

High School University & Careers Handbook

2023-2024

VERDALA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MALTA

*The International School of Choice, Celebrating Diversity, Empowering
and Inspiring Future Generations.*

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Some helpful quick links:

[HS Counsellor Bulletin](#) updated weekly with the latest opportunities worth reading

[Growing Ever Longer List of Summer Experiences](#) a collection of experiences recommended by teachers, community members and other counselors at international schools. Please share any others you can recommend and I'll add to the growing list. It is always possible to improve skill sets and take advantage of local offerings over summer break. Remember, most universities offer some sort of experience on their campuses so if there is a specific school you're interested in, check their summer offerings as well.

[Growing List of Volunteer, Foundation and Gap Year Experiences](#) This is a collection of experiences recommended by teachers, community members and other counsellors at international schools. Please share any others you can recommend and I'll add to the growing list.

Work/Intern/Volunteer experience with [Erasmus](#) or the [EU Solidarity Corps](#) - Are you up for a challenge, and keen to help other people? Check out how you can get involved.

***Striving to empower students' engagement with studies and life –
heralding them to their chosen pathways around the world.***



verdala.org

Letter from the College Counsellor

Welcome to the 2023-24 edition of the High School College Counselling handbook, a resource outlining the support services given to our High School community throughout the last four-year journey prior to university.

What follows provides a window into the life of the College & Career Counselling Department, with milestone guidance from the entry into Grade 9 to the leaving of Grade 12 students, who head out into the world, ready to contribute to it.

Applying to universities both locally and internationally is an exciting and revealing experience which gives students a chance to look at who they are, what they value, and what they might want to do with their life.

Whilst the application process can in itself be a daunting, demanding and time consuming series of events, University & Career Counselling at VIS provides students and parents with a road map toward graduation and beyond. We at VIS pride ourselves on having attracted acceptances from world-class universities around the world.

This guide is meant to assist students and parents on this journey, to support students in their search for self-discovery at VIS and beyond.

Colleen Currie

College & Career Counsellor

hscounsellor@verdala.org



SECTION A

Comprehensive University Counselling Programme at VIS

The Counsellor's office in high school is a particularly pivotal point in VIS students' transition to life - be it University or a Gap year. Some of our students pursue a Gap year option where they choose either to work or simply to travel, expanding their life experience before they choose a study path for their university studies.

Our comprehensive Counselling programme guides and supports students throughout the university application process, formally beginning in Grade 11 and continuing throughout Grade 12. Nevertheless, the process in reality starts as early as you really wish to.

Underlying the University Counsellor's programme is a philosophy that builds on the concept of wellbeing, supporting the holistic development of the VIS student. Thus any coaching at VIS considers the personal components of a healthy lifestyle, the social components of a sense of belonging, the emotional components of being OK within oneself, comfortable within relationships and friendships, and the physical components of striking a good study-life balance supported by good sleep, good nutrition and focused, engaged study.

Choosing your Universities

At VIS all stakeholders work together to ensure a smooth process, one that is taken in small, progressive steps. Guidance in terms of informative individual and group meetings with students and parents, and Social-Emotional Counselling are available to facilitate a manageable pathway.

Aspects of the decision process involve understanding one's academic capabilities, skills and aptitude and matching these with a university study programme. Which University and which study programme are suitable? Does one meet the entry requirements? Is one looking into larger or smaller universities, in the city or on the outskirts? Does one wish to study away from home? How expensive is the local area? Are the university extra-curricular activities of interest? Have you looked at rankings to understand such aspects as student satisfaction scores? Does one's chosen programme offer opportunities for work placement? Accommodation options need to be considered as are tuition and living expenses.

Addressing these aspects of life at university can support students and parents towards drawing a realistic shortlist of universities that ultimately one is comfortable to apply to.

Key Components of a University Application

The following list indicates the key components of a University application. Each will be briefly described below:

- IBDP
- IBCP
- IGCSE
- Anticipated & Predicted Grades
- High School Transcripts
- Admission testing
- SAT testing
- Reference Letters
- Personal Statement
- University Essay
- Interview
- Portfolio

International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP)

Students start this two-year pre-university course in the last two years of high school. This is a globally recognized qualification, thus giving one a very good chance of getting into a top university world over. The IBDP is a great preparation for tertiary education, developing those essential skills that students will need at university. Clearly outlined on the university's website are the IBDP point requirement indicating entry criteria as a guiding baseline.

[Here](#) is an interesting read on the IBDP being a great passport to university.

The following [IB website](#) is a guide pointing towards the specific country's course selection process that need to be taken into consideration when choosing one's IB Diploma subjects:

International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (IBCP)

At Verdala we have expanded the range of options available to our high school students. Currently we offer the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), the MYP (Middle Years programme), the High School Diploma, the International Baccalaureate Programme (IBDP) and the IBCP which is the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme Certificate route. In May of 2023 VIS graduated our first IBCP cohort. The components of the new programme are:

1. BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (Equivalent to one A-Level).
2. IBDP Courses (Minimum 2, Maximum 4 preferably at Higher Level(HL).
3. The Core Curriculum consists of four components: Personal and Professional Skills (PPS), Language Development in Mandarin (LD), Reflective Project (RP) and Service Learning (SL).

Which path is most suitable for your child?

The IBCP is an alternative route to university, further education or the workplace. It gives a rounded qualification, which imparts academic and professional skills, thus bridging the academic/career related study divide.

UCAS Tariff Points are allotted to the components of the programme, making the IBCP a recognized entry qualification to targeted undergraduate studies, predominantly Business related programs in selected universities and places of further education.

For anyone of you seeking a real world approach to learning or if you already know your career direction, this is the programme to pursue.

[Here](#) is a comprehensive list of universities that are IBCP friendly to begin your search.

IGCSEs

As we are switching to the The International Baccalaureate® (IB) Middle Years Programme [MYP](#), 2026 will be our last year offering the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, a globally recognised qualification, delivered in Grade 9 and 10, that is the first two years of High School. The IGCSE curriculum has an international outlook and is tailored for a multicultural and multilingual audience.

IGCSEs are one of a number of factors that throw light on a students' ability. As such they form part of the academic profile of a student, supporting a student's application to university. Effectively universities do look at an application as a contextual whole, factoring in academic qualifications such as the IGCSEs, IBDP, and admission tests, as well as extra curricular activities.

Anticipated Grades (AGs) & Predicted Grades (PGs)

Throughout your DP course, you should be able to get a good understanding of how you are performing by looking at your grades in Managebac. At the start of Grade 12s, teachers might need to submit a predicted grade for some University applications - this will be referred to as an Anticipated Grade. This grade is a calculated guess from your teachers based on your performance so far. These grades will help give you an idea of which University you can apply for and might also give you a clear indication of what you need to do to improve your overall performance. Following your mocks, teachers will be asked to submit your Predicted Grades. Your performance in the mocks and your scores on Managebac, especially the grades you score in your IAs will play a big part in determining this grade. The predicted grades will be as realistic as possible. The point of the predicted grades is to give you a realistic indication of what you can do after high school.

SEMESTER GRADES <i>Progress/End of Sem Reports</i>	ANTICIPATED GRADES <i>October/November Gr 12</i>	PREDICTED GRADES <i>March - Gr 12</i>
Reflects the quality of work produced during a semester	Teacher's professional judgement supported by data from your work in Gr11 & 12	Teacher's professional judgement supported by data from IAs, EAs & mock exams

High School Transcripts

The High School Transcript is an important part of the university application to countries like the USA, Canada and the Netherlands amongst others. All grades from Grade 9 through to 12 are recorded here. It contains information such as the classes one takes, when taken, and how well one did in them. This document is regularly updated as courses are completed. Universities accept official copies of transcripts, those bearing a seal of VIS and those issued by the office of the University Counsellor to the university. School reports are available to reference in Managebac and can also be downloaded in PDF format if needed.

Upon graduation from VIS, students will receive an official transcript as well as their VIS diploma accredited by [MSA](#) (Middle States Association).

Admissions Testing

Standardised testing stipulated by universities complement the IBDP, PGs and Transcript, as indicators of one's academic performance. Though important in essence, they are not considered to be the sole determinant for achieving a place at university. However they remain important indicators of a student's achievement and aptitude.

The battery of university admission testing includes the SAT, BMAT, UKCAT, LNAT, HPAT - just to mention a few tests which students may be asked to take, depending on the university's geographic place and programmes chosen.

For example:

The [BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#) is an aptitude test used as part of the admissions process for Medicine, Biomedical Sciences and Dentistry in some universities in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Spain, Malaysia, Thailand and the Netherlands.

The [UK Clinical Aptitude Test \(UKCAT\)](#) is an admissions test used by a consortium of UK Universities for their Medical and Dental degree programmes.

Students applying to study Law in some UK universities require the

The [Law National Aptitude Test \(LNAT\)](#)

Students applying to study Medicine in Ireland will have to take [HPAT test](#) (Health Professions Admission Test) -


The Scholastic Aptitude Test - SAT

Verdala International School is a testing centre for the SAT. There are some US universities as well as in Europe that accept the test for admissions along with our VIS Diploma. The test is now digital. Free practice tools are available as well and on the [Khan Academy website](#). [This](#) is the info shared by SAT for practice tests and how to download Bluebook, their testing app.

Reference Letters

Recommendation letters are sometimes requested by applications and advocate for the student and are as important as any other document in one's application. They highlight the student's academic and personal abilities, strengths and limitations, potential to thrive in tertiary education, work ethic, how a student handles obstacles, and student's personal passions. Reference letters help to give an impression of who the student is and what they will bring to the university. Whilst UCAS for UK universities has changed their platform for the 2024 applications, it is still a reference section from the school on the student's behalf. For Common App in the US, it is common practice for example, to request a reference letter from both the counsellor and a teacher as part of the application procedure. While programs in Ireland, the Netherlands and Canada don't usually require recommendation letters.

Requests for reference letters need to be made ahead of the deadline by informing the University Counsellor of the referee's name, via email. This ensures efficiency of document uploading. Use of the Brag Sheet or Recommendation form can be helpful for those writing the letters as well as serve as a resource for completing applications.

 [Make your own copy of The Brag Sheet 1.docx](#)

 [Make your own copy of the Self Recommendation template](#)

Personal Statement

Though there is discussion in UCAS of changing this part of the application process, a personal statement is still an important component of the UK application. It's one's chance to document skills, experiences and goals. It tells the story of one's life experiences, personal integrity, social maturity, CAS activities and any voluntary work pursued. One's critical judgement and problem-solving skills, the ability to pursue independent study, one's adaptability, and values are all factors touched upon in this statement.

The Personal Statement needs to show evidence of why one is interested in a particular area of study, what fires up one's academic interest and passion and how one can contribute to society once qualified. In a nutshell this document is the student's personal brand profile, communicated to admissions officers. The following links are good indicators of the nature of this document.

UCAS Personal Statement [Checklist](#):

UCAS Personal Statement [info](#) including top tips for writing the perfect Personal Statement as well using the UCAS portal including a statement builder are great places to start the process.

University Essays for US Schools

US universities require students to write essays. Prompts are usually given and students are asked to focus on answering one of them. An example of a prompt might be: “Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family”.

The following [site](#) is a good guide to US style essay writing. Some international programs in Europe are also incorporating such essay prompts into their application process.

Interviews

Universities may request an interview. This could be conducted in-person or online, typically over Zoom. Some interviews are subject dependent, such as for Art, Nursing and Pharmacy courses to mention but a few.

Typically UK universities like Oxford and Cambridge, Imperial College London and University College London, tend to interview applicants as an integral part of the admission procedure. The [following](#) may support your search and preparation.

[Some](#) universities in the US strongly recommend interviews, like MIT, whilst others consider the interview as optional, such as Stanford and John Hopkins Universities.

At VIS mock interviews are organized on request. The University Counsellor needs to be informed well ahead of the actual interview date, giving ample time to organise interviews according to the specific discipline and university.

Portfolios

Creative Arts students are typically asked for a practical art portfolio as part of the application process into Art and Design Schools and Universities. This collection of work, or a ‘visual diary’, shows how skills and ideas have developed over time. Very often portfolios are supported during an interview. More information can be obtained [here](#).

Career Guidance

Philosophy

The current trend in career advice is much less to do with the type of job one might go into and more about supporting students to be open-minded, flexible, willing to learn new skills, alongside developing networking connections and outstanding communication skills, with future work colleagues and employers.

Universities and employers are looking for adults, who are collaborative in their approach, lifelong learners who are self-directed in their learning, and adults who relish a challenge, who can well handle setbacks and the demands of industry.

In addition to this, at VIS we passionately and unashamedly support students to factor in their ever evolving and developing sense of wellbeing and self-worth. It is the merging of this sense of self-care and sense of good work ethic that combine to create a winning formula.

Events

Career Networking

Parents and friends of VIS, professionals from various fields spend time with High School students explaining their backgrounds and industry. As such, students get exposure to the world of work in medical professions, business, law, finance, art and many others.

Career Insight Sessions

Visiting university admissions officers give presentations on such topics as the changing job markets, hospitality industry and related university courses, AI jobs and others. Webinars and Virtual Days are taking the place of these in order to continue to allow students to explore despite travel restrictions.

At VIS we endeavour to give students access to university admissions officers from as wide a range of universities and countries as possible. It must be recognized however that there are limitations due to Malta's size and we are not on the university tour route for many universities. Visits do take place throughout the course of the year but these often have to be organized on an ad hoc basis.

As a result of post-Pandemic practices, many universities offer expanded webinars and digital Open Days for students to better understand their options. These can be found on their sites. There are also collections in some countries where students can explore their offerings and these are shared regularly in our weekly updates.

Unifrog: The Career Search Tool

The [Unifrog Careers search tool](#) enables students to explore jobs and understand labour market demand, salary and related qualifications. This platform supports VIS students to build well-informed early career pathways by exploring interests, and supporting students to match each interest with a work industry category. Very useful in one's career research, the tool is a

brilliant guide to finding the related university courses. Students and parents can explore pathways using personality quizzes, career and subject profiles, MOOCs (online courses) and webinars.

Students' research eventually leads to a university shortlist for three reach, three match and three safety options. The final step is reached when students understand the entry requirements and decide which universities to then apply to.

In addition to this, Unifrog supports students to make a plan based on students' identification of key skills and experiences. This aspect of the tool supports students to build their Personal Statement or application Essay.

Grades 9 and 10: The IGCSE Pathway

Overview of the Further and Higher Education Pathways in Grade Nine

By grade nine the students have started to make many important academic choices and their summative performance is recorded on the official High School transcript. Students receive orientation from the College Counsellor in the form of personalised meetings, group work and grade wide presentations. Additional conversations at home and with members of the Faculty help students to construct pathways in further and higher education.

Overview of the Further and Higher Education Pathway for Grade 10

Grade Ten is a high stakes year which culminates with a transition to the students pre-university programme. Students choose their subject pathway and receive support from the College Counsellor, the IB Diploma and IB Careers Programme coordinators Meetings are held for the benefit of the students and parents which highlight the implications of the subject choices on future pathways. Students work with the College Counsellor to get an understanding of priority management skills, the university admission procedures, summer internships, voluntary work to gain invaluable experience as well as guidance on all aspects of the applications process.

Grades 11 and 12: Pathways to the future: VIS, IBDP and IBCP Diploma

Overview of the University Pathway for Grade 11

University planning activities really kicks into high gear in Grade 11, where students are actively supported to research universities. It is our aim to support Grade 11 students to develop a clear idea of their chosen pathways by the end of the year. Active application procedures normally start at the very beginning of the next scholastic year in Grade 12.

University GUIDED planning for Grade 11:

Students in Grade 11 meet with the University Counsellor to ensure that chosen IB subjects address university entry requirements.

Research at this stage is intensified. Students are advised to go through as many university websites as they can. The initial four months are crucial in initiating plans, doing research and to generate discussions along these lines. Supported by Unifrog, students are expected to:

- Thoroughly read through the university's course module description to understand the programme's content.
- Check career prospects.
- Get familiar with as many universities and courses to be able to select preferences.
- Together with your University Counsellor, plan your SAT testing for Grades 11 and 12, if needed. Timely online applications need to be submitted through: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/dates-deadlines>
- Consolidate ongoing discussions with parents regarding which country studying will be taking place in.
- Understand the financial aspect of your university education. Check out financial aid options such as grants and scholarships.
- Match Anticipated IB grades with university's entry requirements.
- Shortlist preference of universities.

The last few weeks of Grade 11 bear a significant weight within the university application pathway. The more work done in this respect, the better prepared one is and the easier it will be when it comes to actually working on the application and submitting it in Grade 12.

Year 12

Students have a number of meetings with the University Counsellor in our IB+ classes and individually.

Typical ones include:

- Walk Through the University Application Process: From NOW to Grade 12 First Semester.
- University Admissions testing: SAT for US admissions; BMAT/UKCAT, LNAT and others for Oxbridge, Medicine and Veterinary Courses.
- Applications to Canada, the Netherlands and the rest of Europe.
- Applications to the UK. UCAS opens in May - Registration and Coaching on filling in UCAS form. A buzzword, which links the student's application to the school, will be shared.
- Applications to the USA.
- Writing a Personal Statement (UK) + Essays (USA) workshop.
- Putting an Individual Plan of Action in place: Developing an initial list of potential Universities
- Actions that need to be taken over the summer holidays. Planning of activities, internships, courses: All in support of the Personal Statement writing.

Tasks over summer recess:

Each and every university's website needs to be scrutinised by students and parents for entry requirements, admissions testing, application documentation requirements, and application deadlines. It is the responsibility of the student together with parents to access the various

routes and to analyse, decide, and select the universities that will be receiving your applications.

Planning for university involves many considerations including financial, academic, social, and geographic. Parents and students need to talk about the choices that are available, the student's interests and needs, and the realistic possibilities. Though this is intrinsically a very time consuming task, it could also be experienced as a time of making choices, which define who one is.

Students are advised to set up a spreadsheet to include the university name, entry requirements, course title, course duration, link to the university's site, and university's ranking to include QS World ranking as well as others. At this stage a substantial amount of research into university entry requirements is required. One's preferences, along with predicted grades, admission testing requirements (such as SATs) and possible routes need to be taken into consideration. You are encouraged to speak with admission officers of your selected universities to ensure that your choices satisfy your vision.

If at all possible it is advisable to visit the targeted universities, physically or virtually, as this will surely give a better feel and understanding of the whole set up of university life, ambiance, and academic atmosphere. Meeting with admissions officers additionally gives that personal experience which supports one's decision to ultimately send in an application.

Overview of the University Pathway for Grade 12

Grade 12 is a time to work on the crafting and drafting of the university applications. Naturally, we are all aiming at having a finished product of a sound application that is compelling enough and enticing enough that makes our students stand out from the crowd. Research done previously and the narrowing of choices will support our work together in this year's first semester. Very regular meetings are held with your University Counsellor, ones that see your parents being actively involved too.

Action Plan for the month of September

- In IB+ classes draft your personal statement/essay/motivation letter needs
- Attend workshops/meetings called by your University Counsellor.
- Make good use of the Unifrog platform.
- Students applying to Oxbridge or courses in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and Veterinary Medicine, must meet with the University Counsellor the first two weeks of school.
- Students applying to the US and are planning an Early Decision/ Early Action need to notify the University Counsellor. Refer to the following link for guidelines:
[Early Decision and Early Action - Counselors | College Board](#)

Action Plan for the month of October

Periodic meetings continue to happen with students, parents and University Counsellor over the next few months. Important decisions are taken that affect the course of the next coming years.

- Students applying to the US and Canada are actively preparing documents and filling in applications. Ensure that you schedule regular meetings with your University Counsellor to plan and prepare documentation that need to be uploaded on your online portals.
- Students applying to UK universities through UCAS need to honour the VIS application deadline on October 1. This ensures enough time to allow the Counsellor to prepare all documents for the UCAS submission deadline on October 15.
- Check if there are any Admission tests or written work that must be submitted for courses.
- The final Personal Statement is to be completed, discussed with University Counsellor and any others who can give a constructive critical eye to it, before it is uploaded on your online applications.
- You are **STRONGLY** advised to work very closely with your University Counsellor to ensure a swift process throughout. Saving on procedure time frees up precious time that can otherwise be spent on studying and ultimately attaining a study-life balance.

Action Plan for the months of November and December

Though UCAS application deadline for most courses falls at the end of January, the VIS deadline for submitting UCAS applications is early January. Earlier applications are, of course, supported.

This allows the University Counsellor to double check your application and to call on you and your parents for any fine tuning that needs to be done, prior to submitting applications.

One should note that though these are the official deadlines for receipt of applications, for very competitive courses and universities, it is strongly recommended to complete your UCAS application in October or November.

Further Actions

Students applying to the Netherlands are actively building their university applications through Studielink. Students will be guided accordingly through IB+ class and individual meetings.

The University Counsellor will carefully guide each student to the completion and submission of applications. All official school documentation required by your universities need to be officially endorsed by your University Counsellor. You are advised to consult and constantly inform your University Counsellor of steps that you take in your application journey.

University Application Process

Student Responsibilities

The whole process related to university selection is indeed a laborious one. So many aspects of the journey need detailed attention. Though you will be supported along the way, you need to be aware of the following responsibilities:

- It is your responsibility to attend IB+ class, group and individual meetings called by your University Counsellor. Scheduled meetings are required to be respected as the Counsellor's time needs to be equally distributed with all students requesting attention - and hence efficiency around time usage is paramount. Honouring your commitments in terms of appointments is very important to secure a swift process, turning what could potentially be a daunting task, into a simplified, efficient one.
- The ultimate ownership of a University application is that of the student. Though supported by the University Counsellor, parents and teachers, the management and the actual filling in of the online application lay on the students.
- Students would need to have at hand their students' IDs given by their University, passwords and any access to online university applications so as to be able to work on the ongoing application with the University Counsellor.
- It is your responsibility to ask the University Counsellor for official documents such as Transcripts, and other letters communicating date of Graduation, English as the school's official language of tuition and Anticipate/Predicted Grades. Please be reminded that such documents need to be authenticated by your University Counsellor on behalf of the school.
- Whilst students are advised to apply to universities with entry profiles, which match their academic performances, such as PGs, SAT scores, LNAT, BMAT/UKCAT scores and others, VIS cannot fully support a student's candidature to universities with higher expectations than the student could possibly match.
- Though the University Counsellor supports students in the research of the university study programmes, the student takes the responsibility to understand if there is a fit between one's aspirations and goals, and the chosen programme.
- Students need to be aware of any admission testing required by their chosen universities. Online registration, adherence to application deadlines, accessing the rigour of the testing and preparing for them is the sole responsibility of the student.
- Meeting university application deadlines is the sole responsibility of the student. Note that different courses, different universities worldwide set different deadlines.
- Requests for letters of recommendation need to be confirmed with chosen teachers and then go through the office of the University Counsellor. The Counsellor would then confirm your chosen teachers to write such letters, with specifics for those application portals, then submit on behalf of the student if needed.
- Students are requested to notify the University Counsellor of any acceptances and/or rejections by universities as well as the final choice of University.

Parent Responsibilities

The whole pathway to University inevitably requires parental involvement. As early as Grade 9 and 10, but more intensely at Grade 11 and 12 it is essential for all the stakeholders, namely students, parents and University Counsellor to come together, over more than one meeting to establish and align plans, so as to craft, as efficient as possible, the many steps involved in the application process.

Parents are called for introductory group meetings as well as individual meetings - to better understand implications involved in choices, fees, living and expenses, accommodation arrangements etc. The more planning and discussion made, the less room there will be for stress.

However it is vital for students to own their university journey and the application process. This process supports the student to an independent life soon to be lived away from home, on campus with friends and other fellow students.

Whilst parental guidance towards decisions is vital, students need to retain their autonomy. This matters not only in terms of choices, but also in terms of content of university essays and personal statements. These have to retain the student's authentic tone.

It is recommended for parents to:

- Have ongoing discussions about the different university options and to discuss the implications of the various projected university lists.
- Support with research of study programmes at different universities.
- Keep an eye on deadlines for admissions tests and university applications.
- Work on the financial aspect of a university tuition costs and living, travelling and accommodation costs.
- Go over online applications prior to submission.

University Counsellor Responsibilities

The University Counsellor is the link between VIS and Universities, and thus is a resourceful professional who skillfully navigates this transition. To support such a role, the University Counsellor:

- Conducts individual and group Counselling by providing a confidential helping relationship to support students with educational, personal, and social concerns.
- Plans and runs a programme for High School students, leading the whole process, step by step supporting and guiding both students and parents through the pathway leading to placement of students at university.
- Consults with parents, teachers, and university admissions officers thus determining the most appropriate ways to help students.

The University Counsellor's practice is regularly updated through professional development. In line with the demands of the profession, the VIS University Counsellor stays current in the profession through workshops, conferences, and web-based support.

Applying to University

The UK

Outline

Applications to most UK universities are completed through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) system. The website address is www.ucas.com

This is the central clearinghouse for university applications in the UK. Students are asked to fill out an online form, a reference is added, and once the form is submitted, UCAS forwards the application to the universities of the student's choice. Each university then makes a decision about the application, forwards that information to UCAS, and it is then communicated to the student.

Students may typically select up to a total of five courses (up to 4 if applying to Medical courses), which could include several courses at the same university.

Application Timeline

2023 UK Application Deadlines

- October 15 - Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and Veterinary Medicine courses; Oxford and Cambridge (OxBridge) Universities
- January 31 - All other courses

UCAS October Application Deadline

Though UCAS lists October 15 as its application deadline, VIS deadline for your completed application is October 1. This allows time for the reference letter and predicted grades to be added before applications are sent to UCAS by October 15.

UCAS January Application Deadline

Though UCAS lists January 31 as its application deadline, this year's VIS deadline for your completed application is January 15. This allows time for the reference letter and predicted grades to be finalised before applications are sent to UCAS after the winter recess.

If you plan to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, discuss this with the Counsellor during the second semester of Grade 11 in order to begin planning for submission of the work samples and tests, which are often required by these two institutions.

Application Fee Payment

As an application centre, the €40 payment can be made to VIS for the application process. Payment can be made to the accounts office as well by the student or online at <https://verdala.schoolsbuddy.net/> and pay through the Activities Sign Up page.

Resources

Various web resources support your quest to better understand universities worldwide. Comprehensive great resources to support your initial search are the following sites:

Higher Education League Tables published by major British newspapers indicate university rankings:

- [Guardian University Guide](#)
- [World University Rankings 2023 | Times Higher Education \(THE\)](#)

Studying in the UK Universities

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/applying-to-uni/application-advice-for-parents>

Study London:

Official Guide

<http://www.studylondon.ac.uk/application-advice/faqs/student-loans>

This website allows you to compare a particular study programme offered at all universities in the UK. And this is a comprehensive one as well:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

UK financing website:

This website may be of help for finance questions and EU students:

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/eu-students>

Filling in your UCAS Application

UCAS guide for application: <https://www.ucas.com/file/77801/download?token=N47ycGO>

This is from a school based in the UK and has solid advice for the application process and may be of help as well:

<https://www.wrenschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/UCAS-GUIDANCE-FOR-2022-ENTRY-T-O-UK-UNIVERSITIES-Amended-KRI.pdf>

UCAS Personal Statement Checklist:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1h2EAv8lFqngUATG6b-of5LnkKFXi5MHaWxlVmGheZn8/edit>

Reference specifics for application

Writing UCAS references: advice for teachers:

[Writing a positive and tailored UCAS reference | Undergraduate](#)

For students in the IB applying to UCAS:

[Writing UCAS references: International Baccalaureate students | Undergraduate](#)

[References for 2024 entry | Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Conservatoires, Teacher Training | UCAS](#)

Reference info from UCAS for 2022 entry (this may be updated for 2024):

UCAS will not allow you to see your reference from your portal, as this will be completed on your behalf by the centre you are applying through. We go over your reference needs in the application process and you can always request it from them after submission for a fee as well.

Only one reference is required on the UCAS Undergraduate application. If you want your uni or college to see more than one, you'll need to contact them and ask if an additional reference can be sent directly.

There is actually an option to not include a reference, but only if you contact all your chosen universities and colleges and they agree that you don't need one. Just confirm this on the reference page of your application.

Universities and colleges are being asked, when assessing and comparing applicants this year, to remember that the capacity of an applicant's adviser to produce a full and detailed reference is not an indicator of that applicant's potential.

Requesting a copy of the reference:

<https://www.ucas.com/about-us/policies/freedom-information/requesting-information>

UCAS Extra Choices feature

If you've used all five choices on your application, and you're not holding any offers, you could still find a place using Extra - it's free!

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/types-offer/extra-choices>

General UCAS checklist (*see below if more specific information on applying to the UK from the Counselling Handbook is needed*)

Though UCAS lists January 31 as its application deadline, this year's VIS deadline for your completed application is at the beginning of the second week of January . This allows time for the reference letter and predicted grades to be finalized before applications are sent to UCAS after the winter recess.


Have you:

- Created UCAS student account at www.ucas.com and linked to our center?**
 - Use buzzword *fort2023* when prompted
- Completed student portion of application (profile)?**
 - Make sure to include qualifications from grades 9/10.
 - Use [this handy UCAS guide for application](#):
<https://www.ucas.com/file/77801/download?token=N47ycGOr>

And this is from a school based in the UK and has solid advice for the application process and may be of help as well:

 [adviser-toolkit-2024-ucas-ug-application.pptx](#)

You have 5 course choices, have you consulted Unifrog's match feature? Recommendation is at least 1 reach, 1 match, 1 safe...

- Pasted finalized personal statement into the Personal Statement section of application?** 4,000 characters (about 650 words) max: *Use this handy UCAS Personal Statement Checklist, it even has an exemplar samples link at the bottom:* [UCAS Personal Statement Checklist](#)
- Requested your letter of recommendation?** Make sure to give your brag sheet/letter of rec form and allow them 2 weeks to craft a reference. They need to email it to me so I can add to your application. Use this handy list of questions to consider when asking for a recommendation:  [UCAS Reference Info](#)
- Paid your €40 UCAS application fee?** *As an application center, the payment can be made to the accounts office by the student or online here:* <https://verdala.schoolsbuddy.net/> and pay through the Activities Sign Up page.

Ireland

Outline

Students apply through an online portal, the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#).

Application Deadline

The general application deadline, with a €45 price, falls around February 1. However a discounted price of €30 is applied for students who apply by January 20. Should you decide to change your course choices, this can be done free of charge until 31st January.

Resources

Student Resources

<http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=studentresources>

Parent/Guardian guide

<http://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/CAOparentsguide.pdf>

How to Apply

<http://www.educationinireland.com/en/How-do-I-apply-/>

Directory of Higher Education Institutes

<http://hea.ie/higher-education-institutions/?v=l>

Undergraduate entry to Medicine (from 2023 last update)

<https://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/2023/UGMedEntry2023.pdf>

[The United States](#)

Outline

Most universities in the US use the [CommonApp](#) application portal system, whilst others receive applications directly through their online apply system accessible through the university's website. The school uses the Common App portal and Unifrog to upload documents requested by universities.

Application Timeline

Students are advised to draw up a spreadsheet with the different application deadlines, as these vary depending on different universities.

Regular university application deadline via CommonApp is usually January 1.

You are advised to follow the following [link](#) to guide you in your US search.

Resources

Studying in the USA

- Overview of USA Higher Education
- How to get admitted and Fund your Degree.
- Where to begin your search and how to find the best school for you.
- Choosing a US University

Canada

Outline

The OUAC processes applications for Ontario universities only. For information about a university outside Ontario, contact the university directly or consult [Universities Canada](#).

Every university in Canada has its own entry requirements. Whilst applications are assessed on an individual basis, the High School and an IB Diploma are typical entry qualifications.

The application process varies by province. You might be guided to either a central application service or to a direct application to your university. Upload of documents requested by universities can sometimes be done through BridgeU.

Application Timeline

Whilst many Canadian universities have a “rolling admissions” system, typically there are two enrollment rounds. In general the application deadline for winter start is September 1st and the application deadline for summer start is January 15th.

Resources

The Universities Canada website [| UniversityStudy.ca](#)

Directory of Canadian Universities

<https://www.universitystudy.ca/canadian-universities/>

[Scholarships Canada](#)

Netherlands

Outline

Though most deadlines fall in late April, you can start now. In most cases it is the student's responsibility to find housing and it is suggested to start the application process early as that may play a factor in where you choose to apply. Please make sure to see what the programs you are interested in provide. Some areas are much more difficult than others for students to find housing. Maybe you know people in the city of the university you are interested in attending and can get a sense of housing availability.

Though there is talk in Parliament about limiting or reducing options, for 2024 Dutch universities are maintaining their pool of undergraduate degrees taught in English. Just to give an example, University of Groningen, a high-quality research-intensive university in the world's Top 100, offers more than 30 such courses. Students can apply to four universities through Studielink, the official registration and application portal for programmes at Dutch higher education institutions. However it is advisable to always contact universities directly as some institutions use a different method to register students from abroad.

Application Timeline

A general application deadline falls on 1 May for all other study programmes, however you are advised to check with the institution of your choice, as it may vary per institution and study programme. Exceptions to this are courses that are subject to Numerus Fixus, which always have earlier application deadlines, usually January 15. Studielink will open in early October.

Resources

Studying in The Netherlands

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/international/europe/netherlands/>

Dutch application process:

https://www.studyinholland.co.uk/application_process.html

Studielink website:

<https://www.studyinholland.co.uk/studielink.html>

Directory of Dutch degrees fully taught in English:

https://www.studyinholland.co.uk/full_course_directory_bachelors.html

Information on Numerus Fixus:

<https://www.studyinholland.nl/documentation/step-by-step-plan-numerus-fixus-programmes.pdf>

<https://www.studyinholland.nl/plan-your-stay/how-to-apply#numerus-fixus-programmes>

Create a CV or Cover Letter:

<https://europa.eu/europass/en>

Top Tips on CV and Motivational Letter:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hpyp01zLmiBILC4BWbcwWEfuurJxHQXvj2JKUDLjX4M/edit>

For those of you exploring options here in Malta -

University of Malta, application opens in July. Please note:

University applicants holding an IB Diploma should apply on a regular Local application which is found online www.um.edu.mt/apply

Note that the IB Diploma is considered to be a Local qualification so applicants should not apply as international applicants. Local Application Fees apply. If interested set up an appointment with our student advisors

International Admissions Office: 2340 2225 [Send Email](#)

And there's **STC: Study UK courses here**. It's worth exploring options there. We have a couple graduates from last year currently at STC.

They provide pre university foundation programmes for students who have completed high school, or a direct entry into our degree pathways for those who have successfully finished their IB programmes. Reach out to [here](#)

And MCAST - **The Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology**, read more about the options here: mcast.edu.mt

And there's **American University Malta**: I'm attaching the admissions email, Mr. Ilker Yildiz, and also take a look at their website aum.edu.mt. We toured there last year and it's worth a look: ilker.yildiz@aum.edu.mt

Other European Countries

A very useful resource to refer to is the [European Universities Central Application Support Services](#). Through this site one can access comprehensive and independent information on programmes taught in English, in Europe.

Universities in Europe regularly continue to announce new programmes taught in English. Examples of such courses coming from Italy include the following public Universities:

- University of Bologna (Università degli Studi di Bologna)
- University of Turin (Università degli Studi di Turin) - e.g. Business Management taught in English
- Polytechnical University of Turin (Politecnico di Torino) - very famous for engineering programmes
- Milan Polytechnical University (Politecnico Milano) -e.g. Architecture in English.
- University of Milan (Università degli Studi di Milano) - e.g. Political Science taught entirely in English.

Other Universities in Italy include the private ones, with much higher tuition fees, such as:

- Catholic University of Sacred Heart - Courses taught in English include:
- BSc in Economics & management (Milan Campus)
- BSc in International Relations & Global Affairs (Milan Campus)
- BSc in Sustainable Agriculture for Food Quality & Environment (Piacenza Campus)
- MD in Medicine & Surgery (Rome Campus)
- John Cabot - An American University in Rome.
- The American University of Rome - American University in Rome.

Resources

Studying in Europe

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/study-in-europe>

Connecting Students Successfully To Universities Worldwide: Acceptances in the Past 5 Years*

Around 97% of VIS graduates attend university, while some may take a gap year. Some of the university acceptances during the last five years include:

England

[University of Bath](#)

[University of](#)

[Birmingham](#)

[University of Bristol](#)

[University College London,](#)

[UCL](#)

[University of Durham](#)

[University of Essex](#)

[University of Kent](#)

[University of Leeds](#)

[University of Oxford](#)

[University of East](#)

[London](#)

[University of Exeter](#)

[University of Lancaster](#)

[University of Manchester](#)

[University of Newcastle](#)

[University of Nottingham](#)

[University of Sheffield](#)

[University of](#)

[Southampton](#)

[University of Sterling](#)

[University of Surrey](#)

[University of Warwick](#)

[University of York](#)

[Imperial College London](#)

[King's College London](#)

[Kingston University](#)

[Leeds Beckett University](#)

[London School of Economics](#)
[and Political Science](#)

[London South Bank](#)

[University](#)

[Loughborough University](#)

[MET Drama School,](#)

[London](#)

[Middlesex University](#)

[Oxford Brookes](#)

[University](#)

[Richmond University](#)

[Royal Holloway,](#)

[University of London](#)

[SOAS, University of London](#)

Scotland

[University of Aberdeen](#)

[University of Edinburgh](#)

[University of Glasgow](#)

[University of Strathclyde](#)

[University of West Scotland](#)

Wales

[Cardiff University](#)

Canada

[Carleton University](#)

[Queens University](#)

[University of British](#)

[Columbia](#)

[University of Toronto](#)

[University of Waterloo](#)

[York University](#)

The Netherlands

[University of Amsterdam](#)

[University of Groningen](#)

[University of Twente](#)

[Delft University of](#)

[Technology](#)

[Leiden University](#)

[HZ University of Applied](#)

[Sciences](#)

[Radbound University](#)

[Nijmegen](#)

[The Hague University of](#)

[Applied Sciences](#)

[Tilburg University](#)

United States of America

[Belmont University](#)

[Florida Institute of](#)

[Technology](#)

[Samford University](#)

[San Diego State](#)

[University](#)

[University of Central](#)

[Florida](#)

[University of](#)

[Pennsylvania](#)

[University of Maine](#)

[University of](#)

[Massachusetts Amherst](#)

[Young Harris College](#)

[Purdue University](#)

[University of California,](#)

[Berkeley](#)

[Saint Joseph's University](#)

[Georgia Institute of Technology](#)

[Ithaca College](#)

[University of San Francisco](#)

[Michigan State University](#)

[North Carolina State University](#)

University of Miami

Italy

Bocconi University

Istituto Marangoni

John Cabot University

Universita' degli Studi di
Milano

Malta

University of Malta

St Martins Institute for
Higher Education, Malta

Switzerland

BHMS

Les Roches Hospitality School

Swiss Hotel Management

Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

Others

Anglo American University, Prague, Czech Republic

Istituto Tecnico, Lisbon, Portugal

Ludwigshafen University of Applied Sciences, Germany

ESCP European Business School KTH Royal Institute of
Technology, Sweden

NYU Abu Dhabi

MGIMO, Moscow

Ludwigshafen University of Applied Sciences, Germany

KTH Royal Institute of

Technology, Sweden

University of Hong Kong

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

ArtFx University, France

British School of Design, Moscow

Poland

University of Warsaw

Kozminski University

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Fort Pembroke, Pembroke PBK1641, Malta
www.verdala.org