

How to Apply to the United States

To be used with *Applying to the United States, US - Application Checklist, and Common Application Instructions*

The Application is your Proxy – it must represent you fully and well

You will not get excellent offers of admission if your application is not excellent. You must give 150% and produce the strongest possible applications in terms of grades, test scores, essays, letters of recommendation and extracurricular participation. Your application has to show a university or college that you like to study and learn, and that you will take excellent advantage of the opportunities, both academic and otherwise, that the school will provide you with. You must show them that you are a dynamic and motivated person who will make a positive contribution in the classroom and to the school community at large.

Remember, all applicants to a college meet the minimum admission requirements, and it will have many more strong applicants than it has room for. You must convince a college that you deserve a place in its freshman class: just being a good student from a privileged background will not be enough. The most successful applicants do not just tell colleges what they can do, but show the colleges what they have already done. Your character and values will be evident in your record of accomplishments.

The corollary to this is that no matter how strong your application, you may not receive admittances to every school. You cannot take this personally, and it is not a judgment that you are not good enough, it is simply the result of too many strong applicants for too few spaces. Do not be discouraged by this news, but spread your net widely.

PREPARATION

College Counselling

Meet your counsellor again (your first appointments were during AI) as soon as you return to school in AII. Tell him or her:

1. the short list of schools you are interested in,
2. your AS exam results
3. your SAT results (if taken) / SAT future tests, and
4. any changes to your plans or other information.
5. Confirm your family contribution (how much money will be available for each year of your study) as this figure is very important to help your counsellor guide you to schools that can meet your financial needs.

This updated information on your grades and college plans will help as you work on creating the final list of 13 universities to which you will apply (the maximum number of applications to any single country is 10), not including UCAS. Your counsellor will be available throughout to answer questions, provide information and guide you, but in the end you will choose the specific schools.

Forms

All students must complete the forms required by the College Counselling Office by September . Read and follow the instructions very carefully; they are not be repeated here.

Form 1: University Application List:

- This list should be final and requires a parent signature. Its completion:
 - Requires you to have concluded your university research early in the A2 year. This will free up your time for writing good applications and other important work
 - Confirms your final list of schools, so you can print out school forms for your counsellor /teachers, and allows your counsellor to make plans to meet your document needs.

Form 2: Personal Data Form

- Enter information about your academic background, testing and future plans. This form requires a photo.

Form 3: Teacher and Counsellor Reference Letter Request / Counselling Questions

- Identify how many letters of support you will need and provide documents for those teachers/counsellor.
- Answer the Counselling Questions if you will require a letter from your counsellor.

Résumé

- The Résumé is best done during AI summer, when you can take the time to do it thoughtfully and well.
- Make an appointment to discuss your activities with your counsellor in the fall, as he or she will refer to them when writing your counsellor letter for the US.

US Common Application:

- Students who will apply to schools that require the Common Application will have special procedures to follow. Please read the *Common Application Instructions* thoroughly.

APPLICATIONS

The usual application requirements for an international student are listed below. Procedures for US or Canadian citizens or permanent residents are sometimes different.

Organize:

1. Make and follow a timetable so you will have plenty of time to prepare your documents.
2. Obtain the correct application and financial aid forms, then read and complete them carefully.

Application Documents: Student provided.

Start working on these documents as soon as you can.

1. Application Form:

Most application forms are now submitted online, and often supporting documentation as well. Supporting documents need to be sent by mail if they cannot be uploaded. Hard copies of uploaded/e-mailed documents may need to be sent once you have accepted an offer. Common components are:

- a. Data: Factual information about you, your family, academic history and plans, honors and achievements, etc.
- b. Extra-curricular Activities: Continue your activities all the way through AII; participate in a meaningful way and seek positions of responsibility. Don't sacrifice your studies to too many activities.
 - i. Enter the data about your activities on the application form; you should be able to do this easily using your résumé as a guide.
 - ii. Don't send certificates for the activities you list on the forms. (See supplementary materials.)
- c. Essay: You may be asked to write one or more essays to support your application. Admissions committees care deeply about both content and presentation. There are articles on how to write application essays available in the counseling office, school library and school website, as well as from numerous sources online. Your counsellor may be able to critique essays if you ask well in advance and give her an already well polished draft.

1. Financial Aid Forms

Financial documents may need to be sent by mail, and deadlines vary – follow instructions.

- a. International Students - Requesting Aid: Fill out the required aid form: CSS Profile/ISFAA-International Student Financial Aid Application/school's own form.
 - i. Submit form by schools' published deadlines. Often due with the admission application.
 1. Profile form: student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile
 2. ISFAA/school forms will be available on the requiring schools' websites
 - ii. Gather and submit documents required by each school by published deadlines.
- b. International Students - Paying Full: Complete a Certification of Finances form.
 - i. Usually you must be able to show resources to cover expenses for the first year of study
 - ii. Submit by deadlines; sometimes due with application, sometimes after acceptance.
 1. A school specific or a standard form will be available on each school's website
 - iii. Gather and submit documents required by each school.
- c. US Citizens or Permanent Residents - Requesting Aid:
 - i. Fill out the FAFSA form (online from Jan 1) and a CSS PROFILE form if required by the school. Meet individual school deadlines as listed on their websites.
 1. Profile form: student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile
 2. FAFSA form: fafsa.ed.gov
 - ii. Gather and submit documents required by each school.

3. Attested Certificates and Transcripts:

- a. From your previous school: Obtain these well in advance.
 - i. **O Level Certificates:** usually 2, one for Pak Studies/Islamiyat and one for the rest.

- ii. **9-11 Transcripts:** If your school creates a single page report of all of your 9-11 school grades, this is best. If not, photocopy your yearly grade reports for them to attest. Colleges are likely to require that these be contained in a sealed envelope from the issuing school. You will need: one set for the Common Application (to be turned in to your college counsellor) and one for each school that does not use the Common Application, which you will keep until you need them. Take a scan of them for any online submission.
 - b. From The Lyceum:
 - i. **AS Level Certificates:** Submit copies to your counsellor with your College Counselling Forms: one for the Common App and one for each school that requires a hard copy.
 - ii. **Lyceum Transcript:** the Lyceum College Counselling Office will provide as required. When you must send a hard copy, the office will print a copy for you on special transcript paper. A photocopy on white paper attested by another office in the school is not official.
 - c. Attestation:
 - i. Your documents must be attested by your previous school or by the testing authority. “Attested,” means an original ink seal or signature – a photocopy of an attested document is just a copy, which must be re-attested.
 - ii. Your Lyceum college counsellor will only attest Lyceum AS results, and
 - 1. AS Level exams taken privately (you must present the original certificate)
 - 2. O Level exams taken privately, or through schools outside of Karachi (you must present the original certificates)
 - 3. 9-11 transcripts from schools outside of Karachi (you must present the original transcripts)
- 4. Supplementary Materials: They should provide NEW information. Quality is far more important than quantity. You may provide non-academic letters of recommendation, writing or art samples, or other materials. Send only a few well-chosen items that are evidence of extraordinary achievement, or highlight special skills you will take to your college.
 - a. Art or Music – Some schools have a specific supplements that you can submit. Follow the instructions of each school about how to submit your work.
 - b. Sports – If you are very good at a sport and would like to compete for your future university, then inform them.
 - i. Open the athletics pages of the school’s website, and then the page for your sport. There will usually be a recruitment form you can fill out, which gives you a way to inform them of your interest and to enter data about your athletic history.
 - ii. E-mail the coach to express your interest and to provide additional information if you were not able to put it on the form.
- 5. Standardized Test Scores (SAT I/SAT II/ACT/TOEFL/IELTS): Studying for these tests should never interfere with regular studies. **Register and test early** – at the very latest, complete testing early in A2 December for regular decision/November for most ED/EA programs.
 - a. Send Score Reports: You must have them sent directly to your unis by their application deadlines.
 - i. When you register to take your final test from College Board/ACT, enter the names of up to 8 schools that need the reports. Four will be free, four you must pay a fee for.
 - ii. Request more reports online at any time, for a fee. Enter your last planned test date so the report will include those scores.

Application Documents: Provided by School/Teachers

- 6. Letters of Recommendation It is your responsibility to confirm that your teacher recommendations and forms have been received by the office.
 - a. Teacher Recommendations: Schools usually require 0 - 2 academic references. Ask teachers who have taught you in school in 11th grade or after, who know you well, and who can articulate your positive qualities.
 - i. No teacher is obliged to write a letter for you, so please ask nicely. Do not request more letters than you need. Follow the instructions on AA Form 3 Teacher Reference Request.

- b. Tutor Letter: If you are taking a subject privately you must get a letter with your projected grade from the tutor.
 - c. Personal/peer recommendation: Only if required. Follow the college's advice about who to give it to.
 - i. Peer - should write well about your personal qualities, not simply re-list your activities.
 - ii. Personal - unrelated adult who has had extensive contact with you (internship/job/volunteer supervisor)
7. Secondary School Report and Counselor Recommendation/Midyear Report: Your counsellor will write the letter based on your *Personal Data/résumé/self assessment*, grades, and school records, and will complete the school forms.
- a. Do not print Common App forms: simply invite your counsellor online - see the *Common Application Instructions*.
 - b. Print out and submit the school report and midyear report forms for any non-Common App schools that will require a hard copy form and submit with the *University List*. Fill out school name and address, and personal information, first.
 - c. For schools with online school forms (other than Common App.) please follow the instructions.
8. The Lyceum school transcript: This is the single most important part of your application. You will need to maintain a challenging course load and high grades during both years of study here; universities hate to see falling grades and slacking off. Transcripts show:
- a. term, mid-term exam and final exam grades for all coursework completed at The Lyceum
 - b. annual grade and student rank in each subject
 - c. attendance by subject for each term
 - d. AS Level results and predicted A-level grades
- Your counsellor will prepare your transcripts on special paper as required for your applications.

FOLLOW UP

Confirmation

Some schools will confirm that your application is complete, or notify you if something is missing and some schools will not. If you do not hear from your schools you may contact them to confirm that your application is complete.

Mid Year Reports

US schools require a mid-year report that shows your grades through AII December. This will be sent directly by The Lyceum in the end of January to all the US schools on your *University List*, unless you have already informed us that you have received a decision, or the school has specified that they don't use it. You will be charged a nominal amount for each paper copy that is sent by mail.

Acceptances/Rejections

Each school will contact you with admissions and financial aid decisions according to their own timetable. If you have not heard from your schools by the end of April, at the latest, you may contact them to ask when a decision will be forthcoming.

- a) You must then accept one offer and notify the other schools that you will not be attending.
- b) Complete required paperwork and pay necessary deposits as required by your chosen school. This will include a Certification of Finances, if not previously submitted. For full pay students, this will show ability to pay the first year of expenses, for aided students this will show the amount of the required family contribution.
- c) If you will need a student visa, the school must send you an I-20, which you will need in order to apply for it.
- d) Send back any required housing questionnaire and deposit in order to reserve a space in the dormitories.

Final Report

If required by the school you will attend, you must submit a Final Report/Transcript including mock examination grades. Please note that universities can rescind offers if the grades on the final transcript do not meet their requirements. This has happened – do not let it happen to you.

- a) Common Application – You must submit a final report, and must inform your counsellor to which school(s) it should be sent. (You will only send more than one if you are keeping a wait list option open.)

- b) All other applications. You must inform your counsellor if you need a final report sent, and if it is to be sent electronically or in hard copy. Do not forget to do this for the schools that require it, otherwise you could lose your offer. You will be sent a reminder to do this late in the A2 year – please respond promptly.
 - a. for upload or e-mail, provide the necessary information (e-mail address, your applicant number, etc.)
 - b. for hard copy, your sealed transcript will be sent to the library and you must have it mailed our couriered.

Visa

Leave three months for visa processing. Obtain the visa form well in advance and gather your supporting documentation.

- a) Carefully follow all of the instructions for completing and submitting your visa application.
- b) You will need to attend an interview. They look to see that you satisfy 3 main requirements:
 - 1) You are a bona fide student – You prove this with your academic documents and test scores and by being able to articulate why you want to study in the US and why you have chosen your particular school and major.
 - 2) You will be able to finance your education – Be able to show your financial documentation including your certificate of finances and proof of aid awards/scholarships/support from outside sources including that from extended family.
 - 3) You plan to return to Pakistan when you complete your studies. This is hardest to substantiate. Do not say that you plan to try to live and work or emigrate to the US.
- c) Be confident, be honest, and LISTEN -respond to the questions you are asked, rather than reciting a pre-prepared statement. That said, be prepared with answers to the questions they are likely to ask. Don't worry if they don't ask all of the questions that you expect – let the officer guide the discussion.
- d) Carry your documentation with you. They may or may not ask to see any or all of it.