

College Counselling Office

Mission

Our mission is to work with students to help them achieve the university admissions that are the best for their needs. We have no agenda except what is best for each student. We strive to:

- guide them to appropriate choices, by helping them ask the right questions and consider relevant factors
- support them in the application process
- help them understand the information necessary to choose appropriately and
- give them the freedom to choose from among their options without influence

Introduction

Each student will be assigned a counsellor who will support applications to all countries.

- It is important to start thinking about university options for your son or daughter early in the AI year.
 - Students will then be able to research what they have to do for each application, and can make a plan for how and when to accomplish each task, spreading the work over both years.
- It should be the students' process, but parents play a critical role by guiding and supporting them.
- This document is only a very brief overview. A range of information sheets are available for students and parents on the school website. There are also many resources and books in the library and counseling office.
- The A Level Course selection guideline document that was part of The Lyceum's own application contains a great deal of information about university admission requirements.
- Our goal is to help students have successful applications, but we cannot do it for them, nor can we guarantee admissions or financial assistance for any student.

Deciding Where to Study.

A first basic question to answer is "What country(ies) are being considered?" There are many good university options in Pakistan as well as abroad, and most Lyceum students study domestically for their first degree.

Considerations:

- Goal of study – What will be the final degree; Bachelors? Masters? PhD? Plan ahead.
- Course of study – What degree options are available? Is the course rigid or flexible?
- Competitiveness – What is likelihood of admission? Be ambitious but also be realistic.
 - Students should apply to a wide range of schools, not just the most competitive.
- Expense – What are the tuition and living expenses and travel costs?
 - You must be able to sustain the expense of the degree or of your family contribution for all years required to obtain the degree. Plan for inflation.
 - Plan for any graduate degrees (Masters, PhD) desired as well as for undergraduate (Bachelors) level study. Some less expensive undergraduate options might leave money available to spend towards graduate degrees.
- Financial aid – What are the possibilities for aid or scholarship and the difficulty of obtaining it? Does applying for it affect admission chances? Can you do without it? Again, be realistic.
 - Need based aid will require a family pay as much as they possibly can. Usually the family will be asked to take on a (reasonable) loan burden and the student required to earn some money as well.
 - Sometimes paying full for a less expensive option can cost less than paying the family contribution required by some financial aid packages.
 - Financial aid forms are very detailed and complex and must be filled out accurately. Please start filling out the forms well in advance of the deadlines.
- Part time work: - Available (restricted) in most countries.
 - Even the maximum allowance (usually 20 hours a week) is a huge burden – imagine your son or daughter having to work 3 hours every day Mon-Sat and 2 hours on Sunday, on top of going to class and studying. Try not to depend too much on student earnings.

- Lack of time (working too much) and lack of money (worrying about making ends meet) are serious sources of stress that distract students from their primary job of getting a good education, which is what university study is all about. Avoid a stressful situation for your son/daughter.
- Preferences - Location, campus environment, proximity to family, etc, etc.

Pakistan

- Degree programmes usually focus on a single discipline to which students apply separately. There are a few exceptions in which a single degree programme offers the flexibility to study a range of subjects.
- Costs are reasonable, and financial aid/scholarships are also available at many universities.
- Admission is primarily entrance test based. Only a very few will require/accept SAT instead.
- Some schools require interviews.
- Most schools also look at final CIE A Level exam results before making acceptances.
- Medical universities are very competitive. Students must study very hard for the entrance tests and must study the Inter syllabus as well.
- Pakistani universities need IBCC equivalence certificates from A level students. They may require O Level equivalence with the application, and then A level equivalence before final admission. (There is no equivalence at AS Level, only after O Level and after A Level.)
 - It is very important to confirm eligibility for IBCC equivalence at the start of A Level studies. We have had students who were not permitted to apply to local universities because they were unable to obtain O Level equivalence. Problems occur when:
 - A student has not taken Islamiyat and has not taken an acceptable alternative (such as Ethics through the Inter board)
 - A student requires a science equivalence (necessary for those who want Pre-engineering or pre-medical A Level equivalence) and has not taken O Level biology or computers.
 - A student did the O Levels abroad and has not taken Pakistan Studies, Islamiyat or Urdu.
 - Missing exams should be taken as soon as possible so that grades are available when O Level equivalence is required in spring of the A2 year.

Confirm requirements with the Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC)

Canada

- Relatively few universities of consistent high quality. Most degrees are 4 years, some 3 years. Co-op (work experience) will normally add one year to the degree.
- Programs vary, some are focused, and some are more flexible. Co-op programs include work experience.
- Apply OUAC for Ontario, directly for others. Application fees are expensive.
 - school grades are important in addition to CIE results and forecasted grades
 - activities may or may not be important; most important for competitive programs/scholarships
 - teacher references are rarely required except for scholarship applications
 - documents must be sent to each university; increasingly they can be sent online
- Costs usual range CA \$30–50,000. Canadian citizens/permanent residents pay lower tuition. Quebec residents and French citizens also have a special tuition rate at universities in Quebec.
- There are a few large scholarships (very competitive) and a number of entrance awards of a few thousand dollars, some one-time, some renewable for the length of the degree.
 - Some scholarships are “nominated” meaning that the school can support only a very limited number of candidates. Students must indicate their interest in being a candidate for a nominated scholarship in September of the A2 year.

United Kingdom

- Most programs are 3 or 4 years. A “sandwich,” including 1 year of work experience, adds one year. Some programs can lead directly to a masters degree.
- Programs are focused. Students must know what they want to study before applying. The degree programme cannot be changed once applications have been made.
- There are universities and programs of all levels of competitiveness for entry. Students are given a conditional offer which they must achieve on the final A level examinations.
- Apply via UCAS – one application, 5 choices in a single degree area. Required for application:
 - personal statement including extracurricular activities: based on course of study
 - one teacher reference
 - CIE results and forecasted grades (very important)
 - some require specific tests, especially medicine, law, Oxford/Cambridge
 - no separate forms, except Cambridge; usually no documents to mail
- Costs usual range £20-35,000. Outside of London is less expensive; medical is very expensive
 - UK citizens usually not eligible for home fees due to residence requirements.
- Scholarships are limited and bursary assistance is rare. Entrance awards are usually a few thousand pounds, some one-time, some renewable for the length of the degree. Only a very few larger scholarships. Scholarship application usually made after an offer has been received.

United States

- Vast number of colleges and universities to choose from. Standard degree is 4 years.
 - Colleges usually offer a bachelor’s degrees and a liberal arts curriculum, sometimes with business and/or engineering.
 - Universities offer bachelor’s degrees in liberal arts and pre-professional divisions, and higher degree (master and doctorate level degrees) in a range of disciplines.
- A “liberal arts” program includes physical sciences, social sciences, and humanities/arts. Its ethos is to educate the mind and develop skills in critical thinking, analysis, writing, numeracy, and scientific method; skills students can apply to a wide range of careers in any industry.
 - Can choose major after starting at college
- Pre-professional courses: Engineering, business, architecture, nursing, fine art are often in separate “divisions/”colleges/”schools” at large universities. Apply directly.
- Apply through Common Application if used by the college or university, or directly if not
 - school grades are most important in addition to CIE results and forecasted grades
 - teacher references; up to 2 usually required
 - essay is very important, and usually more personal than about what you want to study. The common application has a main essay; many schools ask for additional essay(s).
 - extracurricular activities/leadership are important
 - SAT I or ACT usually required, and sometimes SAT II subject tests also.
- Some schools offer Early Decision and/or Early Action (ED/EA) programs. If you are ready to apply early (November) you can get an answer by the end of December. Early Action is not binding, but Early Decision requires a commitment – you are not even supposed to go to a school in another country.
- Costs usual range US \$40,000 - \$65,000.
- Tuition is lower at public universities for state residents.
 - Student must be US citizen/permanent resident and also meet schools’ residence requirements, which vary by state and university.
 - Period of residence prior to starting university usually required, or evidence that the student’s parents pay business or property taxes in the state.
 - Birth in the state/relatives other than parents living in the state are not usually adequate.

- Scholarship and need based aid available. Schools may offer scholarship or aid, or both, or no financial assistance for international students at all. All awards are merit based and very competitive to win.
Need-based aid: Awarded only in the amount needed, based on a financial aid application.
 - Awards are based on the merit of the whole application for admission.
 - Families will be required to pay as much as they can; and possibly take on a loan burden also.
 - Student may be required to earn some of the award in an on-campus job.
 - Family must be able to pay the family contribution for all 4 years of the degree.
 - A request for aid usually affects the chances of getting in; the more is aid needed, the harder the admissions, so students should also apply in Pakistan.
 - There are only about 8 “need blind” schools, at which asking for aid does not decrease your chances of admission, but they are all among the very most competitive.
 - Students have a stronger chance for awards at somewhat less competitive schools
 - Families must be honest on aid applications; falsification can lead to expulsion.
 - Full cost of attendance (tuition and living expenses) and almost-full packages are very rare.
 - Citizens/permanent residents may apply for federal financial aid at any school. They may be asked to take on a heavier loan burden than an international student.
- Scholarship: Scholarship is sometimes disbursed like need based aid (to a needy student, in the amount needed), but is often a specific amount of money for a specific kind of student, and an application is usually required. Many scholarships can be won by students with no financial need.

Other Countries

Students are increasingly looking all over the world, including the Far East, the Middle East, Australasia, Asia and Europe. We will discuss countries of interest with students in individual meetings.

- Confirm that (a good standard of) English is the medium of instruction, or add a year for language study, if the university is not English medium.
- Prices can be lower, scholarships are sometimes available.
- TOEFL/IELTS is often required, SAT or ACT are required only rarely.

English Lang requirements – TOEFL/IELTS

Requirements vary widely; students must confirm if required or not.

- UK - May be taken after an offer is received, if a university requires it in their offer. Score should be received by the time final A Level results are received from Cambridge.
- Canada/US/Others – Requirements vary by school and students must confirm the requirements for each.
 - Best to test by November or December of the A2 year, so as not to delay admissions decisions. Summer after A1 is a good time to test.
 - Universities may exempt a student from providing a score based on an O Level or SAT result or because a student is studying in an English medium school, **but**
 - if a student does not clearly meet the requirements for exemption as listed on a university’s website, then the student must request an exemption from the school and obtain written confirmation that the exemption will be granted.
 - Schools, in Canada especially, reserve the right to ask for a language test at any time, even if a student meets the exemption requirements listed on the website.
 - A letter from The Lyceum can request that a student be granted exemption, but cannot guarantee that an exemption will be granted.
 - an English language test result can be helpful in obtaining a visa, and
 - can also be helpful for admissions in the US, considering the difficulty of and low scores often received on the SAT critical reading section. For this reason, many schools recommend that international students and non-native speakers of English take TOEFL, even if it is not required.

Financial Basics

- Expect costs to rise each year. Remember to include, tuition, living expenses, health insurance and travel.
- Make sure that you can pay for all years of study required for a degree.
- Proof of financial support is required for visa applications. Future earnings/student jobs will not count.
- All aid and scholarship (even “need based”) is merit based. The more competitive the school is overall the more competitive it will be to win scholarship and/or financial aid.
- In each country citizens/non-citizens have different rules and application procedures for financial aid.
- Some scholarships require an application, and some may be awarded automatically to applicants.

Application Timetable (Overview only – Each student should make a personal timetable to follow)

AI

- Mar – May Individual advising
- Mar – July
 - Research. Return to school with a short-list of target universities.
 - Create a resume of extra-curricular activities.
 - Answer the self assessment questions.
 - Draft application essays for UK and US.

AII

- Throughout: Know each school’s deadline and requirements. Meet them.
- Sept:
 - Submit Oxford/Cambridge/Medical/Dental/Veterinary applications to the UK
 - Students must submit lists of schools being applied to
 - Students must request teacher references
- Oct: Submit remaining UK applications via UCAS
- Nov:
 - ED (early decision)/EA (early action)/some “priority” deadlines for US
 - Submit OUAC form for universities in Ontario, Canada
- Dec: Send most US applications and documents
- Jan: - Submit remaining Canadian applications and send documents
- Feb: Send any remaining applications and documents
 - Pakistan – some applications begin
- Mar: Counselors must start working with AIs
- Mar – July Application to most universities in Pakistan

What Students Can Do Now

These must be done now so that the fall can be used to write strong applications – there is no point applying to a competitive university with a quickly done poorly prepared application.

- Attend information meetings.
- Develop good relationships with your teachers and counselors.
- Get good grades and have good attendance in school.
- Get good AS results so you don’t have to retake anything in November.
- Have frank family discussions about educational goals and permitted options.
 - Students and parents must be forthright – set limits immediately, not after admissions
 - Think Ahead! Most changes that affect the choice to study abroad are not sudden or unexpected.
- **Have at least one individual meeting with your college counsellor. Appointments will be available February through mid May.** If classes are not in session, call for an appointment.
 - ***Required*** for those applying abroad, very highly recommended for all students
 - plans can change so make sure you are prepared

- Research countries and schools of interest, keeping in mind all factors important to you. Research is very time consuming! More countries considered means more research to do. For each school, look at:
 - Application requirements and competitiveness, environment
 - Costs and availability of aid
 - Programs available
- Over the summer, make a short list of universities that you wish to apply to, so that it is easy to narrow it down to your final list early in the fall.
 - Create a list that makes sense overall, so you can focus your energy on making excellent applications rather than wasting time on applications to schools you will probably never attend.
- Arrange a summer internship in area of possible career interest.

Pakistan

- Not so much to do yet. Those who will take local entrance exams can do gradual preparation. Work on math without using a calculator, especially if you are not taking A Level mathematics.
- Medical students should not be complacent – they should study and do medically related internships

Canada

- Do your research
- Take TOEFL/IELTS and get it over with

UK

- Write the UCAS essay over the summer. Do 10 rewrites and get to 90% completion. **The personal statement is very, very important.** Your statement must convince them to choose you and set you apart from the many applicants with equally good grades. There are many tips on the websites of UCAS and The Lyceum.
- Research any extra tests or other requirements for your applications, and start to prepare.
- Oxbridge – start reading around the subject if you haven't already. (If you haven't already, then seriously re-think your desire to apply.) This is important; evidence of independent research is critical.

US

- **Mandatory!** Take an SAT I/ACT during the A1 year. Oct, Nov, Dec and Jan dates are preferable. May and June are also fine, if you don't think you will back out at the last minute because of AS preparation. Students were told that this was necessary at the recent orientation, and this reminder is being sent by e-mail to all students and parents, so there is plenty of time to prepare.
 - This is not for our benefit, but yours. Students who delay until A2 often face great difficulties.
- In the summer, do focused study for an SAT retake, if desired, or for SAT subject tests for AII fall.
- Research is especially important as there are so many schools and such a wide variety of prices and aid opportunities. Choosing schools is one of the hardest parts of the process.
- Write the Common Application core essay to 90% completion – this means min 10+ rewrites spread over the summer. Most students will have additional supplement essays to write. If you know where you will apply, get started on those too, if not, at least get the main one out of the way. **The essay is very, very important.** Essay prompts on Common App or individual school website.

How Parents can Help

- Help your son or daughter to understand the importance of good school grade and attendance.
- Emphasize the importance of REALLY paying attention and working hard in English.
 - They have to go to class anyway, so they should take good advantage of it.
 - Universities, even in Pakistan, expect a high level of competence. Do not confuse a minimum entry requirement that may not mention English with indifference to English language ability.
 - Fluency in speaking/understanding does not automatically translate into good writing.
 - Strong personal statements/essays are tremendously important in winning admission/scholarship.
- Encourage participation in extra-curricular activities, but not to the detriment of grades.
- Plan in advance so your son or daughter can prepare for the right options. This includes a discussion of funding available for university education.

- **The Lyceum has deadlines that the students must meet – late decisions made by parents are not an acceptable excuse for missing deadlines.**
- Inform yourself about the university options and application procedures. Many information documents are available from The Lyceum and on our website: www.lyceumschool.edu.pk
- Be realistic in your assessment of your son or daughter and his or her competitiveness for different universities. Allow students to apply to schools that meet their needs, not yours.
- Remember that the name of a student’s undergraduate school has much less to do with how successful he or she is in life than most people think. A personal drive for excellence, resourcefulness in getting the opportunities you want, and then taking full advantage of those opportunities is significantly more important than the school name on the first degree.
- Help your son or daughter to focus his or her time and energy on the best university options. Students do not need to apply to every country or to all kinds of universities in a country; the list as a whole should make sense. (Ex: Canada is first choice, so have a full range of competitive and easier schools in Canada, and only apply to a few schools in other countries that you like better than the Canadian options. Or: Pakistan is first choice, so make no other applications.)
 - College applications should not be made “just to see if I can get in.” This is a waste of time and money: your sons and daughters have no time to spare for frivolous applications. If they get in, they feel bad that they can’t go, and if they don’t get in, then they feel bad about that. There are many other things students can do to feel good about themselves.
 - Do not let your son or daughter apply to any school that, in the end, you will not allow them to attend. It is much kinder to set limits early. For example, your son may find it upsetting to be told that he will not be allowed to go abroad, but he will get over it. It will be much more upsetting to him if he spent a lot of time and effort applying and earned an admission, only then to be told that he cannot go.
 - All students who need financial assistance for study abroad should apply in Pakistan as well.
- Help your son or daughter to follow a realistic preparation schedule and help him or her to meet deadlines, but . . .
- Do not take over the process. This is their responsibility, and they will not step up if they know you are hovering in the background to do everything for them. How will they survive at university if they do not take control of their lives now?
- If, at any time, you wish to speak to your son or daughter’s college counsellor or you have any concerns about the university selection or application process, we encourage you to contact our office.

We look forward to working with your son or daughter.