Common App Factsheet

The Sixth Form – University Applications

BRITISH SCHOOL
MUSCAT

What is the Common App?

The Common App is the online application for going to the majority of Universities in the USA (and a few Canadian ones). It has some similarities with UCAS (UK University application process) however it is standalone. Please bear in mind it does not cover all American Universities. There is considerable choice being the biggest higher education system in the world, (UK second) covering 4,627 higher education institutions in total. The range, type and quality of institutions is vast, as is their offer. Considerable research is recommended before making an informed choice.

Overarching Guidance:

Deadlines:

Most applications are due between October and January. Check each individual university for deadlines (Don't use Common App deadlines). There are different deadlines (sometimes) for when you need to send SAT scores, essays etc.

Be aware that Common App deadlines, preparation and administration run concurrent to Year 13 work and UCAS so this multiplies the workload considerably.

Different types of applications:

1. Common Application (Common App)

- Used for most universities
- Common profile (Schools, family, etc.) that you fill in once and can then send to all of you universities on the Common App
- Have to write a Common App essay in response to a prompt you pick from a selection given
- The common app essay is not like the personal statement (UCAS) - don't just use your personal statement
- Individual universities ask for other essays **in addition to** the Common App essay so prepare early

2. Coalition Application:

What is the Coalition App?

The Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success is a relatively new application option for college candidates. Launched in 2016, the Coalition App is a free platform, similar to the Common App that students can submit their applications through.

The Coalition App covers many top college and universities, but not as many schools as the Common App covers. Only 120 schools are Coalition members, as opposed to the almost 700 schools that are covered by the Common App. All eight of the Ivy League colleges; Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, The University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and Yale University are included in the Coalition Application for example.

The main difference between the Common Application and the Coalition Application is that, as its name suggests, the latter attempts to give lower-resourced and underrepresented students a little more help. The Coalition will only accept colleges who prove that they provide substantial support (through financial aid, scholarships, or other means) to low-

income or otherwise underrepresented students. Like the Common App, though, the Coalition App is free for students to use, but they must pay additional application fees for each school they apply to, per the schools' application regulations.

See http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/

State/University based applications:

A state university system in the United States is a group of public universities supported by an individual state or a similar entity such as the District of Columbia. These systems constitute the majority of public-funded universities in the country. Each state supports at least one such system.

- Apply Texas

  ApplyTexas was created through a collaborative effort between the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the colleges and universities represented on the site. The goal of the project is to offer a centralised means for both Texas and non-Texas students to apply to the many outstanding postsecondary institutions available in Texas.

  See: https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX

- Universities of California (UCLA, Uc Berkeley) The University of California (UC) is a public university system in the US state of California. Its magnitude with over 250,000 students is considerable.

  See: https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/

Admissions Tests plus the SAT and ACT:

The ACT	https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-the-act-a-complete-explanation-of-the-test
The SAT	https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-the-sat-a-complete-explanation-of-the-test

Depending on where you want to apply, you're ACT or SAT score can account for as much as 50% of the admission decision, so a strong standardized test score is vital. You will need to prepare for and master the SAT and/or ACT. Given the magnitude of the number of candidates from a huge range and types of qualifications globally, the US system uses the SAT and ACT to level the playing field and work out who are the strongest candidates.

The SAT and ACT is a standardised test meant to show schools how prepared you are for college by measuring key skills like reading comprehension, computational ability, and clarity of expression. Because so many students take the test, it also provides schools with data about how you compare to your peers

SAT: see: https://www.collegeboard.org/

1. Prepare thoroughly
2. Take it multiple times (1-4 times)

3.　Do it with the essay at least once - check if the universities you're applying to require it!
3. Best time to take it: Year 12, preferably very soon after GCSEs because that is when your maths/English will be strongest especially if you aren't taking those subjects at A levels
5. Use **Khan Academy** - the BEST resource for SATs - and SAT books (there's one at school probably.) https://www.khanacademy.org/sat
6. Book early - at least 3 months in advance
7. Test dates: Remember that some testing dates do not include the essay so PLAN in advance
8. It costs money to take the test AND to send your results to universities
9. Make sure you leave enough time for your results to reach the universities before the deadlines

SAT Subject Tests

1. This is NOT the same as the SAT - it is an individual subject test (e.g. physics)
2. It involves A2 knowledge so take it at the very end of year 12 or start of year 13
3. Regardless of when you take it, you will have to **self-teach** a lot of A2 material and some stuff that is not in the A Level syllabus
4. Use the summer to prepare - needs a lot of preparation
5. It helps if you only take 3 A Levels (Further Mathematics counts as one) as SAT, SAT subject and the applications take a lot of time

English Tests

1. You will HAVE to take a TOEFL or an IELTS if you're not from a country where English is the only language - doesn't matter if you have an English GCSE, go to an English school, or only speak English.
2. There are a lot of dates for both the TOEFL and the IELTS but the price for the TOEFL increases the closer you are to the date you pick
3. Do at least 1 past paper to understand the format of the test you are taking

Grants and Financial Assistance:

Financial Aid

There are two types of financial aid available to students: merit-based & need-based financial aid.

Very often the ranking of the university and how much they want you will decide the level of financial assistance available. Research this really well per institution

1. Merit-based financial Aid:

- They can be based on academics or sports
- Sports scholarships cover a lot than merit-based scholarships

2. Need-based financial aid:

- Public universities can only offer need-based financial aid to US citizens but private universities can give aid to international student
- Financial need IS taken into account when coming to a decision by the university
- You will need to fill out the FAFSA or CSS profile depending on what the university requires

Things to research:

1. Transfer Credit for A-Level subjects
2. How courses work -Majors, Minors, Undeclared
3. Attending grad school in the USA -getting a Masters degree or a PhD