands of its applicants. This type of data can be found in the general college handbooks or the college view books. Selective college admissions officers frequently state that the combination of transcript grades and SAT scores are the single best predictor of likely success of a given candidate at their college. More selective colleges ask for the results of SAT Subject Tests scores in addition to the traditional SAT scores. I encourage students to do both the SAT and at least two SAT Subject Tests regardless of where they apply.

Recommendations from teachers, advisors and others.

Many, but by no means all, colleges require a written assessment from the student's recent teachers or others who have known the student well. In addition, many of these colleges request a statement from the college counselor, which at St. Stephen's takes the form of a "summary appraisal," a composite portrait and judgment written by the college counselor reflecting the views of the faculty about the candidate. Warning: it is in general not advisable for candidates to supply too many endorsements to any one college. Inundating an admissions committee with unsolicited recommendations is likely to merely



Applying to US Universities

annoy the committee, which has literally tens of thousands of pieces of paper to contend with annually.

Extracurricular activities.

Colleges and universities are usually very interested in the degree of so-called “extracurricular” work and involvement of their candidates. This may consist of student clubs and student council work, hobbies or interests in which the student invests considerable time and/or where the achievement of the student is noteworthy, community service work, special talents (in music, art, theater, etc.), achievement in sports, interesting background (travel abroad, unusual work experience, etc.), foreign language fluency, and the like. Overall, the purpose is to discover what, if anything, may distinguish two otherwise similar candidates, to determine whether a student is likely to contribute to the extracurricular life of this potential college, and to see if any given student’s academic record is that of a narrow drudge or that of a lively, multi-faceted personality.

The alumni/ae connection.

Many private colleges in the US give some preference, on the margin, to candidates who are the children of their alumni/ae. Loyal alumni organizations and the maintenance of substantial alumni giving to a college are obvious motives here. However, children of alumni/ae who do not meet the general criteria for admission are just as unlikely to be admitted as other applicants with academic profiles that are not in line with the college’s expectation.

Residents of a given state of the US

For the state-supported colleges and universities, some preference will usually be given to applicants whose parents are residents of the state in which the student is applying; as a corollary, some state universities have numerical quotas for the numbers of out-of-state students they can accept. In addition, it is worth noting here that costs at state universities for “in-state” students are significantly lower than for out-of-state students. Warning: many public universities have strict rules about determining residency status – often they want the student to have lived in a state for a certain number of years immediately prior to attend the institution, so read the fine print carefully.

Interview.

Many of the most prestigious US colleges require interviews face-to-face with their applicants. For St. Stephen’s students, this may be done either in the summer of the junior year on a visit to their prospective colleges or here in Rome for those colleges that have alumni or

their representatives interviewing for them. More and more colleges are also using Skype to conduct interviews, and hosting virtual tours and question and answer sessions via the web. For the great majority of colleges, however, interviewing, especially of candidates overseas, is not a requirement, and not having an interview will not prejudice a student's admission prospects. It is up to you to find out the policies of each of the colleges you are considering.

TOEFL exam results.

Some US colleges and universities require that non-US nationals whose mother tongue is not English submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). This requirement applies despite the fact that, as a St. Stephen's student, you should have been working and studying in the English language for at least some of your secondary school career. Make sure to verify that the college or university won't take an alternative test like the SAT, or the IB. The TOEFL is given electronically in Rome during most of the year, and is generally considered to be quite easy for St. Stephen's students. Registration information is available at <http://www.ets.org>.

St. Stephen's university attendance history

Approximately 100% of St. Stephen's School graduates enroll into four-year colleges or universities. In the past three years, 91% have enrolled immediately and 9% have elected either a gap year or a post graduate year. Graduates of St. Stephen's school from the past three years have matriculated to the following colleges and universities (highlighted universities indicate the matriculation of the class of 2013).

USA/Canada:

- Babson College
- Bard College
- Barnard College
- Bates College
- **Boston University**
- Brandeis University
- University of British Columbia
- Brown University
- Bryn Mawr College
- **University of California at Berkeley**
- **University of California at Santa Cruz**
- **Duke University**
- Florida Institute of Technology
- **Georgetown University**
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Lake Forest College
- Loyola University Chicago
- **McGill University**
- Newberry College
- New York University
- Northeastern University
- University of Pennsylvania

- University of Richmond
- Sarah Lawrence College
- School of Visual Arts
- **Stanford University**
- **Swarthmore College**
- **Wellesley College**
- **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**
- Yale University

Worldwide:

- Aarhus School of Business (Denmark)
- **American University of Rome (Italy)**
- Amsterdam University College (The Netherlands)
- **Università Bocconi (Italy) (4)**
- **Università Bocconi World Bachelor in Business (U.S., Italy, Hong Kong)**
- **Carl Benz School of Engineering**
- University College Utrecht (The Netherlands)
- Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)
- European University (Spain)
- Universidad de Favaloro (Argentina)
- **Florence Design Academy (Italy)**



Applying to US Universities

- John Cabot University (Italy)
- LUISS (Italy)
- **Universiteit Maastricht (The Netherlands)**
- Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan)
- Politecnico di Torino (Italy)
- Università Paris IV – Paris – Sorbonne (France)
- **University of Roma, La Sapienza (Italy)**
- **Università degli Studi Tor Vergata (Italy)**
- **University of Berlin (Germany)**
- University of Bonn (Germany)
- University of Zurich (Switzerland)

UK:

- Architectural Association School of Architecture
- **University of the Arts London**
- University of Bath
- Bournemouth University
- University of Brighton
- University of Bristol
- **Brunel University (3)**
- University of Cambridge
- Cardiff University
- **Central Saint Martin's School of Art and Design (3)**
- **City University**
- University College London
- De Montfort University
- **University of Durham**
- **University of East Anglia (3)**
- University of Edinburgh
- **University of Exeter (2)**
- **Goldsmiths College, University of London**
- Imperial College of Science and Technology
- University of Kent
- **King's College London**
- **Lancaster University (2)**
- Leeds College of Music
- **London School of Economics**
- Loughborough University
- **University of Newcastle**
- **University of Nottingham**
- **Queen Mary, University of London**
- **University of Reading**
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- **School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London**
- University of Southampton
- St. George's, University of London
- University of Sussex
- University of Warwick



section 3



Applying to US Universities

College planning calendar - Grade 11

DEC / JAN	Attend PSAT result review with college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAN / FEB	Evaluate PSAT results with college counselor to set up a study plan for May/June Administration of SAT (see www.collegeboard.com for dates)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete Student Questionnaire (mandatory before family meeting with college counselor)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete Student CV/Résumé (mandatory before family meeting with college counselor)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Parent Questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend college planning evening with parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Schedule family meeting(s) with college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Date(s) - _____	
MAR	Meet with college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Generate a long list of colleges to research based on scores, GPA, interests	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend periodic junior meetings re college process	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend college workshops during ToK & free periods (Naviance, Common Application, College Board, Essays)	<input type="checkbox"/>
APR	Deadline for May SAT registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with college counselor re first set of IB predictions (after MP3)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with Director of Studies re senior program	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete first drafts of college essay(s) (required in English class)	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAY	Deadline for June SAT registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
	SAT + SAT Subject Tests	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Early May is deadline to confirm early US applications	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with counselor for update on summer plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Discuss senior program with counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Speak to two teachers about confidential recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUN	SAT + Subject Tests	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUL / AUG	Summer job/internship	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete full first draft of EE throughout summer	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Polish personal essay; plan ALL supplemental essays	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Evaluate SAT performance and prepare for re-takes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Visit colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Based on continued research, shorten list to 5-10 colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fill out Common Application forms	<input type="checkbox"/>

College planning calendar - Grade 12

SEPT	Early September deadline for October SAT/SAT Subject Test registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with counselor to update and prepare final list	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Personal Statement workshops during first two weeks of school – all students complete final versions	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sept 15th deadline enter universities on Naviance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	September 15th deadline to inform counselor of ED/EA intentions (internal deadline – must be respected); confirm teacher recommenders; enter colleges on Naviance; request teacher recommendations through Naviance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
OCT	SAT/SAT Subject Tests (first weekend)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deadline for November SAT/SAT Subject Tests registration is early October	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Second week of October, ED & EA predictions submitted to counselor by teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
	October 15th: deadline for students to complete ED/EA applications to US for counselor review (internal deadline)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	October 26th faculty recommendations uploaded to Naviance for ED/EA	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOV	End of October, deadline for all other seniors to have met with counselor to finalize college lists	<input type="checkbox"/>
	SAT (first weekend) – languages with listening are offered on this date	<input type="checkbox"/>
	November 1: deadline for all remaining students to submit final college list to Naviance	<input type="checkbox"/>
	November 1: deadline to submit teacher recommendation requests through Naviance or give teachers specific recommendations forms if university does not use Common Application	<input type="checkbox"/>
	November 1: University of California application opens	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deadline to register for SAT/SAT Subject Tests for December exam (Italian offered only in December)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All remaining IB predictions are due in 2nd-3rd week	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Send SAT/ACT scores to colleges through College Board and ACT	<input type="checkbox"/>
	End of November student deadline to complete US Applications for counselor review (internal deadline)	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEC	End of November student deadline to complete University of California applications	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Early December deadline to register for SAT/SAT Subject Tests January test date	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Write lovely thank you letters to those who wrote recommendation letters for you	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAN	Enjoy a genuinely relaxing winter break	<input type="checkbox"/>
	January 1: Opening date to file financial aid forms	<input type="checkbox"/>
FEB	January 1 or 15: Applications due at majority of colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Send any remaining applications (with later deadlines)	<input type="checkbox"/>
APR	Closing date for financial aid forms: Feb. 15	<input type="checkbox"/>
	April 1 or earlier: admissions decisions from US colleges come out	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAY	May 1: Acceptance notification due at chosen US colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Politely notify other colleges of your final decision and update Naviance	<input type="checkbox"/>

A printed copy of this checklist has been included at the back of the Handbook. Use these calendar planning sheets; put them above your desk or someplace where you will see them often. Refer to them regularly and check off each item as you meet each deadline



section 4

Applying to UK Universities

General information: UK higher education

Types of Institutions

As outlined briefly in the beginning of the handbook, before any application for a higher education course is completed, it is important to consider the type of institution.

University: There are over 300 universities and colleges to choose from, and some of these have a number of colleges within the university. The institutions previously known as “polytechnics” have become “universities.” They are often referred to as the “new universities.”

Specialist College: Can include programs in printing, art and design, drama, building, agriculture, etc.

College of Further Education: Some offer one-year foundation or access courses prior to university entry.

College or Institute of Higher Education: Some provide teacher-training courses.

Location

Having decided on the type of institution, it is important to consider the location of the institution. This choice may be based on:

- The size of institution the size of city or town in which it is located distance from home and transportation connections social atmosphere of institution.
- It is worth taking time to think about these factors and to work out which institutions and places are more attractive to your attitudes and preferences.

Courses

Careful choice of the subject and the course is very important. You may choose to:

- Continue with a familiar academic subject, previously taken at IB or AP level.
- Try a new academic subject.
- Take a combined studies course which leaves options open for a delayed choice of the final year subject. “Combined sciences” and “combined studies” at universities and modular programs at “new universities” allow for later choice and specialization.
- Choose a subject with direct career links, such as business studies, finance and accounting, management, engineering.
- Pick a “sandwich course” which mixes periods of full-time study at college with work experience in industry or commerce.
- Choose a course which offers a year abroad which often adds a year to the program.

Qualifications

- In assessing a student’s chances of getting a place at a higher education institution, the student’s IB/AP results or predicted results have to be weighed. It is well known, for example, that it is very difficult to get an offer in medicine or veterinary science. The reason is that there are a restricted number of places on first-degree courses in these subjects and the number of potential applicants far outnumbers the available places. Therefore the universities can ask for and expect the highest grades. Equally high grades are expected for courses such as law and business, which are very popular, as well as entry to Oxford and Cambridge for almost any course.
- It is wise to have some idea of the requirements expected for the course that a student is considering. Clearly if the applicant’s expectations of IB results are modest (24 points), it would be impractical to apply for a degree course in a popular subject at a university. (IB students should see the counselor in the second semester of junior year to obtain early prediction information which will help in selecting an appropriate selection of courses.)
- Before applying, **every candidate should check the university prospectus, the UCAS website or e-mail the admissions office to determine whether s/he has the correct entry qualifications in terms of IB/AP subjects.** In special cases, a letter directly to the admissions tutor of the university is advisable.







Degrees

These include Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) and Bachelor of Education (BEd). The universities give their own degrees.

Duration of study

- **England/Wales:** 3 years (nine 10-week terms)
- **Scotland:** 4 years (eight 15-week terms)
- **Buckingham University:** 2 years (eight 10-week terms)
- **Sandwich and foundation course degree programs:** 4/5 years

Minimum entry requirements for universities

- IB diploma (24 points) or AP exams (3 passes) with SAT or ACT.
- Individual universities make offers that usually specify minimum IB/AP grades in specific subjects.
- Consult the Naviance database for offers received by past St. Stephen's graduates.

Methods of study

Having made a choice of subject, the next step is to determine the way in which it is studied.

- It is wrong to suppose that courses with the same title have the same content. Students should check the prospectuses of at least six different universities to see what is actually involved in studies of a particular subject. The wide variation in content may well come as a surprise.
- The prospectus should explain how the subject is taught: tutorial, seminar, dissertation, fieldwork, case studies.
- Another important consideration is whether a single subject is to be taken throughout the course or if a combined or joint course would be more attractive.

What is the best course?

This question, which is regularly asked by parents and students, is impossible to answer: Best for whom? Best for what? But one way of attempting to provide an answer is to say that the choice of a course must be based on the same criteria used in choosing the right subject, in choosing the right course that incorporates this subject, and in choosing the right institution.

All these factors depend on personal attitudes, opinions and needs. The best institution will not necessarily be the one with the highest academic reputation. A student may instinctively or logically decide that another place would be more suited to his or her personality and needs. The best subject may not be the one in which the student achieved the best IB/AP mark.

The most important consideration is to think about the options, and not make a judgment based on inadequate research or on hearsay.

Tuition fees and living costs

Tuition fees are usually set by the academic institutions themselves. Fees charged are divided into two categories:

- **home** (EU countries)
- **and overseas** (non-EU countries).

The decision as to whether you pay “home” or “overseas” fees rests entirely with individual institutions.

Home candidate:

Part of the tuition fees is reimbursed by the British government or LEA (Local Educational Authority). In general, to qualify you must be an EU (European Union) national (or the child of an EU national) and your parents must have lived and worked in an EU country for the three years prior to your university entrance. For further information see the college counselor.

Overseas candidate:

The full tuition fees are paid by the student/family.

Tuition rates:

In December 2010 the British Parliament approved of a new increase in tuition fees for public universities. The approved plan will set tuition at roughly (and no more than) £9000 per year. This plan originated from the Browne Report (independent.gov.uk/browne-report). The British government website **Direct.gov** has good information about student fees and financing a UK education (http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Gettingstarted/DG_171573).



Cost of living

Residence hall fees vary and housing is not guaranteed on all campuses. In general, a residence hall room with half board in London costs approximately £120 per week and elsewhere £90 per week. An individual student should plan on minimally £900 monthly to cover all living expenses such as accommodation, food, clothes, books, etc. See specific university prospectuses for estimated costs.

Plan your college search

Follow these logical steps:

- Write or email colleges that interest you
- Review literature and websites about the colleges
- Decide which colleges you would like to visit
- Schedule campus visits and interviews where possible
- Prepare for visits and interviews
- Discuss your impressions of the colleges visits with the college counselor
- Review application materials
- Decide upon the final list of colleges



A brief summary of the UCAS scheme

UCAS stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions System for the UK. All applications are processed via UCAS. The applicant can list on the UCAS application up to **five choices** of courses at institutions in the UCAS scheme.

An applicant for 2015 entry (or for deferred entry in 2016) should complete the application on-line in the autumn of 2014 through UCAS Apply.

After the application has been processed, UCAS issues an acknowledgement letter confirming the applicant's choices and providing the **UCAS number**. At the same time copies of the application are sent to each of the institutions that the candidate has listed. Each institution considers the application independently and sends its decision to the applicant via UCAS. Students track their offers through UCAS Track. **Decisions** may come in any order and the times taken to make them may vary. Offers may be either **unconditional or conditional** upon forthcoming examination results.

With the last decision the applicant will receive a **statement of decisions** with instructions on how to reply to all offers that have been received. The applicant can accept one offer firmly and, if the offer is conditional, can hold one other offer as insurance. Following publication of **examination results**, institutions will make final decisions on applicants who are holding conditional offers by comparing their results with the offers made. UCAS will send **confirmation of offers** to successful applicants and details of the options open to those who have been unsuccessful.

Applicants whose places are confirmed are **committed** to them unless they withdraw completely from the UCAS system. If applicants are made an offer at Confirmation for a changed course, year and/or, point of entry, they are not obliged to accept it and will be sent a letter giving details of the courses of action open to them. If applicants are unsuccessful at Confirmation, or hold no offers from their original application, or apply after 30 June, they are eligible to enter Clearing.

The object of **Clearing** is to fill any remaining vacancies in institutions and to place suitable applicants who have been unsuccessful so far, or who have applied late. The integrity and success of the UCAS scheme depends upon institutions and applicants clearly understanding and observing their respective commitments. If difficulties arise UCAS will do what it can to help applicants, in consultation with the institutions concerned.

Extra is also a possibility. This relatively new option allows for students who have not received an offer from any of their choices, or who have decided to decline all offers, to choose another school to which to apply. Extra begins at the end of February and ends at the end of June. Students can only choose one university at a time.

Relatively new to the UCAS scheme is **Adjustment**. Students are eligible (available after A level results day) if they have **met and exceeded** the conditions of their conditional firm (CF) choice. You are **not** eligible to use Adjustment if you are confirmed (UF) at your firm choice but did not exceed the conditions of the offer, you have a confirmed place on a changed course offer, your original offer was unconditional. Please see the UCAS website for more details.



Applying to UK Universities

Application dates

Applications for 2015 entry should reach UCAS **between 15 September 2014 and 15 January 2015**, except for the following:

- Applications for courses at Oxford or Cambridge should be submitted to UCAS by **15 October 2014** (this means finishing and sending the application to the college counselor by October 1);
- Applications for courses leading to a professional qualification in medicine (i.e. with a course code of A100, A101, A103, A104, A106), Dentistry (i.e. with a course code A200, A203, A204, A205 or A206) and Veterinary Science/Medicine (i.e. with a course code of D100 or D101) should be submitted to UCAS by 15 October 2014 (see above note). Applications received after 15 October 2014 will be forwarded to the universities for consideration at their discretion;
- Applications for courses in Art and Design sometimes have later deadlines, so make sure to consult UCAS and the universities for details;
- If an applicant is applying from outside the UK or EU for one course only and already has the necessary qualifications, he/she can apply at any time. The applicant should contact UCAS or the chosen university or college for advice.

Applicants who think they may be assessed as a 'home' student (UK or EU) for tuition fees, should apply by 15 January 2015. **However, St. Stephen's students should follow the counselor's deadline, which is late November.**

Applicants should be advised to apply in good time wherever possible, but should not be under pressure to apply early at the expense of making careful and considered choices of courses and institutions.

Institutions are expected to give **equal consideration** to all applications received by UCAS up to and including the closing date of 15 January, or 15 October, irrespective of the date of submission. However, it would be unrealistic to guarantee such equal treatment in all cases. Occasionally it may be necessary for admissions tutors to adjust their **admissions policy** in the light of the number and quality of applications received, both of which may fluctuate from year to year. Institutions make every effort to avoid this and to minimize any adverse effects, but they do make admissions decisions before these deadline dates and, generally, start making offers 3-4 weeks after receiving applications.

UCAS applications should be sent to the college counselor by the end of November. Candidates should avoid the 15 January peak when a large volume of applications is likely to cause delays in the processing and acknowledgement of forms.

Applicants who are unable to apply by 15 January may still submit an application. Institutions consider late applicants at their discretion throughout the admissions cycle.

Late applications received by UCAS after 15 January 2015 will be processed as follows:

- ***Applications received between 16 January 2015 and 30 June 2015:***

UCAS will forward copies to each institution listed for **consideration at their discretion**. Applications received after 16 January 2015 may not receive a decision until end of July 2015.

- ***Applications received between 1 July 2015 and 20 September 2015:***

Applications will be processed through the **Clearing scheme**, which operates from mid August. UCAS will send such applicants instructions about Clearing including details of how to obtain vacancy information.

It is in the interests of applicants who are applying late to explain in the application why they are doing so.

League Table of Universities

Every year, *The Times* publishes a ranking of UK universities (*The Guardian* also has their own tables). This is just one piece of information to use as you select your universities. The College Office cautions against putting a great deal of weight on the league tables. Just because University So-and-So is ranked in the top 20 does not mean that it is ranked in the top 20 for your selected subject. Nor does it mean that you will be happy there. Having said that, you can take a look at them by going to <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/education>, where you will be able to use pull down menus to see how various subjects are ranked. Again, look beyond the rankings. Make sure a university that you choose is a place where you believe you will be happy.





Applying to UK Universities

College planning calendar - Grade 11

DEC	Attend PSAT review with college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAN / FEB	Student Questionnaire: mandatory before meeting with counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Student CV/Résumé: mandatory before meeting with counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Parent Questionnaire to college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend college planning evening with parents at SSS	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Schedule family meeting(s) with college counselor - Date(s)_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Discuss IB program with IB coordinator and college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend the UK university fair	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAR	Meet with college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend periodic meetings re college process	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Arrange for spring visits to colleges/universities	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend college workshops during ToK and free periods (UCAS, Naviance, Essay)	<input type="checkbox"/>
APR	Complete first draft of personal statement (required in English class) & continue to revise throughout spring and summer	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with college office re first set of IB predictions (after MP3)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with director of studies to discuss senior program	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAY	Early May deadline to confirm applications to Oxbridge, UK Medical, Dentistry or Veterinary School	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with counselor for update on summer plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Oxbridge, UK Vet/Med Schl applicants meet w/counselor to plan testing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Discuss senior program with counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUN	College counselor will provide UCAS login information	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUL / AUG	Summer job/internship	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Oxbridge, UK Vet/Med School applicants prepare for testing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Polish personal statement	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Visit universities	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Based on continued research, shorten long list to 5 universities	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fill out UCAS	<input type="checkbox"/>

College planning calendar - Grade 12

SEP / NOV	Discuss your final choices with the college counselor (maximum 5)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Apply online using St. Stephen's buzzword	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete UCAS application online as soon as possible but no later than Oct 1 for applications which include Oxford/Cambridge and end of November for all other applications (a detailed schedule will be posted on Naviance, the web site, and the bulletin board)	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOV / MAR	Receive conditional offers from universities	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Prepare yourself for interviews if required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Concentrate on your studies in order to satisfy your conditional offers	<input type="checkbox"/>
APR / MAY	Decide on which offers to accept	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consult prospectuses, speak with SSS graduates attending university in the UK, consult with your IB teachers, get advice from your parents and college counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend the UK Universities Fair to speak with admissions officer if necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notify UCAS of your acceptance of two offers (you may hold one Firm offer and one Insurance offer)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Continue to concentrate on your studies!!!	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Supply IB coordinator with name of university you plan on attending and fill out appropriate IB request form for sending your results to the university of your choice	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUN / AUG	Await your IB results	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Make sure that universities have your summer address for important communications about housing, orientation programs, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Leave instructions with college counselor about action to be taken if your offer is not satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If you do not make your offer, you should telephone the university immediately to plead your case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do not have your parents call. Universities prefer to deal directly with you. If you need assistance, contact St. Stephen's and the college counselor will assist you.	<input type="checkbox"/>
SEP / OCT	Notify your college counselor about your final university plans and leave a forwarding address	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Make sure you have returned materials borrowed from College Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Complete the college counseling survey via Naviance.	<input type="checkbox"/>

UCAS applications are officially due in the 2014-2015 academic year on January 15, 2015. However, for the College Office to manage all applications –US, UK and beyond–, students are expected to submit their applications by the Thanksgiving break.

A printed copy of this checklist has been included at the back of the Handbook. Use these calendar planning sheets; put them above your desk or someplace where you will see them often. Refer to them regularly and check off each item as you meet each deadline



5

section 5

All About Testing

US College Admissions Testing Information







All About Testing

What is the PSAT?

The PSAT is a practice SAT. Most students take it in October of their junior year, but some take it in their sophomore year as well. PSAT scores are not shown to colleges, but they give students an idea of how well they'll do on the SAT. And the scores are used to qualify US citizens for the National Merit Scholarships.

The PSAT has three sections: math, critical reading, and writing skills. Each is scored on a scale of 20 to 80. The math, critical reading, and writing scores multiplied by 10 are roughly equivalent to SAT scores. So a 56 in math on the PSAT is comparable to a 560 on the SAT. National Merit Scholarship eligibility is determined by adding the math, critical reading, and writing-skills scores. Students who are US citizens and score above a certain level, depending on their state's index, will be recognized by National Merit. Only a very small percentage of students qualify, however. For most students, the PSAT is simply a practice test.

What is the SAT?

(also known as the SAT Reasoning Test or the SAT I)

The SAT takes just over 3 1/2 hours to complete, is given seven times a year, and is used by most colleges and universities as one of the most important factors in their admissions decisions. It is composed of a math section, critical reading, and writing section. Students receive three scores—one for math, one for critical reading, and one for writing—between 200 and 800, but most schools look at the combined total.

Most students take the SAT for the first time at the end of their junior year; many take it a second time at the beginning of their senior year. While you can take the SAT as many times as you like, it is a good idea to prepare yourself by doing some practice and/or taking a prep course. Most students take the SAT two times because, generally, skills and scores improve with practice. We recommend that students sit the exams a maximum of three times to avoid unnecessary stress and expense.

Students in the past have changed their mind about universities as late as after finishing the second year of study in the UK or Italy. It is for this reason that St. Stephen's asks all students to take the SAT at least once.

How important is the SAT?

Every school has its own admissions policy, but the general rule is the larger the school, the more important your SAT scores and your grade point average. Most smaller schools consider your SAT scores but place significant weight on the level of difficulty of your high school classes and on your personal background.

What are the SAT Subject Tests?

There are currently 20 SAT Subject Tests for disciplines such as English literature, Mathematics Level 1 and Mathematics Level 2, world and US history, biology, chemistry, physics, French, German, Chinese, Italian, Latin, and Spanish, each lasting an hour. You can take as many as three in a day, and they are scored on a 200-to-800 scale. *Please note that the listening tests with languages are only offered in November, and Italian is only held in December.*

These have become increasingly important in college admissions, as they reflect more advanced work in particular areas. Almost all the more selective schools require two SAT Subject Tests. (In the past, some colleges required three, but more recently, the norm has been two; policies change, so make sure to do your homework and check each college's testing requirements before making your decisions.) It is advisable to take subject tests in different areas, like math and English literature, or science and history, in order to show a well-rounded academic background, but often colleges will recommend students to take their strongest subjects as subject tests. Even if you submit an ACT score, you will often be required to submit SAT Subject Tests (some colleges will accept only the ACT, as long as it is taken with writing). To be safe, check with the school.

When should you take the SAT Subject Tests?

The best time to take the SAT Subject Tests is when you feel most prepared but no later than the beginning of your senior year. For instance, the best time to take the World History SAT Subject Test is just after a course in World History.

How can you study the SAT Subject Tests?

While you should be choosing subject tests for subjects you've studied, because you are taking IB level courses, there might be some gaps or differences in what is covered in the test and what you have covered in class. Be sure to look through a few practice tests, and be prepared to create a study plan. Please discuss your Subject Test choices with your academic teachers.

What is the ACT?

The ACT has traditionally been favored by Midwestern schools, while the SAT has been more popular on the East and West coasts. But every school these days will accept an ACT score in lieu of an SAT score.



All About Testing

The ACT contains four sections: English, reading, math and science. Each of these sections is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, and the composite score is the average of these four scores.

Whether you should take the SAT or the ACT really depends on which of the tests you think you can score better on. The best approach is to try both of them, and if you score significantly higher on one, submit that test as part of your admissions portfolio.

Registration and fees

Registering is rather straightforward and is explained to students in small groups by the college counselor during junior year. Announcements will be made regularly during morning meetings. For the SAT, you may register by mail, phone (if you have registered previously) or online. For the ACT, you may only register by mail and online. It is best to register early as it gives you the best chance of being assigned to the test center of your choice.

Both the SAT and ACT have registrations closer to the test date but only students taking the SAT can register late. If you register late, the SAT allows students to take the test as a **Standby**. However, there is no guarantee. There is an additional charge for this service above and beyond the charge for late registration.

- There are several ways to register for the SAT or ACT. You can pick up a registration booklet at St. Stephen's or call ETS (609-921-9000) or ACT (319-337-1000) and have one sent to you. You can also register online for the SAT at www.collegeboard.org or the ACT at www.act.org (this is what we strongly recommend).
- The fee for the SAT 2013-2014 year is \$51.00. There is an additional \$28.00 international processing fee. The SAT Subject Tests cost \$24.50 for basic registration, with the \$35.00 international processing fee, \$24.00 for language tests with listening, and \$13.00 for all other Subject Tests taken. Consult <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/intl-services-fees> for updated fee information. For the ACT, the fee is \$36.50, plus \$16.00 for the optional writing section (\$33 additional for international testers). In certain cases, these fees may be waived. To apply for a fee waiver, go on the act.org or the collegeboard.org websites for the forms.
- Be sure to spell your name the same way each time you fill out a registration bulletin. Different spellings will create different test records and may prevent all your scores from being sent to the colleges to which you apply.

- St. Stephen's School high school code is 748600. If you are registering for the SAT, you must go to The American Overseas School in Rome or John Cabot University to take the exam. If you are registering for the ACT, you will test at the American University of Rome.
- Each time you register for a test, you will use a separate form, unless you choose to re-register by phone. Please note that you use the same form to register for both the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. Learn your social security number (if you have one). It will be necessary to supply it each time you register. When registering for subject tests, you will be asked to register for the specific tests you intend to take. The amount of the fee will change slightly depending upon whether you take one, two, or three tests. If, however, you change your mind as to which test you want to take, or desire to take an additional test, you may do so at the same time you take the test without contacting the College Board. They will learn of your decision when they get your answer sheet and bill you directly if you have incurred any additional fees.

Special accommodations

For test takers with special needs, special accommodations are available. A diagnosed condition or disability can entitle the student to extra time, extra breaks or food, a cassette recording or Braille version of the test and other exceptions to standard rules. To apply for special accommodations, send in a request form (get it from your high school counselor) along with letters from a doctor and your school. **This is something you will need to have on file months in advance of the test. Please see the counselor if you need help getting students with special needs approved for special accommodations.**

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TWE (Test of Written English)

The TOEFL test is primarily intended to evaluate the English proficiency of non-native speakers who wish to study in colleges in English speaking countries. The test is divided into three sections: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression and Reading Comprehension. The TWE is the essay component of the TOEFL. It is a multiple-choice test used to evaluate the English proficiency of applicants whose native language is not English. The test will provide information about the ability of the test taker to generate and organize ideas, to support these ideas with evidence and examples and to use the conventions of standard written English.

If you are a full IB diploma candidate, many universities will accept a letter from the International Baccalaureate Organization or from the counselor exempting students from the TOEFL test. This will save you the hefty test fee (see test location for exact price). However, some universities will still insist that IB students who are not native English speakers should take this test. Check with the universities you are interested in. If you are unsure as to whether you should take the test, see your counselor for a recommendation.

The TOEFL test is computer based and one can schedule a test date at any time. Registration for the test can be done at www.ets.org/toefl. Test sites are available throughout Italy.



Prep courses for college testing - what to do?

There is no simple answer to this question. At present, the College Board maintains that short courses (20 hours) improve an average combined score by about 25 points. Longer courses (35-50 hours) improve combined scores an average of 35-50 points. There is a word of caution, which is that the improvement can be accounted for as a result of test familiarity. Secondly, many students do additional preparation on their own. Finally, keep in mind that they are just averages and while some scores go up, others go down.

At St. Stephen's, we have no official position on the advisability of taking a coaching course. We encourage students to take practice tests and learn what they can about test taking strategy from them. In the end, we encourage all families and students to choose the preparation option that works best for them. In addition to formal courses, there are on-line courses. Typically, we will invite an expert to offer a prep course on the weekends at St. Stephen's in the spring semester of junior year. This is not part of our curriculum, and therefore families do pay a fee.

Frequently asked questions about college test scores

How do I get my scores sent to the colleges and universities to which I am applying?

When you register for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, or the TOEFL, you are asked to list the colleges to which you want your scores sent. After your test has been scored, the results will be sent by the test giver to these colleges; however, often students are not sure yet which colleges should receive their scores. If you did not indicate any college on the registration form or want to add any additional colleges, you must complete "The Additional Report Request Form" via your profile on the College Board website. Although you often self-report your scores on your application, colleges require and will only use data supplied by an official report. **It is the student's responsibility to have the College Board or ACT send this official report to admission offices. After the first four colleges, which are free if noted at the time of the test, there is a fee to send scores to additional colleges.**

If I take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests more than once, which scores do the colleges use?

As of spring 2009, the SAT has changed its policy back to "score

choice.” This means that students will be able to choose which sitting (test date) to send to colleges. According to the College Board, “Score Choice is optional, and if students choose not to use it, all scores will be sent automatically. Colleges will continue to set their own test requirement policies. These policies vary from college to college, as well as from year to year. The College Board will work with colleges to provide them with best practice information and guidance on how best to formulate, clarify, and/or communicate test requirements policies, given the new SAT score report policy. Students will be encouraged to follow the different score-reporting requirements of each college to which they apply.”

Please go to:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning/scores/policy> for further information.

Can I cancel my score?

You may cancel your test immediately after you have taken it if you feel that you have done poorly. You do this by completing a cancellation form at the test center, or by writing or phoning the College Board or the ACT immediately after the test date (the following Monday). **You cannot cancel your scores once they have been recorded.**

Is any one of my scores more important than another?

Most college admissions officers probably feel the critical reading and writing scores are somewhat more important as predictors of success in college work due to the large amounts of reading and writing that are required in most college curricula. If, however, you are applying to programs that focus primarily on math or science, then these scores will be of greater significance.

What if I apply early? When should I take my SAT Subject Tests?

If you are considering applying during the first round of early decision or early action (November 1st or 15th), and subject tests are required, you should take two subject tests by the end of your junior year or plan on taking them on the October SAT test date. If you wait until later than October to complete your subject testing, your scores may not be received early enough to be considered in the early decision/action process. In fact, your application may be judged incomplete and may not be considered at this point. If you are planning on applying during one of the later rounds of early decision (December 15 or January 15), you may take your subject tests as late as the November test date.

Please remember that the best time to take a subject test is immediately after you have completed the relevant course work. If you have not recently studied a particular subject, you will want to review before taking the test. If you have a question about when to take various tests, ask the college counselor.



Suggest time table for college testing

JUNIOR YEAR

October	PSAT
May/June	SAT (on either date or both)
April/June	ACT (on either date or both)
May	TOEFL
June	SAT Subject Tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US History • World History • German • Modern Hebrew • Latin • Spanish • Chemistry • Math 1 or 2 • English Literature • French • Biology • Physics

SENIOR YEAR

October	SAT (Optional) SAT Subject Tests (Optional) ACT (Optional) TOEFL (Optional)
November	SAT (Optional) SAT Subject Tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French Listening • German Listening • Spanish Listening • Chinese • Japanese • Korean
December	SAT or SAT Subject Tests (Optional) ACT (Optional) SAT : Italian, French, Latin, Spanish
January	SAT or SAT Subject Tests (Optional)
February	ACT (Optional)

Meet with the college counselor to decide on a testing schedule that works for you. Each student has different needs.

Ten test-taking tips

- Before the test, **learn the directions** for each section so you won't have to waste time with the directions during the test.
- **Read each question thoroughly and carefully** so you understand specifically what is being asked.
- **Always answer the easy questions first.** Remember, they are usually at the beginning of each section and count the same as the more difficult questions.
- **Be accurate in marking your answers.** Erase all unintended marks completely. If you skip a question, make sure that your answer choice is for the correct question.
- **It is appropriate to guess** if you can eliminate one or more of the answer choices as being incorrect. Otherwise, leave it blank.
- **Remember to bring the following to the test center:** Picture ID, Admission Ticket, No 2 pencil with eraser and a wristwatch.
- **Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.**
- **Prepare in advance.** Use a computer program, take a practice test.
- **Arrive at the test location early.**
- **Be confident!** You can do it!

Getting to the two test sites

All students who are registered to take the SAT/Subject Tests take them at AOSR (American Overseas School of Rome), via Cassia 811, or at the Tiber campus of John Cabot University (Lungotevere Raffaello Sanzio 12). Students should arrive by 7:45 a.m. AOSR is on the left hand side of the Cassia (direction leaving Rome). If you are coming on the Raccordo Anulare, AOSR is two kilometers inside the Raccordo (towards Roma Centro). John Cabot is in Trastevere.

For AOSR, if you plan on taking public transportation, make sure to allow enough time to get to AOSR (at least one hour from school). You can take Tram 225 at Piazzale Flaminio (Metro stop on line A) to Piazza Mancini (end of the tram line) where there are two buses (301 or 201) which head to the Cassia and pass by AOSR.

All students must bring to the exam center

1. Two No. 2 pencils (at least).
2. Your admission ticket (it now includes a photo of you).
3. An acceptable identification with your photo (passport, driver's license, etc.).
4. A calculator (for SAT and Math subject tests with calculator) – see the College Board website for specifics on approved calculators.



6

section 6

Written Components of the Applications

Essays: make your essays count

How important is the personal essay in college admission? What do colleges look for?

First of all, the essay is important, to both you and to the college. This is your chance to “talk” directly to college admission officers. According to one admissions director, “It makes the facts in the student’s application come alive for us. Because it is the student’s personal statement, no single piece of admission evidence gets as much attention and provokes as much discussion.”







Written Components of the Application

Essays: make your essays count (cont.)

The essay is your opportunity to take charge of the information the college receives about you, and to provide information that does not appear in grades, test scores, and other materials. It allows you to reveal your intelligence, talent, sense of humor, enthusiasm, maturity, creativity, expressiveness, sincerity, and writing ability—traits that count in the admission evaluation. With the UK personal statement in particular, it is your chance to let them know why you have chosen your course of study and why you believe yourself to be a strong candidate.

What do colleges look for?

Generally speaking, the admission staff will evaluate your application on three levels:

Level 1: Your ability to use standard written English that is correctly written, punctuated, with correct grammar, usage, and syntax.

Level 2: Content, substance, and depth of insight, reflecting your ability to think about yourself and to convey your true feelings or opinions about a topic.

Level 3: Creativity and originality. “It is at this level,” according to a dean of admission, “that students can position themselves as unique as individuals who would bring a freshness of vision and viewpoint to the college that will enhance the quality of its academic and social life.”

In its essay directions, a US college may ask you to do one or more of the following:

- Describe your uniqueness as a person, or tell something about yourself that can't be learned from the information in your application.
- Discuss something that contributed significantly to your growth.
- Comment on your goals and aspirations and tell how you expect the college to help meet them.
- Write about someone who has had a great influence on you.
- Describe a significant event or experience in your life.

Whatever the topic, the care and attention you give it express the level of your motivation and how much you care about college.

US college essay-writing tips

1. Don't put off writing your essay until the last minute. Write rough drafts of your essays during the summer after junior year. Allow yourself enough time for all the steps below. Many US colleges require additional individual essays beyond the general one they receive as part of your Common Application.
2. Be sure you understand the college's topics, directions, and deadlines, and look in its catalogue or guidebooks for descriptions of the personal qualities it is looking for.
3. Before you start your essay, jot down your aspirations and how you think the college will help you meet them. Then develop a personal inventory. Make lists of your civic and school activities, your travels, awards, honors, other accomplishments, work experiences, any academic or personal shortcomings you are trying to overcome, and the personality traits you value about yourself. To focus your essay, develop a one-sentence theme from your inventory.
4. Think about the form you might use to convey your information. Straight prose is fine, but if your theme lends itself to another approach, try it.
5. Now write a draft. Set the draft aside for 24 hours and then read it to spot clichés, triteness, vagueness, dullness, grammatical errors, and misspellings. Is your essay focused on your theme, or does it ramble? Is it confusing or boring? Does the introduction “grab” the reader?
6. Rewrite your essay based on this evaluation and repeat step 5 until you feel the essay is your absolute best possible writing.
7. Ask someone whose opinion you respect to read your essay and give his or her candid impressions. Ask for specifics: ***Tell me what you think I'm trying to say. How do I come across as a person? Where do you need more details? What parts bore you? Tell me the parts you like the best.*** But do not let this person rewrite your essay.
8. If necessary, go back to step 3, 4, or 5. If this draft is the best you can do, polish it by checking again for spelling and grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, inaccurate usage, unnecessary words, or anything else that does not sound right to you. Read your essay out loud to locate the rough spots.
9. Type your essay and proofread it to catch typographical errors and any other errors you may have missed. In fact, proofread it many times.
10. Upload your essay with your application on time and relax. If you have done all of the above, you can be relatively sure your efforts will be noted with appreciation.
11. Write your supplemental essays for colleges well in advance of the deadline. Then review each application for balance of information. Each essay should complement the others and not duplicate information. Each essay should represent a different facet of you as a person.



Written Components of the Application

UK university personal statement - writing tips

Personal Statement:

- 47 lines and 4,000 characters **including spaces**
- Straightforward/direct
- Needs to make an impact on the admissions tutor

Objectives:

- Why have you chosen this particular course of study?
- Why are you interested in this subject area?
- Cite a relevant job experience—especially that which relates to your subject area
- Cite key skills/talents—i.e. internship, or strengths in your subject area
- Cite activities that relate to your subject area—i.e. MUN for International Relations
- Cite awards, achievements, honors
- Describe particular or specific interests in a course of study (Extended Essay topic?)
- State future plans and/or goals based on course of study as preparation for same
- State if and explain why you plan to defer for a year before pursuing university
- Why have you chosen to study in the United Kingdom? (Perhaps the degree or qualification from that university system will enable you to pursue your goal.)

Format and Structure of Personal Statement:

- Topic sentence/central idea
 - Each paragraph must be built around a controlling idea
 - Points you make must support this opening idea
 - Concise, yet detailed, supporting statement
 - Persuasive tone, but always HONEST. Write with candor about yourself
- Organize your statement in a logical, chronological sequence
- State how you have “gone that extra mile” to pursue your subject area
- Show how you are committed to this subject area
- How are you prepared for the challenge of higher education?
- What do you hope to do with the qualification you will receive from this university?

Obtaining teacher and counselor recommendations

(Note: UK colleges require only the counselor recommendation)

What You Should Know About Recommendations

1. Recommendations are not used by public universities except in unusual circumstances (e.g. serious illness, special talent in the fine arts curriculum, foreign-born students).
2. In many instances, the counselor recommendation (which often includes teacher comments) is sufficient. It is of utmost importance that you give your counselor information in writing regarding your autobiographical information, special interests and activities.
3. Highly selective US colleges will require recommendations from teachers as well as counselors. The most helpful recommendations provide descriptions of your skills and work in the classroom, your comparative ability to other students, along with examples and anecdotes illustrating those skills and personal qualities. You are strongly encouraged to discuss these with your teachers and counselor.
4. A recommendation is only credible if you have signed (when provided) the waiver of right to see the recommendation

Recommendation Procedures

1. Ask the teacher for a recommendation in person (preferably 11th or 12th grade teacher). Be sure to give the teacher plenty of time to complete the recommendation. (Note: most US applications are sent before Christmas break; the college counselor should have all recommendations completed by early December.)
2. Supply information about yourself. Make a photocopy of your completed CV/autobiography. Give one to each person you ask to recommend you.
3. **Request the recommendations through Naviance. Make sure to waive your right to view the recommendation.**
4. Wait two weeks. Confirm with the teacher that the recommendation has been completed.
5. Follow up with a personal “thank you” to the teacher or counselor.

What Does a Recommendation Say About You

Below are some characteristics, talents or behaviors that a teacher might mention in the recommendation:

- Participation in class discussion
- Independent thinking and study
- Personal responsibility and organization
- Leadership ability
- Motivation in school work projects
- Self confidence/maturity consideration for others
- Academic ability
- Written expression
- Imagination or creativity
- Academic/scholarly potential
- Critical thinking
- Consistent academic performance
- Other personal qualities



section 7

US Financial Aid

Financing an Education in the US: How Much Does a College Education Cost?

Many people overestimate the cost of college or believe that all schools are expensive. For example, a recent Gallup survey indicated that 13- to 21-year-olds overestimated the average cost of public two- and four-year colleges by more than three times the actual figure. The same group estimated that the costs of private four-year colleges were one-third higher than they actually were.

Although some colleges are expensive, costs vary from institution to institution. In addition, the availability of financial aid—money available from various sources to help students pay for college—can make even an expensive college affordable for a qualified student.



College costs

The basic costs of college are tuition, fees, and other expenses:

Tuition

Tuition is the amount of money that colleges charge for instruction and for the use of some facilities, such as libraries. Tuition can range from a few hundred dollars per year to more than \$40,000, not including room and board. The least costly option for post-secondary education is typically a local community college where the average tuition and fees are generally under \$2,500 per year. There are also many four-year colleges and universities that are relatively inexpensive. Approximately 68 percent of students who attend four-year colleges attend public institutions whose tuitions are much lower than those of private institutions.

Fees

Fees are charges (usually small) that cover costs generally not associated with the student's course load, such as costs of some athletic activities, student activities, clubs, and special events.

Other Expenses

Besides tuition and fees, students at most colleges and universities pay for room, board, books, supplies, transportation, and other miscellaneous costs. "Room and board" refers to the cost of housing and food.

Tuition at Public and Private Colleges

It is important to know the difference between public and private institutions. A school's private or public status has a lot to do with its tuition.

Public Institutions

Over three-quarters of all students in two- and four-year colleges attend State or other public colleges/universities. Since these schools receive a large proportion of their budgets from State or local government, they can charge students who live in that State (in-State students) relatively low tuition. Students from other States (out-of-state students) usually pay higher tuition.

Private Institutions

Private (sometimes called "independent") institutions charge the same tuition for both in-state and out-of-state students. Private college tuitions tend to be higher than those of public colleges because private schools receive less financial support from States and local governments. Most private colleges are "non-profit." Other private post-secondary schools—mostly vocational and trade schools—are "proprietary." Such institutions are legally permitted to make a profit.

Financial Aid

Financial aid can help many families meet college costs. Every year millions of students apply for and receive financial aid. In fact, almost one-half of all students who go on for more education after high school receive financial aid of some kind. There are three main types of financial assistance available to qualified students at the college level: **Grants and Scholarships**, **Loans**, and **Work-Study**.

Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships provide aid that does not have to be repaid. However, some require that recipients maintain certain grade levels or take certain courses.

Loans

Loans are another type of financial aid and are available to both students and parents. Like a car loan or a mortgage for a house, an education loan must eventually be repaid. Often, payments do not begin until the student finishes school, and the interest rate on education loans is commonly lower than for other types of loans. For students with no established credit record, it is usually easier to get student loans than other kinds of loans. There are many different kinds of education loans. Before taking out any loan, be sure to ask the following kinds of questions:

- What are the exact provisions of the loan?
- What is the interest rate?
- Exactly how much has to be paid in interest?
- What will the monthly payments be?
- When will the monthly payments begin?
- How long will the monthly payments last?
- What happens if you miss one of the monthly payments?
- Is there a grace period for paying back the loan?

In all cases, a loan taken to pay for a college education must be repaid, whether or not a student finishes school or gets a job after graduation. Failure to repay a student loan can ruin a person's credit rating and make finances much more difficult in the future. Parents, this is an important reason to consider a college's graduation and job placement rates when you help your child choose a school.

Work-Study Programs

Many students work during the summer and/or part time during the school year to help pay for college. Although many obtain jobs on their own, many colleges also offer work-study programs to their students. A work-study job is often a required part of a student's financial aid package. The jobs are usually on campus and the money earned is used to pay for tuition or other college charges. The types of financial aid discussed above can be merit-based, need-based, or a combination of merit-based and need-based.

Merit-based Financial Aid

Merit-based assistance, usually in the form of scholarships or grants, is given to students who meet requirements not related to financial needs. For example, a merit scholarship may be given to a student who has done well in high school or one who displays artistic or athletic talent. Most merit-based aid is awarded on the basis of academic performance or potential.

Need-based Financial Aid

Need-based means that the amount of aid a student can receive depends on the cost of the college and on his or her family's ability to pay these costs. Most financial aid is need-based and is available to qualified students.



8

section 8

Helpful Miscellany

Regarding Summer Activities

- Interesting summer experiences alone are not going to get you admitted. But, for a student otherwise qualified in a competitive situation, they can make a real difference, in particular, if you reflect on these intelligently in the written work you submit.
- Private institutions generally give more weight to summer activities than public schools do, but doing nothing in a summer is a bad plan wherever you apply.
- How colleges rate the relative value of different summer activities: 1) unique experiences like an internship that the student shapes from a particular interest or cause; 2) non-academic summer programs, such as a summer job; 3) an academic enrichment program; 4) travel/study programs.
- Admission officials understand that not everyone has the money or circumstance to do programs outside their community, so they give equal consideration to local jobs or internships. They will scrutinize carefully what a student with advantages does with his/her summers.
- There are no extra points for participating in an organized program, per se. The question is whether you stretched and reached beyond your bounds. Was there initiative to get involved with something you're really interested in? The more that summer activities reflect your interests and possible career directions, the better.
- If you participate in an organized program, don't assume the college knows all about it. Give them enough information so they understand the nature of the experience. Tell them if you received a scholarship for the program. It helps if it was a selective experience and you competed with others for admission.



Some useful web sites for applicants

ACT Registration

- www.act.org

Canadian Universities

- www.aucc.ca Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada Web site. This is your single stop for complete, up-to-date information on Canadian higher education.
- www.pas.bc.ca Twenty of British Columbia's universities, university colleges, colleges, and institutions are now accepting applications through Canada's first Internet application-for-admission service.
- www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/student Canadian student loans program. For Canadian citizens only.
- www.macleans.ca. While US News and World reports on rankings of US schools. Macleans offers rankings on Canada's Universities. Check out this site to see how each is ranked and to find out how rankings were compiled.
- www.schoolfinder.com You will find information on over 700 universities, colleges and career colleges, including admission requirements, costs, programs and contact details. You can view interactive virtual campus e-Tours™. Find career and scholarship information. Search by program, school, or use the advanced search engine.

Choosing a Subject/Selecting a Major

- www.gustavus.edu/careercenter/planning/majors/ Need some help understanding what career opportunities you will have with various majors? Ever wonder what you can actually do with the major you've already chosen? Take a look at What Can I Do With This Major/Degree. Each title outlines common career areas, typical employers, and strategies designed to maximize career opportunities upon completion of a four-year degree.

Gap Year

- www.frontierprojects.ac.uk This organization places students in field/research projects that contribute to the conservation of natural resources
- www.world-challenge.co.uk/expeditions/gap_challenge.asp A comprehensive provider of international leadership, teamwork and personal development training for young people.
- www.kibbutz.org.il/eng/welcome.htm For students who want to experience living on a kibbutz in Israel
- www.projecttrust.org.uk Organizes volunteer work in 24 countries for students taking a gap year.

- **www.idealists.org** 25,000 nonprofit and community organizations in 153 countries, which you can search or browse by name, location or mission.
- **www.csv.org.uk** Community Service Volunteers is a UK charity that arranges community based work experiences.
- **www.bunac.org** International work and travel programs.
- **www.britishcouncil.org/education/** The British Council Web site; click on the information page of interest to you on this comprehensive Web site.
- **www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings** Here's where you can find the University League table information. At this Web site, you can see the league table for how each university is ranked by subject.
- **www.scotland.org/study-in-scotland** Everything and more that you wanted to know about studying or working in Scotland.

International Universities

- **www.aacu.org/index.asp** Assoc. of American International Colleges and Universities. Look here if you want to stay in Europe but get a US-accredited degree.
- **www.ecis.org** Click on Find a University at this site and you can search by country. What you will find are universities here that are members of the European Council of International Schools.
- **www.cgf.org** This site claims to have the most information about schools all over the world. You can find over 20,000 college catalogues, search by country and get links to universities all over the world. There is a quick start tutorial to help orient you to the site.

Learning Disabilities

- **www.skill.org.uk** The UK's National Bureau for students with disabilities.

SAT Review

- **www.testtakers.com** Practice tests, questions and strategies.
- **www.princetonreview.com** More practice tests, questions and strategies.
- **Naviance website** – *see college counselor for details.*

UCAS Applications and Study in the UK

- **wwwucas.com** A centralized admissions center for all UK schools and programs. Here you can search schools, programs and access the UK application. *A very user-friendly site and one you will use the most.*

Study Abroad

- **http://www.ciee.org/STUDY-ABROAD/**
- **http://usac.unr.edu**
- **www.studyabroad.com**

Summer Programs

- **www.petersons.com**

TOEFL

- **www.toefl.org** Here's where you register to take the test.

US Applications and Guidance (Note, first three are essential)

- **www.collegeboard.org** This is the most comprehensive Web site for US college-bound students and their parents. Find out about everything from standardized tests to financial aid and much more. The College Board also sells excellent test-preparation materials in addition to books and CDs that facilitate the college application process.
- **www.connection.naviance.com/sss/** All students must register with Naviance, our school's college counseling database. Naviance is used throughout the world, and is custom-made for each high school. Student data regarding colleges and test scores are located in Naviance, as are past students' college application success. Supporting documents for US applicants are uploaded and sent to the colleges directly through Naviance.



Helpful Miscellany

- **www.commonapp.org** Great information on thousands of colleges, an “ask the expert” area, and plenty of advice on the college.
- **www.petersons.com** Peterson’s provides information about various US colleges and universities. You can search for a college based on a prospective major. Applications for a number of colleges can be downloaded.
- **www.collegeexpress.com** Great information on thousands of colleges, an “ask the expert” area, and plenty of advice on the college.
- **www.allaboutcollege.com** This Web site connects you to college Web pages. Almost every college web site includes an application, which can be downloaded or submitted online. Find the college, click on admissions, and look for application forms as part of the admissions Web page.
- **<http://www.nacac.com/p&s.html>** Steps to College is an online newsletter for students and parents produced by the National Association for College Admission Counselors. New stories are added through out the year, but you can search the newsletter for specific topics, such as tips for writing essays, college visits - a planning check list, and financial aid basics.
- **www.campustours.com** This is exactly what it sounds like: college tours, plus campus maps and web sites.
- **www.degreesearch.com** This is a good Web site to check out if you know what you want to study, because it will tell you all the schools that have a certain major - even fairly uncommon ones.

US College Rankings

- **www.library.illinois.edu/sshel/specialcollections/rankings/rankabout.html** The purpose of the rankings site is to draw together and provide context to various online sources of information on the ranking of institutions of higher education. We try to only provide links to stable sites offering original information. These sites rank colleges with criteria ranging from the academic to the spiritual.

US Financial Aid

- **www.finaid.org** The most complete financial aid site on the internet.
- **www.fastweb.com** The Internet’s largest free scholarship search.
- **www.college-scholarships.com** This site has put together an online directory of college and university admissions office email addresses and telephone numbers, college scholarship and financial aid office email addresses, and links to the home pages and online applications of more than a thousand colleges and

universities. They have assembled a page of links to the very best college and university admissions, college scholarship, and financial aid pages on the Web.

- **www.edupass.org/finaid** There is very little aid available in the US for international students. This site caters to non-US citizens, presenting more information about financial aid for international students than any other site.
- **http://www.fafsa.ed.gov** On-line registration for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid along with answers to frequently asked questions about the financial aid process.
- **https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp** “CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE” is the financial aid application service of the College Board. More than 500 colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on the PROFILE to determine eligibility for non-federal student aid funds. The PROFILE is a fully Web-based application system that provides students a secure and efficient method for reporting their financial data to higher education

Glossary: the vocabulary of US/ Canadian degrees

-
- **ACT:** American College Test. These are tests in English, math, reading and science reasoning, scored on a scale of 1-36 and accepted by many colleges in lieu of SAT and Subject Tests.
 - **AP:** Advanced Placement courses/exam. Graded on a scale of 1-5, exam results are sent to the college of the student's choice. The college decides whether or not it will grant credit or placement for AP work in high school; college policies vary widely. These exams are an important part of the admission process for British and other European

universities if the student is not doing the full IB diploma.

- **Candidate Notification Date:** The date colleges notify students of acceptance or rejection (April 15 is the most commonly used date).
- **Candidate Reply Date:** The day by which the student must notify the college of his enrollment intentions, generally, May 1.
- **CEEB:** College Entrance Examination Board. Creates and supervises the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. The **CEEB code for St. Stephen's is 748600.**
- **Class Rank:** The numerical position of a student in his class based on Grade Point Average. **Like many other high schools, SSS does not rank students.**
- **College:** The term commonly used to describe any institution of higher education. Strictly speaking, it is an institution with a single type of program, such as a four-year course leading to the law degree. A college may be one part of a university (e.g. Yale College is the undergraduate division of Yale University), or it may be independent.
- **College Board:** The organization responsible for the administration of the SATs, APs and the College Scholarship Service.
- **Common Application (Common App):** A single application which is accepted by over 300 colleges in the US. After completing the original form, the student duplicates it and sends these copies to college choices which accept the common application. It is available at **www.commonapp.org** and through other Web sources.
- **Core Curriculum:** Specified courses required for graduation.



Helpful Miscellany

- **Defer:** Students not admitted under Early Action or Early Decision are generally deferred, or put into the regular applicant group to be considered in March.
- **Early Action/EA:** A competitive admissions plan adopted by some US colleges whereby a student can submit applications by an early deadline (usually November 1) and receive a decision by mid-December. With single-choice Early Action, the student is limited to submitting only one Early Action application, but may submit applications to rolling admissions schools (typically state universities). Students are not required to notify the college of their enrollment until May 1 and may submit regular applications to other institutions.
- **Early Decision/ED:** A program whereby a student can apply to his or her first choice college early in the process and receive a response by mid-December. **Upon making an early decision application, the student agrees to enroll if accepted and to immediately withdraw any other applications.**
- **FAFSA/CSS Profile:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid and an additional form often requested. These must be filed no earlier than January 1 of the senior year but as soon thereafter as possible. Most institutions require only the FAFSA, and some require the CSS Profile (which is on the College Board Web site) or a form specific to the institution.
- **GPA :** Grade Point Average. Not relevant at St. Stephen's School.
- **Ivy League:** This term is used to designate a group of eastern colleges with strong reputations. Strictly speaking, these are Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale. It was originally a football conference.
- **Liberal Arts & Sciences:** The liberal arts and sciences (or general) program is the core of most US universities, offering courses in the humanities—the study of literature, languages, philosophy, mathematics and the pure sciences, which should both train and liberate the mind. These colleges offer a four-year course of study, leading to the BS or BA degree. Such a course of study usually does not prepare for a specific occupation, though it is often a prerequisite for postgraduate study.

- **Major:** The field of specialization or concentration for a college graduate. The student normally does from a quarter to a third of the total undergraduate work in his or her major field. In the US, most often, the student is asked to declare a major at the end of the sophomore year.
- **Minor:** Secondary area of concentration, may or may not be required.
- **Rolling Admissions:** A system of admissions decision notification whereby a college informs the applicant of his or her status within a short time, generally six weeks after the application is complete. In many state university systems, students applying by a priority deadline have a statistically better chance of admission. Most state universities use rolling admissions.
- **SAT:** Scholastic Assessment Test. A test of critical reading, maths, and writing skills with a score range of 200-800.
- **SAT Subject Tests:** Scholastic Assessment Subject Tests. One-hour exams in 20 subjects on a scale of 200-800. Some universities require them. You must check with each to be sure.
- **TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language. Exam taken by students whose first language isn't English.
- **Transcript:** The official copy of a student's academic record.
- **Tuition:** A fee paid for instruction at a college or university.
- **UCAS:** The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The central agency through which you apply for most undergraduate courses and colleges in the UK.

- **University:** A public or private institution that grants not only the Bachelor's degree but that has one or more graduate programs as well.

Glossary: the vocabulary of British degrees

- **Single Honors:** Study of one subject, within which a range of specialized options may be available.
- **Joint Honors:** Study of two separate but equal subjects, which may or may not be related.
- **Combined Honors:** Study of several subjects, which may or may not be related often narrowing as the course progresses to two or three subjects.
- **Sandwich Courses:** Alternating periods of study with related work experience, normally lasting four years.
- **Modular Courses:** A wide variety of courses is offered, and you select your own program, often after a common subject in the first year. These courses are increasingly taken on a semester basis. They are more frequently offered in the newer universities.
- **Foundation Year:** A pre-degree year during which you take courses to qualify you for a degree program. These would be intended for students who have not achieved IB level qualifications, or whose IB level results did not meet course requirements.
- **Foundation Year in Art:** The year required before acceptance into a degree program in art. A portfolio is required.



section 9

Homework for Students

Summer assignment

Writing at least one essay is good practice for creating the final draft that will be due next fall. The essay or personal statement you create over the summer is only a draft. We encourage you to develop a number of approaches. Your essay will undergo many revisions before you actually apply to a university/college and as most seniors will tell you, you end up revising it dozens of times. Having said that, your summer assignment is to revise the essay drafts you wrote in the second semester.

US Applicants

In addition to researching schools that interest you, those applying to the US and the growing list of universities worldwide that use the Common Application. The common application form is available at **www.commonapp.org**. You should fill in the relevant information and write a personal statement choosing one of the three topics listed on the form. The common application form is accepted at over 500 colleges. **You should start your common application before returning to school in September.** If you want help on how to write a college essay, go to **www.collegeboard.com**, click on Getting into College > Creating a Powerful Application > Write a Winning Essay and read the information presented there. You can also go to **www.collegeexpress.com** and click on Admissions Advice > How to Write the Application Essay. There is a ton of information on-line if you search in Yahoo! or any browser of your choice.

UK Applicants

If you want help, here is an excellent link (albeit a long one) **www.ucas.com/students/startapplication/apply/personalstatement** which tells about how to approach the statement.

St. Stephen's School

Via Aventina, 3

Rome 00153 Italy

Phone: +39 06 575 0605

Email: ststephens@sssrome.it

produced in collaboration with: Mediactlan Italia srl