



# College Application Guide 2020-21



# NEEV College Application Guide 2020-21

## Introduction

At NEEV Academy, each student and family has varying levels of familiarity with colleges and how the college application process works. Some begin the junior year with long lists of schools, while others have only vague notions about what they might want to study or where they might want to go. Some of our students are extremely ambitious while others see college as a nebulous concept and are not yet sure what might come next. We also work with students who are planning to take a gap year. The role of the counsellor is to guide all students, with their many different needs, perspectives, and interests, through a process that helps them to find schools at which they will be successful.

We view a student's engagement in the college admissions cycle as an educational experience. Students need to learn to ask questions, to research, to analyze their research material and then synthesize it and to reflect on their inputs. They practice speaking, writing, and organizational skills. It is the counsellor's job to help guide and support each student through this journey.

Ultimately, the college research and application experience should be about the process as well as outcomes. The counsellor will offer a positive process so that all students and families will conclude their NEEV experience feeling supported and having "best fit" outcomes: colleges to which students are admissible, at which they will be happy and successful, and from which they will graduate.

## APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE USA

This planning guide is mainly focused on the US application process. If you are thinking about applying to universities in Australia, Canada or the UK, please see the section on "Applying to Colleges Outside the US." If you are thinking about applying to universities in India, please talk to your counsellor.



## TIMELINE

In order to ensure a thoughtful application process, the college counselling office recommends that students follow this general timeline. Of course, this plan may vary with students' unique college plans, so make sure you discuss your personal timeline with your counsellor.

### ***Junior Year: 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester***

- Attend the individual meeting with your counsellor (this comes first)
- Attend the family meeting with your counsellor
- Update personal information on CIALFO
- Develop a testing plan for the SAT, ACT, TOEFL (and any others you may require – BMAT, MCAT)
- It is recommended that students sit for either the SAT or ACT during this semester
- Ensure that at least one of your core subject teachers will be willing to write a recommendation letter for you when the time comes (and for some universities you will need two letters)
- Keep a running list of colleges you are thinking about on CIALFO

### ***Summer: between Grade 11 and Grade 12***

- Visit campuses, if possible, research schools of interest and begin the process of drafting essay prompts
- Explore admissions websites for schools you are considering and double-check their requirements
- Create application accounts (Common Application, UCAS and any school/country-specific ones)
- Update information on CIALFO
- Undertake an internship or some sort of work experience in the career path of your choice



### ***Senior Year: 1<sup>st</sup> Semester***

- Meet again with your counsellor (early in the school year)
- Update college list, moving some of your schools to the apply section in CIALFO
- Have those college essay drafts proofread by staff
- Register for any additional standardized tests
- Oxford, Cambridge or medical/dental/veterinary programs in the UK deadline is October 15
- Notify your counsellor in early September if you are applying ED or EA (or other deadlines close to the October 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> timeline)
- Consult financial aid documents/requirements and deadlines

### ***Senior Year: 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester***

- The internal deadline at NEEV is December 1<sup>st</sup> for applications to UCAS, USA and Canadian schools
- If you have been accepted EA or ED, decisions have to be made
- Mid-year transcripts will be automatically sent to US and Canadian schools
- If you have been placed on a waitlist please see your counsellor
- Keep your grades up as your acceptance is based upon the successful completion of your Grade 12 year

## **RESEARCHING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Making the decision where to apply is and should be an individual one. There are numerous reasons why you will be applying to certain schools; what you want to study, your grades, location, class size, cost of attendance and many more. Your priorities and mind will likely change several times throughout the process and this is perfectly all right. For almost every student there are hundreds of schools that would be a good fit.



Start the search on CIALFO for colleges. This program will provide you with best matches once you have completed some personal information onto the site. There are print materials in the counselling office to help with your search as well.

### **ADMISSION OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES**

NEEV will host some college representatives over the year and there will be other college fairs throughout Bangalore. Take advantage of these visits even if you are not interested in the University. Getting comfortable with the process and gathering additional information is always a good thing. These face-to-face interactions with the College Reps will provide you with helpful information moving forward. When meeting with a representative ask a variety of questions and take notes. Be specific with your questions and don't shy away from talking about financial aid and/or scholarships offered by their institution. Ask for a direct email address or business card, thank them and move on to the next college representative.

### **CAMPUS VISITS**

Try to visit college campuses if at all possible. Many students find this a great way of narrowing down the list. If possible go to a variety of schools – in size (small/large student populations), location (urban/rural). Take a formal tour if it exists. You may even be able to sit in on a class/lecture. Check their website for more information. Make sure that their admission office knows that you are there!

### **CONSIDERING COST**

The cost will play a different role for each family. The first thing you can do is to know what you (your family) can afford before you start the college search. Next, find out what the cost of attending each school you are interested in is. The USA is one of the most expensive countries for college tuition. Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and the UK (where a bachelor's degree is only three years) are typically less costly.

Scholarships (mostly merit-based) are available at some schools; this is an additional process over and above the application process. Make sure that you budget for the extra time it will take to complete this process.



## **BUILDING YOUR LIST**

You should be working to build a list on CIALFO that includes a number of colleges, any of which you would be happy to attend. It is rare to think that there is only one single college that is just right for you. For colleges in the USA, you do not have to declare a major, whereas for the UK you need to know exactly what you will be studying. It is important to consider your chances of admissibility in creating your list. It is a pretty well known fact that grades earned and the rigour of your high courses is the best predictor of college success, so choose colleges for your list based on these factors.

Early in your Grade 12 year you will need to finalize your list. It is important that the list is well researched by you and balanced. There should be an appropriate mix of 'likely', 'possible' and 'reach' schools.

## **ADMISSIONS TESTS (SAT, SAT SUBJECT TESTS, ACT, TOEFL, IELTS, BMAT, LNAT, CLAT ...)**

The anxiety that occurs when this topic comes up with students is real. If a college requires one of these tests, then the results obtained on them is most likely significant. However, the grades you score throughout your high school career are far more important. The more selective the university, the more important the scores seem to be.

## **WHEN TO TAKE THE TEST**

The further into high school you are the better you may do on the test. We would suggest that the first time you should take a standardized test is either in December or March of your Grade 11 year. This way you will have the option of taking the test again, depending on your results. If you were applying early decision or early action, it would make sense to complete all standardized tests by October of your Grade 12 year.



## **PREPARING FOR THE SAT OR ACT**

As you would prepare for any test, you should also prepare for the SAT or ACT. There are plenty of websites offering free practice tests (College Board and Khan Academy are two of the best). As stated earlier, your grades in the courses you are taking in class are far more important than the scores on the SAT or ACT, so don't spend all of your time studying for these external exams.

## **SUBJECT TESTS**

These are one-hour tests administered by the College Board that cover very specific course content. Most universities in the USA do not require subject tests. Engineering may require you to take Math and Physics but it varies from school to school. Research carefully when creating your college list to know the requirements needed for each university you are applying to.

## **TOEFL AND IELTS**

If English is not your mother tongue, you may need to take the TOEFL or IELTS. Depending on which IB English course you are taking, the score you are receiving and the level of the course you may be able to have this test waived. See your counsellor about this. Remember that the TOEFL test results are only good for two years so do not take the test too early and if you are applying to the UK, then you will have to take the IELTS test.

## **APPLYING TO SCHOOLS**

In the USA, colleges and universities each set their own criteria for determining who gets admitted and how. Each will ask different questions, set their own deadlines/policies and requirements for applying. This can be a very complicated process so it is best to start researching early and make notes in CIALFO.



Give yourself plenty of time to do the groundwork. It is your responsibility to ensure you have completed all the necessary requirements.

## **APPLICATIONS**

The platforms you will use to apply will vary depending on the country and in some cases individual schools. If the Common Application is an option, you must use the Common Application to apply.

## **ESSAYS**

Essay topics for Universities in the USA are pretty consistent from year to year. This means you can start writing up your drafts in Grade 11 or during the summer (pre Grade 12). It's important that you provide information on yourself that is not already stated on your transcript or in your recommendation letters. The person reading your essay should be able to determine how you think and process information, your ethics and/or value system, your sense of humour and the level of your intellectual curiosity. Stick to the word count and don't go over; less is more.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

You will be able to report your activities and interests. Concentrate on your important activities and list them in order of which ones were most meaningful to you. This should not be a laundry list of everything you have done over your lifetime.

## **TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Talk with your counsellor on whom you should ask to write a recommendation letter for you. It is best to ask teachers you have had in your junior year because they have taught you recently and can speak about you in an academic capacity. Letters should come from a core subject teacher and/or a teacher in the discipline you plan to pursue in college. It's best to approach the teachers you are going to ask to write letters on your behalf in the second semester of Grade 11. Letters of recommendation are confidential documents and thus you will not be able to view them.





## APPLYING TO COLLEGES OUTSIDE THE USA

### ~AUSTRALIA~

When you apply to Australia you must know what you want to study, as your courses will all focus on that area of study. Most courses of study are three years long. You need to be aware that the school year begins in February. Most schools will also have a mid-year intake in late June or early July. Information can be found by going to the government website: [www.idp.com](http://www.idp.com)

Australian universities do not require letters of recommendation or personal essays for admission. Be sure to look at each university's website to see if you meet their entry requirements.

They will admit students on rolling admissions, so you may apply at any time within a year of your planned enrollment date. It would be wise to apply within six months of your start date, which would mean applying in September (post high school graduation year).

### ~CANADA~

In Canada, the term College usually refers to a two-year program or trade school, whereas university refers to a four-year institution. Most Canadian schools are mainly concerned with a student's academic results. Only a handful of universities will require standardized test scores like the SAT or ACT. Essays may or may not be required.

You can apply for most universities directly from their website, with the only document required being the transcript. In Ontario, you can apply to multiple universities through a single portal called OUAC.



Deadlines for Canadian universities tend to be later than those in the USA. Check the universities individual website for their requirements. The sooner you apply; the sooner you will hear whether you have been accepted. December 1<sup>st</sup> is NEEV's internal deadline for applying to Canada.

~UK~

Universities in the UK usually ask you to choose, apply to and then focus on a single area of study (though you can also combine areas of study – History and Business for example). If you know exactly what you want to study, then a UK school may be a good choice for you. Most degree programs in the UK take three years to complete, with the exception being Scotland where it will take you four years to complete a Bachelor's program.

The primary document that UK schools will use to decide admissions for you will be your Predicted Grades. You will have to write a personal statement about your interest and commitment to the course of study you are applying for. One teacher will be required to write a letter of recommendation for you.

The application process for all universities in the UK is through UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)). You are limited to applying to only five schools. The application deadline is January 15<sup>th</sup>, however, NEEV's internal deadline for applying is December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **GAP YEAR**

If you are not sure about going to college, doing something different for a year gives you time to think things over. For most students, there is little downside to a productive gap year. This could involve working a full-time job, volunteering for an organization or travelling. A gap year may allow you to become more independent, gain real-world experience, and often times, focus on what you really want to achieve in university.



If you decide to take a gap year, it is recommended that you go through the process of applying to universities and if accepted asking for a one-year deferment.

## **AFTER YOU APPLY**

Once you have applied it is recommended that you frequently check the university website (they will provide you with a personal access code) to make sure they have received and processed all documents. You can also check with your counsellor who can check your status on CIALFO.

Early decision and early actions applicants will probably hear by December of the outcome, whereas the regular decision applicants to USA schools will hear by April. In the USA the decision you receive no be conditional, whereas all decisions from UK schools will be conditional meaning a decision of acceptance will not be made until your IB Exam results are processed in early July.

Most students will either be accepted or denied by the university they have applied to, but in some cases, students will receive deferrals or be waitlisted. See your counsellor if you are either deferred or waitlisted by a university you applied to.

## **REPLYING TO OFFERS**

In the USA you will have to make a firm decision about which school you will be attending by May 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't tell a school by then that you coming in the fall, they will most likely withdraw your acceptance. You can make the decision earlier and email is a great way of letting the school know your intention.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**University:** An institution of learning, having both undergraduate programs and a program of graduate studies.



**College:** In the USA a college is an institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training. A college usually does not offer any graduate programs, so all student will be preparing for four-year bachelor programs.

**Liberal Arts:** The academic course of instruction at a college intended to provide critical thinking and reasoning skills and general knowledge comprising the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences as opposed to professional or technical subjects.

**Major:** A subject or field of study chosen by a student to represent his or her principle interest and upon which a large share of his or her efforts are concentrated.

**Degree:** An academic title conferred by universities and colleges as an indication of the completion of a course of study, or as an honorary recognition of achievement. The order of degrees – Associate Degree or Diploma (1 or 2 years to complete), Bachelors Degree (3 or 4 years to complete), Masters (one or two years to complete), Doctorate (depends).

**Regular Decision:** Candidates are required to submit their applications by a specific deadline and are notified of decisions in the spring. Decisions could be – admit, deny or waitlist/defer.

**Rolling Admission:** Institutions review and make decisions on applications, as application files are complete. There are no deadlines per se. Spaces are often awarded to eligible students on a first come, first served basis. Typically, the earlier you apply to a school with rolling admissions, the better.

**Early Action (EA):** This is one way for an applicant to receive early notification of a college decision. EA deadlines are usually November 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> and a decision or notification will be made prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>. A student may apply to more than one college for EA.

**Early Decision (ED):** This is another option for USA schools. ED deadlines are usually November 1<sup>st</sup> and a decision is usually made before January 1<sup>st</sup>. If admitted, the decision is binding. A student may only apply to one university.



**Early Decision II (ED II):** The same policies as ED, but the deadlines fall later in the academic year. Typically, ED II deadlines are January 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> and decisions are made by mid-February.

**Restrictive Early Action (REA):** The same non-binding policy as EA, but college policy dictates that a student may not apply to any other EA or ED colleges.

**Waitlist:** Universities are unable to predict the number of accepted students who will attend; a waitlist is created at the end of the regular decision admission round. Students may be offered admission if a space becomes available.

**Conditional Acceptance:** This means you are 'accepted' only if you receive the final grades that the university (UK) has requested you make in your final IB Examinations.

**CIALFO:** Is the college online platform that Neev Academy uses to compile all information for students applying to universities locally and around the world.

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