



Renaissance
College

Hong Kong

啓新書院

Planning for Further Education

The aim of this booklet is to help you develop a strategy for choosing a course and getting a place at an institution of Higher Education. It contains guidance and advice for making university applications in general, with specific advice regarding applying to UK, US, Canadian, Australian and Hong Kong Universities.

The next months are among the most important in your life. You need to decide where you want to study, which course you want to follow and the type of institution you prefer.

CONTENTS

Career Planning Tips	3
Think About Your Reasons...	4
Finding What's Right for You	5
Some Initial Questions	6
30 Questions to Evaluate Yourself	7-9
What Institution Characteristics are Most Important to You?	10
What Subject to Study?	11
What Programmes Are Available?	12-15
What Grades Are Needed?	16-20
10 Questions to Evaluate University Preferences	21-22
Making Your List	23-24
Mailing Address Info	25
Important Websites	26
Ongoing Tasks	27

This handbook will help you navigate the tricky and sometimes treacherous process of selecting and applying to universities. Many of the sections of this handbook were borrowed from similar handbooks produced by Patrick Campbell, Further Education Counsellor at Sha Tin College, Hong Kong, and Timothy Thomas, Student Services and Diploma Programme Coordinator at Dresden International School, Germany.

Career Planning Tips

Career planning has three steps that you will cycle through and repeat throughout your working life. By following these steps, you can make career decisions that are right for you. You'll know what your options are and what it will take to reach your goals.

First, take a realistic look at your strengths, weaknesses and interests.

Consider:

What are your goals?

What can help you achieve your goals, and what obstacles could get in your way?

What types of work and school courses and activities appeal to you? What interests you?

What do you do well now, and what skills have you gained through experience?

Second, explore your options.

It's hard to know what you want to do "when you grow up" if you aren't even aware of the possibilities. Here are a just a few ways to find career information:

Discuss your career and educational plans with your parents, counsellor or other interested people.

Spend time with people whose activities interest you.

Volunteer or work in a job that interests you.

Finally, consider issues that can affect your plans.

Take appropriate actions to accomplish your goals. Consider:

What do you need to study in order to have the career that you want?

What schools offer the training you need?

How will you pay for school?

Are you ready to search for a job?

Think about Your Reasons for Going to University

What do you want to be when you "grow up" and how will university help you get there?

Although university cannot be all things to all students, with proper planning it can meet your needs and expectations. High school is an excellent time to identify what you expect from university.

Use your interests, abilities, and preferences to help you choose a career and plan your education.

As you decide which universities and major(s) interest you, keep your long-term goals in mind. Decisions about university are part of the career planning process.

For example, if you like planes and want to design them, look for a strong aeronautical engineering program. Decide what you want from life and use university as a tool to help you get there.

Finding what's right for YOU...

Please use the form below to collate some of your personal information, which will be useful background when discussing options and ideas with teachers and counsellors.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Year:

Courses:

Year 11 (MYP courses):

Year 12 (IB HL, SL courses):

CAS Commitments:

Other qualifications and awards:

Initial preferences or ideas regarding possible careers:

Some Initial Questions to Get You Started

1. What are your areas of interest?
2. Do you have any career plans?
3. Which course /type of programme would you like to take?
Assoc./Bach. Degree Diploma Other

4. Where would you like to go?

Australia Canada UK USA Hong Kong Other Country _____

5. Research: How? Where?

Read about the subjects you might like to study.

Look up University/College websites.

Send off for individual prospectuses, applications, etc.

Take advantage of presentations (such as Education Fairs, visiting speakers, etc. and ask questions regarding issues like funding, scholarships, programmes and applications.

Use the summer holiday to visit the places you will be applying to. Use the Internet

(e.g. www.careercruising.com for career preferences/university choices; Stamford Test (visit ucas.com) for possible courses/majors.)

Get some work experience to get a taste of what your future might be like.

30 QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE YOURSELF

The questions which follow can help you focus career tracks, university selection and admission where it belongs: on **YOU** as an individual. You may feel embarrassed or self-conscious when you first consider these questions. However, an honest and thoughtful self-evaluation can reveal what you should look for in your future and prepare you for statements you will be asked to make about yourself in essays and interviews when you apply to college. If you are willing to look seriously at yourself, you can find the universities that are right for you and present yourself effectively to them.

YOUR PERSONAL GOALS AND VALUES

1. **WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE MOST?** Have you missed anything during this time? If you could live this period over again, would you do anything differently?
2. **WHAT VALUES ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?** What do you care most about? What concerns occupy most of your energy, effort and thoughts?
3. **HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?** Are you satisfied with your accomplishments to date? What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
4. **WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME?** Of your unique gifts and strengths, which would you most like to develop? What would you most like to change about yourself?
5. Is there anything you have ever secretly wanted to do or be? If you had **A YEAR TO GO ANYWHERE AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANTED**, how would you spend that year?
6. What **EVENTS OR EXPERIENCES HAVE SHAPED YOUR GROWTH** and the **WAY** you **THINK**?

YOUR EDUCATION



7. What are your **ACADEMIC INTERESTS**? Which courses have you enjoyed the most? Which courses have been most difficult for you?
8. What do you **CHOOSE TO LEARN** when you can learn on your own? Consider interests pursued beyond class assignments: Topics chosen for research papers, lab reports, independent projects; independent reading; school activities; job or volunteer work. What do your choices show about your interests and the way you like to learn?
9. **HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST**? What methods of teaching and style of teaching engage your interest and effort the most?
10. How would you **DESCRIBE YOUR SCHOOL**? Is learning and academic success respected there? Has your school environment encouraged you to develop your interests, talents and abilities? Have you felt limited by your school environment in any way? What would you preserve or change about your school if you had the power and money to do so?
11. How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues and exchange ideas? What has been your most **STIMULATING INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE** in recent years?
12. How well **HAS YOUR SCHOOL PREPARED YOU FOR UNIVERSITY**? In what areas of skill or knowledge do you feel confident or inadequately prepared for further study? Have you been challenged by your courses?
13. Have you worked up to your potential in high school? **ARE YOUR ACADEMIC RECORDS AND TEST SCORES AN ACCURATE MEASURE OF YOUR ABILITY AND POTENTIAL**? What do you consider the best measures of your potential for university level work?
14. Are there any **OUTSIDE CIRCUMSTANCES** (in your recent experience or background) **WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED YOUR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**? Consider such factors as: after-school job, home responsibilities or difficulties, excessive school activities, illness or emotional stress, parental pressure, English not spoken at home, problems of course scheduling or other factors which are unique to your recent experience or background.

YOUR ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

15. What **ACTIVITIES DO YOU MOST ENJOY OUTSIDE THE DAILY ROUTINE** of school and other responsibilities? Which activities have meant the most to you? Looking back, would you have made different choices?

16. Do your **ACTIVITIES SHOW ANY PATTERN OF COMMITMENT, COMPETENCE OR CONTRIBUTION?**
17. How would others describe **YOUR ROLE IN YOUR SCHOOL OR HOME COMMUNITY?** What do you consider your most significant contribution?
18. **AFTER A LONG, HARD DAY WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY DOING?** What do you do for fun? for relaxation?

THE WORLD AROUND YOU

19. How would you **DESCRIBE YOUR SCHOOL, FAMILY AND HOME TOWN?**
How has your environment influenced your way of thinking? How have your interests and abilities been acknowledged or limited by your school and/or home?
20. **WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS AND FRIENDS EXPECT OF YOU?** How have their expectations influenced the goals and standards you set for yourself? What pressures have you felt to conform?
21. What has been **THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IN YOUR SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY?** How does the issue concern you? What has been your reaction to the controversy? What is your opinion about the issue?
22. **HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT AND ACTED DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU DID?** What viewpoints have challenged you the most? How did you respond? What did you learn about yourself and others?
23. What distresses you the most about the world around you? Assuming the obligation and opportunity to **CHANGE THE WORLD**, where would you start?
24. Do you have any current or historical **HEROES OR HEROINES?**
25. **WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ WHICH HAVE CHANGED YOUR WAY OF THINKING?**

YOUR PERSONALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

26. How would **SOMEONE WHO KNOWS YOU WELL DESCRIBE YOU?** Your finest qualities? Your most conspicuous shortcomings? Would you agree with their assessment? How have you grown or changed during your high school years?
27. Which **RELATIONSHIPS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND WHY?** Describe the people whom you consider your best friends? Your best

- critics? Your best advocates? In what ways are they similar to or different from you?
28. **DESCRIBE THE GROUPS IN YOUR SCHOOL?** Which ones do you feel you belong to? Which ones do you feel alienated from? What kind of people do you associate with and admire? Generally, how do you respond to people who think and act differently than you do?
29. How are you **INFLUENCED BY OTHERS WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?** What pressures have you felt to conform? How important to you are approval, rewards and recognition? How do you respond to pressure, competition or challenge? How do you react to failure, disappointment or criticism?
30. How do you feel about **CHOICES AND MAKING DECISIONS FOR YOURSELF?** What are the best decisions you have made recently? How much do you rely on direction, advice or guidance from others? Have you ever chosen anything because it was new or interesting?

What Institution Characteristics Are Important to You?

The following topics may be very important as you consider which particular schools to apply to. Once you have thought about the academic programmes which best match what you want to study, there are many other considerations which may also be important in helping you make your final decisions about where you to apply. These may include topics such as guaranteed housing, extra-curricular activities, cost of tuition/housing, etc., closeness to major cities, the weather, the school's social/recreational scene, and many others.

Write down some of your preferences under the following headings:

What do I want?

- a. Traditional/Modern/Large/Small/Cost
- b. Campus/Large City /Small Town
- c. Near/Far from relatives/an international airport

- d. Preferred Region/Type of environment/Near the Sea – Mountains – Lakes...
- e. Type of accommodation (e.g. is 'residence' guaranteed for 1st yr students?)
- f. Extra-curricular activities/opportunities
- g. Other important considerations...

What Subject to Study?

1. Do you continue with a subject you have already studied in IB, or do you choose an entirely new subject, or do you want to apply with an undeclared/undecided major (north America only)?

Remember subjects at higher education level can be radically different from IB and the content/teaching/assessment can also vary widely from institution to institution. Some may plunge you into the main subject from the first term, while others ask you to study, perhaps, three subjects for the first year or deliver a common core to all students, in social sciences, for example.

2. For many jobs, the actual degree subject is not as relevant. However, you should check carefully.
3. Are you likely to gain the grades which will be needed to follow a particular course? Remember to ask your teachers for their estimates of your likely performance in your IB exams.

4. Are there any special subject requirements for admission to the course? Check carefully.
5. How much flexibility is there in your chosen degree course or programme? Is a wide selection of electives available?
6. One of the most important considerations when applying for a course is ENJOYMENT. You must choose a course that YOU want to do, not your parents or teachers!.

So what subject/course/major do you think is right for you?

WHAT PROGRAMMES ARE AVAILABLE?

Below is a brief description of the various types of programmes available for students to apply to in five major destinations. Additionally, various other countries offer similar types of programmes.

A UNITED KINGDOM

DEGREES (BA, BSc, BEd)

These are usually three years in duration (four years in Scotland), or four years if a practical placement is included. A few courses (e.g., Medicine and Veterinary Science) may last for five years or more. They usually require a minimum of IB Diploma. Realistic entry requirements will usually be higher than the minimum quoted. The degree options might be a subject you have already studied at school (e.g. English or History) or one which can be started from scratch (e.g. Law or Accountancy).

HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND)

They are usually two years in duration when full time (three years with a practical placement).

They usually require a minimum of IB certificate.

They have a vocational bias, e.g. Stage Management.

These diplomas can be offered as a single subject but often involve study of several elements under a single subject heading (e.g. Business Studies which can incorporate Law, Accounts, Economics, Marketing, etc.)

Foundation Courses

These have been very popular for those with an interest in Art & Design courses. They are a year in length and students experience all media in depth. At the end of the year they then decide on which medium/media to pursue as a degree course. Increasingly some universities are offering these in the science and technology fields. This allows students to enter fields that their IB choices may have excluded them from.

B United States

Undergraduate Degrees (AA, BA, BSc, etc.)

There are two types of degrees that can be studied for at the undergraduate level. The Associate Degree and Professional Certificate are normally focused on a narrower and more practical or vocational field of study (e.g. Accountancy) and are usually only available from two-year community/city colleges. This type of school also may offer first and second year courses, which will give you transfer credit to take with you into the second/third year of a four-year degree programme.

The Bachelor Degree normally takes four years to complete, with the first two years offering a broad academic foundation for the specialisation in the third and fourth years. When applying for this type of a degree, you may or may not have a particular major in mind when applying – in either case, the major can be changed after studies begin without penalty or needing to start over. This type of programme offers you breadth and flexibility to try some new subjects and time to be sure of the area you want to specialise in at undergraduate level.

Please note that there are two types of school that offer four-year undergraduate degrees. Colleges are those schools which focus on undergraduate programmes only. The advantage of this is that the most respected faculties members at such schools are not 'saved' for research and graduate programmes, but are involved in teaching undergraduates, including freshmen. Within this category are schools known as Liberal Arts Colleges. These schools are especially focused on providing students with a challenge in the breadth of their studies keeping a multi-discipline approach through the four years while still having the focus of a major. The major benefit of colleges is the attention they give to undergraduate students.

The other category of schools that offer bachelor degrees is that of the University. The difference between colleges and universities is not one of status but rather one of focus - while colleges focus on undergraduate degrees, universities also provide graduate and research programmes. Normally, a university will be a collection of schools or faculties and undergraduate programmes may be a part of those schools or faculties.

A university may also have an undergraduate college as one of those schools (for example, Yale College is a part of Yale University). Students benefit from a university's facilities and atmosphere for academic research and discovery.

Remember that most colleges offer advanced standing on credit for high grades in your IB Higher's and occasionally Standard's. However, it is probably not wise to make decisions about which college or university and which programme/major to apply to based on how much credit they give.

C CANADA

Among OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, Canada devotes the greatest proportion of its public expenditures to post-secondary education. All universities and colleges are government regulated and subject to very high standards, ensuring that degrees are nationally and internationally recognized.

Universities

Universities generally offer bachelor's degrees that require from three to five years to complete, as well as master's and doctoral degree programs. There are 93 degree-granting institutions in Canada.

Colleges



Colleges offer technical training, vocational training, and in some cases, university transfer programs. They are authorized to grant certificates or diplomas for programmes that range in length from one to three years. There are about 150 of these across the country.

D Australia

Universities and Institutes of Technology offer – doctoral degrees, masters degrees, graduate diplomas, graduate certificates and bachelors degrees. Almost all of these are government funded, although some are private and students pay fees directly to the institution.

TAFE Colleges (Technical and Further Education Colleges) offer vocational training – advanced diplomas, diplomas and certificates.

Non- Government (Private) Vocational Educational Institutions are a third type of institution. These are normally named Colleges or Institutes of Business and Technology. These institutions are established with private funding. Advanced diplomas, diplomas and certificates are offered.

Degrees usually involve at least three years of full time study, apart from medicine, which is six and architecture, dentistry and veterinary science, which are generally five years in duration.

Diplomas are normally three years of full time study, vocational in nature and may also count as credit toward degree courses.

The number of overseas students in the higher education sector in Australia is increasing at a significant rate. Each State/Territory has responsibility for its own education system, but the Australian Government oversees the overall quality of education.

E HONG KONG

DEGREES (BA, BSc, BEng, BEd)

There are a wide variety of courses on offer. Please refer to the university prospectuses and websites for lists of all the available courses in each of the Hong Kong universities.

ASSOCIATE DEGREES (Asc)

These are generally two-year courses and are a step between an IB Diploma and a full Bachelor's degree. They can be considered as the foundations for a degree and are very similar in style to the UK HND and the US Associate Degree. HK universities typically offer

paths through their Associate Degrees into full degrees at a variety of universities around the world.

VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

These are offered in a number of Technical Colleges and vocationally related courses which focus on preparation and qualifications of particular vocation/career. Further information is available in the Careers Centre.

WHAT GRADES ARE NEEDED?

Remember - be honest with yourself!

If you expect to get much higher grades than your teachers predict and you apply to programmes which do not match up with your academic profile, you may be very disappointed with the lack of offers you receive.

A United Kingdom

Most universities will make offers of places conditional on meeting expectations regarding the overall score on the IB Diploma as well as individual scores in your higher level subjects. These offers will vary, reflecting supply and demand for the course.

The grades required will depend on the popularity of the course and institution for which you are applying, e.g. an offer for Veterinary Science (one of the most popular courses) will be very high, probably 35+ points in the diploma. Such courses and institutions are not necessarily the best suited to you.

Joint Degrees and less popular courses often attract much lower offers, e.g. offers for Joint English and French Degrees are likely to be lower than English by itself.

Competitive universities will be looking for the full diploma and may specify an overall score (e.g. 32 points) and/or specific levels in certain subjects, especially at Higher Level (e.g. 32 points, including a 6 in Higher Physics). However, some less competitive institutions may not require the full Diploma and may base their offers on your performance in individual certificates. More detail can be found by contacting the Admissions Offices at universities.

B United States

There are over 3000 institutions in America offering courses that lead to degrees. These schools have a great variety of admissions considerations. A publicly funded 'state' school tends to give priority to students who apply from within their state. Private schools tend to

place much less emphasis on where you come from but also tend to be more expensive. In either case, students who apply from RCHK to competitive schools in America must have something more to offer than decent grades...

The most competitive schools tend to look at five areas of a student through their application (with varying degrees of emphasis).

1. **Academic Performance** – This is recorded on your transcript which will (most likely) show your MYP grades through to your predicted IB score. Schools are looking not only for good grades, but also for consistency, variety and challenge across subjects. Your choice of subjects is nearly as important as the grades you earn in those subjects.
2. **Standardised Test Scores** – Tests such as the TOEFL, SAT and SAT Subject Tests are usually required by schools, not so much as an admissions test but rather to confirm or question the information which is provided on your transcript. If your first language is not English, you are strongly advised to take the TOEFL whether it is required or not, as it helps to show your level of English proficiency independent of other factors.
3. **CAS** – More competitive universities are not only interested in choosing students who are academically strong. You should also show your maturity and strength of character through your involvement with others. Choose two or three main activities to commit to meaningfully and contribute to with maturity. What the activities are is less important than what you do in the activity.
4. **References** – These are required or recommended by most universities and are written by up to three of your teachers. It is also a good idea to have an extra reference from someone you know or have worked with in community service or activities. This helps to verify and show more fully what type of a student (and person) you are, both in and outside the classroom.
5. **Student Essay/Application Questions/Interviews** – Questions related to these are often worded something like this:
 - a. Tell us about a significant experience you have had and how it has affected you.
 - b. Tell us about a place or person that/who has influenced you and why.

In these questions, schools are not so interested in comparing your experiences with others, nor the places and people who you have known as much as they are interested in what is important to you and why. This is one of the ways they get to understand what your values are like, what level of maturity you will bring with you and what kind of

character you possess. Through your essays and interviews, your schools are looking to see how well you match their school rather than to test your suitability for a particular course.

C CANADA

Admission to universities leading to a Bachelors Degree is based upon satisfactory results upon High School graduation. You will need to provide the following:

- a) Completed application forms
- b) Official School Transcripts
- c) Academic Reference
- d) Predicted IB Diploma scores
- e) Proof of proficiency in English e.g. TOEFL (a letter from the school emphasizing the applicant's fluency in English may be sufficient)
- f) Certified photocopies of examination certificates
- g) Non - Canadian citizens will need to obtain special documents before studying in Canada. Enquire at the Canadian Consulate about this.

Universities will be looking for a full diploma and may specify an overall score (e.g. 32 points) or specify levels in certain subjects especially at Higher (e.g. 32 points, including a 6 in Higher Economics). More detail can be found by contacting the Admissions Offices or consulting the specific university reference book. Please note that some IB courses are granted advanced credit automatically. Please also note that the education received and the programmes run are very similar in all the universities across Canada.

The emphasis in Canadian universities is on grades rather than extra-curricular activities, which are usually regarded as not as important. The requirements for acceptance from international schools are listed in the individual handbook for each university.

Acceptance at Canadian colleges is not based on grades, as most schools are open access (except some colleges which are feeder schools for universities). Applicants gain a place through a lottery system. All colleges have an orientation programme specifically for overseas students and at this point in time it is easier for non-residents of Canada to gain acceptance to a college. Colleges also require a TOEFL score of 550 or above, (or equivalent English language test) although a letter stating the applicant's fluency in English may be sufficient. Increasingly, many universities will also base conditional offers on activities and community involvement as well as a student essay or responses to application questions.

While your grades are important, it is even more important that you ensure you have the proper course pre-requisites. For example, in some cases if you want to study Business, you **MUST** have HL Mathematics or your application will not even be considered. You need to research these pre-requisites fully.

D Australia

There are several methods of applying to Australian universities:

a) Pre-IB Diploma (i.e. before completing Y13)

Some students attempt to apply to institutions mid-way through their Diploma in the hope of being accepted to a 'Foundation Course'. For some students this may present problems in the future. Students who complete the Foundation Course are not guaranteed a place on a degree programme and their foundation course qualification may be very limited in the way it is recognised for application to other universities. All institutions prefer students to have completed their full IB Diploma as this provides students with the most comprehensive grounding for tertiary education and makes them far more eligible when competing for places with local applicants.

b) After completing the Diploma

Students with a full IB Diploma can be given an offer of a place based on these at an Australian university. Some courses will require high grades such as Medicine and Law, while others may accept students with much lower grades. YOU will need find out what entrance qualifications are required. Applications such as this can be made either during the Spring (mid-year intake) for some courses or after graduation in Aug/Sept for all courses.

c) Through the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or Other External Exams

This is taken in the Autumn term of Year 13 before IB exams are taken. Some students sit the HSC (Higher School Certificate) examinations to improve their chances of an offer, if they are expecting to obtain only average grades at IB. However, you should be aware of the additional workload involved and how it might affect your progress in your IB subjects. The best option would be to wait until after the IB to sit the HSC (or other State equivalent external examination). This is a relatively unusual path as you would be sitting exams that you have not been studying for.

d) IB Certificates

Students with these qualifications may be eligible for entrance into TAFE Colleges and Private Vocational Education Institutions. Application procedures for TAFE Colleges are similar to Universities. Please note that all institutions require proficiency in English. Entrance into some

degree programmes will require an interview and/or an additional entrance exam (eg. Medicine).

e) Mid-Year Intake

Some programmes accept students into the second semester of the first year of studies. These programmes are not very common but students who do not wish to wait several months after finishing Year 13, may consider finding out if the institutions and programmes they are interested in offer this option. Students would apply in March and begin studies in July.

E HONG KONG

As non-JUPAS applicants (i.e. non-local school), you will apply directly to the universities for admission. As all programmes are generally government funded, universities have rough 'quotas' (by percent) that limit the number of non-JUPAS students they accept, and therefore, many courses are extremely competitive.

Most universities require a full IB diploma as a minimum requirement. They expect ESF students to have Chinese to IB Standard Level/Higher Level. The Chinese University has become quite strict on their need for Mandarin/Chinese as the second language, but have also initiated a scheme of waiving this requirement for international students if they are of a suitable strength. Additionally, Hong Kong University normally requires applicants to have successfully taken the HKAL Use of English. They waive this requirement if a student earns a 4 or above in English A1 or a 5 or above in English A2 or English B. It is best to fulfil their expectations as far as possible, but remember that they look at non-JUPAS applicants on an individual basis.

Offers are given based on your predicted grades. You may be interviewed and offers can be 'Firm' or 'Conditional', depending on the results of your examinations. Some applicants who are not given offers may be placed on a reserve list and reviewed when results are known in July, once your final examination results are available.

Please note that many of Hong Kong's universities will require a deposit to secure a place once an offer has been made, this can be quite substantial.

...10 QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE UNIVERSITY PREFERENCES...

These questions are to help you sort out what are important factors in your search for a place to study after high school. Too often students do not take the time to decide what is important to them and get swept along in the frenzy of friend's opinions, parental pressure and big name recognition. As you begin to decide what is important to you, remember to relay these decisions to your parents and discuss WHY they are important.

1. **WHAT SATISFACTIONS AND FRUSTRATIONS DO YOU EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER IN UNIVERSITY?** What are you looking forward to? What worries you most? What do you hope to gain from university? What is the overriding consideration in your choice of university?
2. **WHY DO YOU WANT AN EDUCATION?** Why are you going to university?
3. **HOW DO YOU WANT TO GROW AND CHANGE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?** What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth you would like to see?
4. **WHICH INTERESTS DO YOU WANT TO PURSUE IN UNIVERSITY?** Do your interests require any special facilities, programs, or opportunities? Consider ALL your interests in terms of fields of study, activities, community and cultural opportunities? Are you more interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge and skills of inquiry?
5. **WHAT DEGREE OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE IS BEST FOR YOU?** What balance of study, activities and social life suits you the best?

How interested are you in the substance of intellectual life: books, ideas, issues and discussion? Do you want an academic program where you must work hard? Or one where you can make respectable grades without knocking yourself out? How important is it to you to perform at the top of your class or would you be satisfied to be in the middle or bottom of your university class? How well do you respond to academic pressure and competition from others?

6. **HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO UNIVERSITY WHERE YOU WERE RARELY TOLD WHAT TO DO?** How much structure and direction do you need?
7. **HOW WOULD YOU ENJOY LIVING IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE WORLD?** How often do you want to be able to go home? What kind of change in your lifestyle and perspective might be exciting, or distressing and overwhelming?
8. **WHAT KIND OF SURROUNDINGS ARE ESSENTIAL TO YOUR WELL-BEING?** Are there certain places, activities, countryside terrain, weather or pace of life that make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-environment where something is happening most of the time? Do you prefer an organized environment where you can join a wide variety of planned activities? Do you prefer a more serene and relaxed environment where you can go your own way?
9. **HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO A UNIVERSITY WHERE THE OTHER STUDENTS WERE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM YOU?** How would you react? Would you find it an exciting or intimidating environment? Would you prefer to be with people who share your viewpoints and lifestyles or who challenge and make you question your values?
10. **HOW FREE DO YOU FEEL TO MAKE YOUR OWN UNIVERSITY DECISIONS?** Do you and your parents agree about

your post secondary plans? How important to you are the opinions of your parents and friends?

MAKING YOUR LIST!

Make sure that as you start making your list, you provide for a variety of admissions levels. Divide your university choices into three categories: **STRETCHING**, **'GOOD FIT' FOR ME**, **SECURE**. In dividing the universities into these categories, compare your SAT scores and IB grades with those of each college being considered. Use the following as guidelines:

- **STRETCHING**: The average points/GPA scores or other admissions criteria of entering freshmen will be (significantly?) higher than yours. Make sure all of your choices are not in this category. If all are highly selective and you get turned down by one, you will most likely get turned down by all of them.
- **'GOOD FIT' FOR ME**: The average points/GPA scores and yours will be in the same category. The other criteria for admissions (test scores etc.) are within your profile. The other factors of admissions selectivity also fit your talents and interests.
- **SECURE**: The average GPA and test scores of entering freshmen will be (significantly?) lower than yours. The main questions to ask are... "is this a safety school for me?" **AND** "If accepted, would I be glad to attend?"

PLEASE NOTE: Make sure you take as much care choosing schools in this category as you do for the "Reaching." Nothing is more difficult than trying to find a replacement in April when a student realizes that they do not want to attend their safety school! Remember admission is not guaranteed at any school unless they state they are "open admissions."

Keep in mind that choosing your "secure" schools is actually the most important decision. These have to be schools that you would really like to attend, but that have lower admissions standards. Lower admission requirements do not mean that the school is not a good institution; it simply serves a different population of students.

Students are urged to give careful consideration to providing for diversity of admissions standards in their final list of colleges. In other words, one should not apply exclusively to schools that have a reputation for being highly selective.

STRETCH	
'GOOD FIT'	
SAFE	

SPECIAL NOTE:

*LEARN YOUR MAILING
ADDRESS!
AND WRITE IT THE SAME EVERY
TIME!*

*Make sure you know the postal code and all the
correct
abbreviations so that your correspondence
from universities arrives in a timely manner!*

Use this address consistently!

*Even minor changes (like using "Miss/Ms.") can
result in confusion, if not used consistently.*

Decide how you will write your name and address and write them here:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

13. Important Websites

International

www.braintrack.com

This website links to the home website of every major university in the world. If you need to locate a specific university's website, this is the place to start.

Hong Kong

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/postsecondary/local-higher-edu/institutions/>

This website contains links to all the major universities in Hong Kong.

United States

<http://www.princetonreview.com/college-education>

Personalize the college search. You tell the database who you are, how you're doing in school, what's important to you in a college, what you would like to study, how much you can pay, etc, and the engine will generate several suggested colleges. Drawback? It's not completely unbiased. There may be some great selections for you that do not appear in their database.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

This website contains tens of thousands of careers found in the United States. It provides a thorough description of many aspects of each career and indicates the various educational paths that would qualify a student to practice that career.

<http://apps.collegeboard.com/myroad/navigator.jsp?t=351&i=homepage>

This website requires a log-in. All students will receive their log-in when they get their results from the PSAT/NMSQT. This site contains a personality assessment that is linked to several tools for exploring career options. Allows for personalization according to each student's goals, experiences and test scores.

<http://www.actstudent.org/college/>

This website run by the people at the American College Test provides more tips, tricks and advice than you could possibly read in a lifetime. Lots of good information that is organized in a user-friendly way.

United Kingdom

www.ucas.com

If you plan to attend school in Great Britain, you WILL use this site. Even if you're not considering Great Britain, this site can be interesting. Lists all the courses available at British universities. Anything you need to know about going to university in Great Britain can be found at this site. (University and Colleges Admission Service)

ONGOING TASKS:

- General selection of university
- Evaluate individual aptitude and interest to select university majors
- Talk with parents about universities, locations, costs
- Accumulate supplementary documentation (external examinations, essays, photos, documents attesting to financial standing, visa documentation, records from previous schools, etc.)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ALL YEAR:

- Keep an accurate record of all correspondence.
- KEEP a copy of ALL applications, essays, documents, etc.
- Budget your time.

READ! READ! READ! READ! READ! READ! READ!

The single most repeated word of advice from teachers, counselors and university admissions people is **READ!**