

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF  
NOUAKCHOTT



COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

## *Introduction*

Choosing the direction to go after high school is one of the most important decisions you will make in your high school career. Will you go to university, join the work force, or enlist in the military? With proper preparation and some hard work, you should be able to make the right decision. Your parents, director, college guidance counselor, and teachers will help you in every way possible, but ultimately the responsibility lies with you – and you must make the final decision.

There is no magic behind making the right decision. It is complicated because most of you will apply to universities in other countries that may be thousands of miles away.

This handbook has been created to make this decision less confusing. You are encouraged to read it carefully and ask questions as you think of them.

The most important factor is that you choose a university that is right for you. There are many different factors to consider: finances, geography, academics, interests, abilities, personality, attitudes, and goals for the future. University is more than just the “Ivy Leagues” schools, too. There are thousands of other universities that may be a better overall fit for you. You should aim for the best university, while being honest and realistic about your chance of admission and success at a particular university. You must have honest evaluations about your abilities, patience, persistence and organization.

We wish you the best of luck in making your university/future plans. We will help you in every way possible to make this decision a successful and satisfying one.

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# Junior (Gr. 11) Time Line

## September – December

- Work hard in all of your classes to present the best possible academic record to universities. Your junior year is the most important.
- Attend scheduled College Counseling or Guidance meetings to discuss initial college search, the general college process + requirements, resume building, etc.
- Prepare for the SAT (Using Khan Academy, SAT Prep with teachers, or SAT study guides and practice tests.
- Update/prepare a resume of activities and accomplishments.
- Register for October or December SAT (Required if plan to attend university in USA).

## January – March

- Write a personal statement.
- Update your resume of activities and accomplishments.
- Register for May SAT (Required if plan to attend university in USA).
- Schedule an appointment with your counselor/advisor to develop an initial list of universities.
- Prepare for the SAT (Using Khan Academy, SAT Prep with teachers, or SAT study guides and practice tests.

## March – April

- Have personal statement proofread by 2-3 teachers/college guidance counselor.
- Have resume proofread by 2-3 teachers/college guidance counselor.
- Prepare a list of 15-25 universities that meet your general criteria.
- Register for TOEFL (if English is not your native language).
- Prepare for the SAT (Using Khan Academy, SAT Prep with teachers, or SAT study guides and practice tests.

## April – May

- Verify testing requirements for your universities (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, SAT Subject tests, etc.).
- Talk to specific teachers about writing letters of recommendation.
- Prepare final copy of personal statement.
- Prepare final copy of resume.
- Prepare for the SAT (Using Khan Academy, SAT Prep with teachers, or SAT study guides and practice tests.

## May

- Take SAT.
- Turn in final copy of personal statement to the college guidance counselor.

## June

- Letters of recommendation must be on file with the college guidance counselor.

- Submit resume to college guidance counselor.
- Reduce your list to 12-15 universities.

### **July-August**

- Attend a pre-university program and/or visit universities on your list.
- Partake in an internship or fellowship in your desired field of study.
- Schedule SAT summer review course if desired.
- Research each university on your list for application requirements.
- Begin to complete *College Application Checklist*.

## **Senior (Gr. 12) Time Line**

### **September**

- Work hard in all of your classes to present the best possible academic record to universities.
- Meet with college guidance counselor to finalize college list.
- Register for SAT Test in October or December if necessary.
- Register to take the TOEFL if necessary.
- Submit TOEFL scores to college guidance counselor.
- Update list of letter of recommendations requested.
- Update list of universities where application will be made.
- Select Essay topic based on University requirements (more general topic, the better).
- Begin work on the Common Application and others.
- Continue to review and complete *College Application Checklist*.
- Regularly attend College Counseling/Guidance meetings.
- Register for any AP tests you plan to take in May.

### **October**

- USA Early Decision/Early Action applicants – be aware of deadline!
- Oxford/Cambridge UCAS applications due – be aware of deadline!
- Continue completing applications.
- Attend AISN College Application Night with parents (on an as-needed basis).
- Attend scheduled College Counseling meetings & individual meetings by student or advisor request.
- Ask two teachers for recommendation letters at least 4 weeks before the application deadline if you do not already have 3 on file.

### **November**

- Most USA Early Decision applications are due.
- Remind teachers about recommendation letters.
- Apply for Scholarships if desired.
- Request and pay fees for official scores from ETS (TOEFL and SAT) to be sent to individual universities.

### **December**

- **Completed applications due to school counselor by December 10<sup>th</sup> (if application deadline is January 1<sup>st</sup>). This needs to be completed before the AINS winter break.**
- UCAS application due December 1.
- Print a copy of all applications. This is important. Ask college guidance counselor for assistance if needed.
- Receive Early Decision results from universities around December 15.
- Make sure SAT & TOEFL results are sent directly to colleges.

### **January**

- USA selective college application deadlines are January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 15<sup>th</sup>. Keep a copy of all applications and provide a copy to college guidance counselor.
- Remind advisor/counselor to send transcript with first semester results to university.
- Keep your grades up and work for good results.
- Notify college guidance counselor of all communications received from universities.
- Many Canadian college applications due.
- Complete Financial Aid forms ASAP! (FAFSA & any specific college forms, and PROFILE if required). This aid is first come, first serve. It opens October 1<sup>st</sup>. Forms must be submitted by February 15<sup>th</sup>. Deadline to submit is June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **February-April**

- Enjoy your final year, but do not catch “senioritis”.
- Notify college guidance counselor and director of your acceptances and scholarships.

### **Before May 1**

- Keep your grades up.
- Decide on the one university you will attend.
- Inform colleges of your decision.
- Send in your tuition deposit to your college of choice.
- Look for information from the university about housing, roommates, orientation, course selection, etc.
- BE PROUD – you have completed a difficult task!!
- Start working on your graduation speech.

### **May/June**

- Take your Advanced Placement exams.
- Request that final transcript be sent to the university you will attend.
- Begin Visa process for US/UK.

## **How Universities Evaluate Applications**

Universities in different parts of the world have different criteria. You should know how the universities to which you are applying make their decision so you can present the best and most solid application.

Universities in the United States use the transcript as the basis for their decision. They extend a conditional acceptance until the final transcript is submitted after graduation.

Universities consider the following to different degrees:

### **Academic Record**

The most important indicator of future success is your academic record – the courses you take and how well you do in them. If a school offers an AP or IB course, you should enroll in the most difficult courses available to you.

Does your record reflect the following points?

- Consistent effort?
- Improving academic achievement?
- Intellectual risk taking?

### **Standardized Tests**

The importance of these depends on the policy and selectivity of each university.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| • SAT                | Required by many universities                      |
| • SAT Subject (SUBJ) | Required by some universities                      |
| • ACT                | Can be substituted for SAT                         |
| • IB and AP          | Can help you earn credit for university coursework |

### **Rank in Class**

AISN does not rank its students, but generally, a university can estimate your relative class standing by using grade distributions, GPA, and the school profile.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Universities expect to see depth of commitment, rather than large numbers of activities. Summer experiences, work, volunteer service and special talents and achievements are all beneficial.

### **Recommendations**

Your teachers, family friends, and previous supervisors will write you letters of recommendation. It's your choice whom you choose to ask. Typically, these 2-3 people really know you well and can identify your strengths. For example, a supervisor, teacher,

counselor, mentor, or family friend are good people to ask. Please do not ask a parent or family member to write you a letter recommendation, as many colleges do not accept those as valid letters of rec. Some universities will require more than one recommendation and may even specify who needs to write them. Check each university to determine if they have specific requirements for recommendations (a common one is from an English and Math teacher). Remember this is somebody going above & beyond for you, so it's important to officially and verbally thank them for their help.

### **Essays**

Universities that solicit essays want to read about you in your own words. This is your chance to “talk” to the admissions committee and distinguish yourself from the pack of other applicants. Write your essay with the university you are applying to in mind.

### **Personal Interview**

If a university gives personal interviews, and you can arrange to be there, it is to your advantage to have one. It is your chance to present yourself in a favorable way and make contact with a member of the admissions committee. Check with each university to determine if an individual interview is required, if it is of high or low importance, and if you can obtain one.

### **Special Talents**

Students who have special talents need to contact the specific department for additional requirements. These include athletics, music, art, etc.

## **Testing**

Almost all universities request some sort of outside testing for admissions and/or advanced standing. The tests generally taken by students at AISN are the SAT, TOEFL and AP exams.

For universities in the United States the SAT, TOEFL and/or ACT are the most common. Many international and United States universities will give advanced standing to specific scores on the AP exams.

- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): during the spring of their junior year.
- AP Exams: AISN offers AP exams in some subjects.
- SAT: All students should take the SAT at least once and no more than three times beginning in the spring of their junior year.

## **Gathering University Information/Interview**



Ideally, you should visit a university before attending. This allows you to get a personal view of the university. For international students it is not always possible.

For juniors, a good time to take university trips is either during the summer or over school breaks. Visiting during these times allows for a longer look at the various universities while not taking time off from school. In addition, admission officers have more time to spend with you. Check with each university for the best time to visit.

### **Campus Visit Procedures**

- Discuss your plans with the school counselor
- Call, write or email the university as far in advance as possible to schedule tours, dorm accommodations, interviews, etc.

### **Questions:**

- What is the average class size? For freshmen and upperclassmen? Are there large lecture classes and/or discussion sections?
- Does the school use graduate teaching assistants? How?
- How accessible are the professors to students?
- Is the library accessible when you need it? Can you access it from your room?
- To what extent does the university offer tutoring and/or academic support? Is there a writing center?
- Are dorm rooms connected to the campus server? Are computers easily accessible?
- Is there an advisor for the first year?
- How do you choose your courses? How long does it take to graduate?
- What are the living arrangements for students? Do students live on or off campus?
- Is housing guaranteed for four years?
- How do you choose your room and roommate?
- Campus security. Is an escort service available? What are crime statistics?
- Are there specific meal plans? What are the options for eating on campus?
- How diverse is the student body?
- How do students get around on campus?
- Are movie theaters, shopping, dining, etc. close to campus?
- Read the university newspaper, alumni magazine and bulletin boards
- Try to get a general impression of what the university and students are like

### **Special Interests:**

- Evaluate those that are important to you:
- Athletic facilities (health center, pools, intramural options)
- Publication offices (Newspaper, yearbook, literary magazine)
- Science, foreign language and computer labs
- Department of intended major
- Internships (locally and in other areas)
- Study abroad program
- Religious offerings and support

### **Talk to Students if Possible**

- What drew them to this university?
- What do they like and dislike?
- What is the academic load like?
- Are there quiet areas on campus to study?
- How is the social life at school? Do students leave on the weekends?
- How is the relationship between students and faculty and administration?

### **Observe on a School Visit**

- Appearance of students and faculty
- Academic atmosphere
- Friendliness of students and faculty
- Ethnic diversity
- School spirit

### **Reflect on Your Visit**

- Write down your impressions – good and bad be specific.
- Would you be happy in this environment?
- Would you be challenged academically?
- Would the time spent outside of classes aid you in your maturation process?
- Trust your instincts and first impressions

### **Interview**

- The interview gives you the opportunity to learn more about the university, while letting the university know you better. If you do your research on the university, then you will show yourself in a positive light.
- Have some questions in mind that cannot be answered on the school website, catalogs and books.
- Dress neatly and appropriately and arrive a few minutes early.
- Be friendly, relaxed and courteous. Talk freely about your accomplishments without bragging.
- Ask about a work-study program if you are interested in working.
- Introduce your parents. However, your parents should not go to the interview with you.
- Try to get a business card before you leave. Write a thank you note to the interviewer while mentioning something that interested you.

## **Hints for Completing Your Application**

### **Information Generally Needed for Completing Your Application**

American International School of Nouakchott – US Embassy  
Rue Abdallaye B.P. 3107  
Nouakchott, Mauritania (West Africa)  
AISN School Code (CEEB): 634010  
AISN Phone Number: +222 45252967

Advisor Name: Current Counselor or Director  
Director email: [director@aisnmauritania.com](mailto:director@aisnmauritania.com)

The College Board website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

### **Obtaining Information and Applications**

Information concerning universities is readily available on-line. Most university sites will have a section called “Admissions” or “Prospective Students.” These sections are geared to give you all of the information you need including information for the application procedure. Most will have the ability to apply on-line by the institution website/portal, using the Common Application, or UCAS. You may consider downloading an application as a PDF file and completing it on paper first. Remember that it is your responsibility to obtain all the needed material for the application process.

### **Applying On-line**

- Many universities require you to apply on-line: on the university admissions website, using Common App, or UCAS. Your primary portal will be the Common Application website. First check to see if the universities you will to apply to are listed on the Common App. If it is not listed on the Common App website, you will need to complete the online application on the institutions website. You should make sure that you can save the application and print a copy to proofread. When you are sure that it is perfect, submit it to the university.
- Print a copy of your application for your records. Provide the college guidance counselor with a copy.

### **Optional Sections**

- Any optional section should be treated as mandatory. This will demonstrate your interest in the school and may be a determining factor in an acceptance.

### **Other Information**

- Meet **all** deadlines; remember that it takes the school several days to process your application materials.
- Waive your right to access. Admission representatives place more weight on letters of recommendation to which students have not had access.
- Your university essays should be typed with your name in the upper right-hand corner.
- Be sure to sign and date your application. If the application also requires your parent or guardian’s signature, be sure to get it before submitting the application.
- Take your time with the applications.
- Be neat and **proofread**. Check for spelling and grammar mistakes.
- Follow the specific university’s procedures concerning standardized testing (SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Test, TOEFL, etc.).

### **Sole Authorship**

It is understood that you will ask for and receive help while filling out the application. This help should be in the form of suggestions. It should not include an individual rewriting your sentence, paragraph or essay.

## The Common Application

### Common Application

The Common Application provides applications that students and school officials may submit to any of its more than 400 member schools in the USA and other countries.

### Access the Common Application

- Go to <http://www.commonapp.org>.
- Go to the Help Center for instructions for creating an account and completing an application.

### Helpful Hints

- For the essays, work in a word processing program, then cut and paste to the application. Check to see if your university needs a supplement.
- After submitting the application, print and hand in a copy to the director.
- Work on the Common App each week. It takes about 10-25 hours to complete the entire application. Definitely do not wait until the night before it is due.
- Have teachers and others proofread your essays and applications.

## Admission Decisions and Terms

Once you have received your applications, you will have to make a decision about which plan to apply. The following are a few ways in which universities make their decisions. Each university and country has its own way for this procedure so you must check with the university catalog to get the specifics.

### Early Decision

Many universities offer various Early Decision plans, whereby you can, by committing yourself to attend the specific university if accepted, receive a decision on your application early – usually by December 15. If you have determined the school you want to attend and you meet the academic qualifications, you may want to apply for Early Decision. **AINN will not support your applications to other universities if you apply early decision and are accepted. The school will inform all universities to which you have applied of your acceptance.**

### Early Action

Some universities have an early notification date. You can apply to these schools early and have the school make a decision on your application prior to the regular notification date. This type of plan does not restrict you to attending the particular school.

### **Common Notification Date**

Many universities have a common notification date. This means that all applications must be submitted prior to a specific date – usually in January or February. These colleges will notify you of their decision at the same time – usually in early or mid-April.

### **Rolling Admissions**

Universities will notify the applications of their decision as soon as they are made. It is to your advantage to apply early, since it becomes increasingly harder to be accepted as more freshmen are admitted.

### **Summer or Spring Acceptance**

Some universities may not accept you for the fall term, but will accept you for the summer term immediately following graduation or for the spring term following graduation.

### **Deferred Admission**

Some universities may allow you to defer your enrollment for a semester or year in order to travel, earn money or pursue a unique interest.

### **Waiting List**

Students who are not initially accepted may be placed on a waiting list. If a space develops later, you may be offered admission.

### **Common Reply Date**

May 1. This is the date on which you must respond to all offers of admission. We encourage you to confirm acceptance as soon as you know where you want to go, as you will need to pay deposit fee and begin the *Student Visa* process.

### **Conditional Acceptance**

Most, if not all, decisions are *conditional*. The college makes an offer of admission based upon the successful completion of high school and maintaining your grades. Failure to meet these conditions could lead to a withdrawal of the offer of admission.

### **Double Deposit**

This is the universities' term for informing more than one school of your intention to attend by sending in more than one deposit. **AISN discourages the practice of double deposit and will notify your schools if you double deposit. The policy of AISN is to send only one final transcript to the university you have selected, except in the case of a Waiting List.**

## **Use Your Resources**

### **What the College Guidance Counselor/Director can do...**

- Discuss your plans and goals for the future.
- Advise you on selection of college entrance tests to take.
- Help generate a list of colleges that meet your requirements and needs.
- Help direct you to resource materials.
- Assist you with narrowing your list of universities; review with you the possibilities of acceptance.
- Write the school letter of recommendation.
- Review your applications when asked.

### **What YOU can do...**

- Think and re-think your goals, expectations, academic abilities.
- Take college entrance exams in a timely fashion.
- Know yourself...your likes and dislikes
  - What kind of environment is ideal? Small vs. large? Rural vs. urban? Geographic location? Country?
  - What are your academic areas of interest?
  - What extracurricular activities are important?
- Generate a broad list of universities.
- Research universities; eliminate those that do not fit you.
- Apply to a variety of universities:
  - Dream Universities – your wish list, may be difficult to get acceptance
  - Target Universities – ones you have a good chance of gaining acceptance
  - Safety Universities – schools that are “sure bets”
- Visit the universities.
- Write essays and have your teachers proofread them.
- Ask teachers to write recommendations in advance.
- Meet all deadlines.
- File any financial aid or scholarship applications on time.
- Be the sole author of the applications, essays and any other materials.

## **Parent Letter of Recommendation**

From the school letter of recommendation, universities learn more about our students than just their scores and grades. The director must rely on many sources of information to write this letter. A parent letter of recommendation can be very informative.

What can parents do to help their children in the process? Write a letter of recommendation on behalf of your child. It should not be about your child's academic record, but a side of the child that the school does not see.

Some information that might be included in this letter: any relevant anecdotes concerning the family, the student's background and any other unusual activities or achievements. What motivates him/her? What excites her/him? How does he/she spend his/her time

outside of school? You should include examples that relate to how you feel about her/him. (A story or incident that conveys his/her character assessment of him/her is often more helpful than a simple statement such as “Matthew is funny.”)

This letter should be a comprehensive summary of your views of your child, focusing on your subjective reactions to her/him, supported by facts that led to your conclusions. Write in a way and language that makes you feel comfortable. This letter will be confidential and will not be shared with your child. The letter should not be longer than two pages and should be emailed to the school email address of the college guidance counselor. Some specifics to include:

- List three adjectives that best describe your child
- Relate a specific anecdote that illustrates your child’s strengths, accomplishments, preferences, work habits or personality
- Considering location, size cost, program of study, I think my child would do best in the following university setting...
- Are there limitations or special considerations, which will affect where your child attends college?
- What do you believe to be your child’s outstanding accomplishments during the past several years? Why?
- What do you consider your child’s outstanding personal characteristics?
- What is your biggest concern regarding your child leaving home and going to university?
- Discuss your child’s learning style, motivation, strengths and weaknesses.

## Financial Aid

Universities expect you and your parents to contribute as much as possible toward your education whether you are a citizen of the country where your intended university is located or not. Therefore, financial aid is based primarily on need.

When requesting an application, request information about financial aid. The universities will send you financial aid information. Read it carefully and be sure to note any deadlines and additional forms that must be filled out. The information below pertains to most international schools in some form or another. You will need to contact the universities directly to find out specific information.

In the United States, for instance, federal aid is only for US Citizens; therefore non-citizens must secure private financing. This could be through loans or specific grants and scholarships from the college or sponsoring organization.

### **Profile and FAFSA (USA)**

Some colleges will use Profile (available early) and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Profile must be filled out on-line, and it is a good option for the FAFSA.

Respond promptly to any requests for additional information to process your application. Even if your application is received by the priority deadline, you will not receive an award if your application is incomplete. Some colleges have their own form to complete, and they may require copies of tax returns and other documentation to verify information on the application. Be honest in all of your dealings with the Financial Aid Office.

Most colleges offer a package containing all or several of the following: grants and scholarships, loans and work-study.

### **Grants and Scholarships**

Grants are gifts that do not need to be repaid. These grants come from several sources – federal or state governments or the college itself. There are millions of dollars in scholarships that disappear because people just do not apply for them. Scholarships are outright grants given for merit – to recognize academic, athletic or other unusual talents. Scholarships are competitive awards and not readily granted. Be sure to contact the universities/institutions you are applying to about specific grants and scholarships available. Google search: “scholarships and grants” and you will find hundreds of websites advertising them. Check with advisor to make sure they are legitimate (usually they are)!

### **Loans**

Loans made to the parents or the students come from college, federal or state governments (US), by way of the college, or from private institutions.

### **Work-Study**

Work-study programs offer job opportunities on campus based on need. Work-study money usually goes to the spending money component of the cost of attending college. Jobs may include working in various college offices, the library or the gym, or in food service. Hours vary but are set so that academic or extracurricular activities will not suffer.

Students interested in earning money can also get jobs on campus without going through the financial aid process.

### **Other Information**

It is to your advantage to submit your application for financial aid and admissions as soon as possible. Universities do not award aid unless the student is accepted, and there is a limited amount of aid available.

Many universities have a need-blind admission, which means that the people who accept you are not the same individuals who determine financial aid (US). Decisions to apply to



a university should not be determined by the cost, but rather by the desire to attend. You should inquire to be sure that a college is truly need-blind.

Finally, if you have questions, ask. If your financial situation changes drastically, then the college may be able to adjust your award. Remember, if you are in doubt, you should apply for financial aid.

*Be wary of firms that charge a fee for scholarship searches.* Contrary to popular belief, there is not that much unused money.

## Helpful Resources

### Useful Websites

Individual College websites		Check out the website of each college you plan to research.
Naviance	<a href="http://connection.naviance.com/tas">http://connection.naviance.com/tas</a>	Use this web application to keep track of your college list and to see historical data from the college/university you are considering.
College Board	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.org">www.collegeboard.org</a> My Big Future	SAT/SAT II info, College Searches, and other resources
Educational Testing Service	<a href="http://www.ets.org/toefl">www.ets.org/toefl</a>	Info and registration for the TOEFL
American College Testing	<a href="http://www.act.org">www.act.org</a>	ACT info and registration
Fair Test	<a href="http://www.fairtest.org">www.fairtest.org</a>	A list of test optional schools
Unigo	<a href="http://www.unigo.com">www.unigo.com</a>	Student reviews of college/universities in the US
Cappex	<a href="http://www.cappex.com">www.cappex.com</a>	College Search Tool

Zinch	<a href="http://www.zinch.com">www.zinch.com</a>	College search tool where both students and colleges search for each other. Also a scholarship database.
iStudent Advisor	<a href="http://www.istudentadvisor.com">www.istudentadvisor.com</a>	Online publications about colleges/universities from all over the world
Facebook	<a href="http://www.Facebook.com">www.Facebook.com</a>	Receive info and updates by joining a school's network, and meet current students.
YouTube	<a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a>	Watch videos from admission offices, current students and alums about institutions
Youniversity TV	<a href="http://www.youniversitytv.com">www.youniversitytv.com</a>	A website that contains virtual tours of many US campuses. Each virtual tour is about 10-15 minutes long
Number 2	<a href="http://www.number2.com">www.number2.com</a>	This is a free SAT and ACT test prep website
U-CAN	<a href="http://www.ucan-network.org">www.ucan-network.org</a>	A website that compiles important data about private college and universities in the US. Over 800 private colleges and universities are profiled on the website
Fastweb	<a href="http://www.Fastweb.com">www.Fastweb.com</a>	Scholarship search engine

Free Application for Federal Student Aid	<a href="http://www.fafsa.ed.gov">www.fafsa.ed.gov</a>	The online US federal aid application
FinAid	<a href="http://www.finaid.org">www.finaid.org</a>	Helpful information on scholarships, loans and an aid calculator
EduPASS	<a href="http://www.edupass.org">www.edupass.org</a>	Helpful information on admission, financial aid that is aimed at students living outside the US
Study Canada	<a href="http://www.studycanada.ca">www.studycanada.ca</a>	A comprehensive resource for Canadian schools
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service	<a href="http://www.UCAS.com">www.UCAS.com</a>	The online application and a resource for UK schools
UK Price Calculator	<a href="http://www.studentcalculator.org/uk">www.studentcalculator.org/uk</a>	A way to calculate and estimated total cost for a UK education
The Common Application	<a href="https://apply.commonapp.org/Login">https://apply.commonapp.org/Login</a>	A common site used to apply to many US Universities and to begin college application process

## Student Visas for the U.S.A

Students who have been accepted to attend school in the USA must obtain an appropriate visa: F (student – high school or college), M (vocational training), or J (exchange program).

**IMPORTANT NOTE** to student visa applicants: You will not be admitted to the consular section for a visa interview unless you have paid the SEVIS I-901 fee. Payment can only be verified by a valid I-901 fee receipt. Student visa applicants should visit [http://mauritania.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant\\_visas.html](http://mauritania.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant_visas.html) and <http://www.ice.gov/sevis> for further information on payment.

### How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the [embassy or consulate website](#) where you intend to apply. Complete the Online Visa Application

- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#)** – [Learn more](#) about completing the [DS-160](#). You must: 1) complete the online visa application and 2) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

### **Schedule an Interview**

You must schedule an appointment for your visa interview, generally, at the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) in the country where you live. Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early.

**New Students** – F-1 and M-1 student visas can be issued up to 120 days in advance of your course of study start date. However, you will not be allowed to enter the United States in F-1 or M-1 status earlier than 30 days before your start date.

### **EACH APPLICANT MUST BRING TO THE INTERVIEW:**

- A valid passport
- A completed Electronic Visa Application Form (EVAF) (Form DS-160) available at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>. It must be filled out completely, with a full frontal photograph against a white or off-white background stapled or glued to the visa application in the appropriate space. The photograph must be no more than 6 months old and must measure 50mm x 50mm with the head centered in the frame.
- A valid form I-20 or DS-2019 confirmed by the educational institution electronically at the SEVIS web address.
- Your original diploma.
- A bank statement showing proof of your (or a family member's) ability to pay your education costs in the US. Please bring three months of bank statements from the person paying for your education.
- Letter of support from person paying for your education.
- Spouses and minor children accompanying the student to the United States should bring marriage certificates and birth certificates to the interview, to prove the relationship between themselves and the principal applicant.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR STUDENTS AND EXCHANGE VISITORS**

Before a visa can be issued, all nonimmigrant visa applicants, including for student visas, must demonstrate strong social and economic ties to their country of residence such that compel their return after a temporary visit to the United States.

Please note: The information contained on this page is subject to change at any moment. For the most up to date information please visit the non-immigrant visa section of the US Embassy in Nouakchott's website:

[http://mauritania.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant\\_visas.html](http://mauritania.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant_visas.html)

## **Students' Rights and Responsibilities**

**Prospective students have the right to know and universities must provide:**

### **General:**

The cost of attending an institution including tuition, books and supplies, housing, and related costs and fees.

- Requirements and procedures for withdrawing from an institution, including refund policies.
- Names of associations that accredit approve or license the institution.
- Special facilities and services for disabled students.

### **Academics:**

- The academic program of the institution, including degrees, programs of study, and facilities.
- A list of faculty and other instructional personnel.
- A report on completion or graduation rates at the university.
- At schools that typically prepare students for transfer to a four-year university, such as a community college, information about the transfer-out rate.

### **Financial Aid:**

- The types of financial aid including federal, state and local government, need based and non-need based, and private scholarships and awards.
- The methods by which a school determines eligibility for financial aid; how and when the aid is distributed.
- Terms and conditions of campus employment, if financial aid is delivered through a work-study aid program.

### **Campus Security:**

- Procedures and policies for reporting crimes and emergencies on campus, as well as the system of adjudication.
- The number and types of crime reported on campus.
- The school's drug offense policy, as well as descriptions of the school's drug awareness and drug use prevention program.

**When You Apply to Colleges and Universities You Have Rights**

**Before You Apply:**

- You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices and packaging policies, and housing policies. If you consider applying under an early admission plan, you have the right to complete information from the university about its process and policies.
- You have the right to be free from high-pressure sales tactics.

**When You Are Offered Admission:**

- You have the right to wait until May 1 to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid.
- Universities that request commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1 must clearly offer you the opportunity to request in writing an extension until May 1. They must grant you this extension and your request will not jeopardize your status for admission and/or financial aid.
- Candidates admitted under early decision are a recognized exception to the May 1 deadline.

**If You Are Placed on the Wait/Alternate List:**

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Universities may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition of remaining on the wait list.
- Universities are expected to notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1 at the latest.

**When You Apply to Colleges and Universities You Have Responsibilities****Before You Apply:**

- You have a responsibility to research, and to understand and comply with the policies and procedures of each university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships and housing. You should also be sure you understand the policies of each university regarding deposits you may need to make before you enroll.

**As You Apply:**

- You must complete all material required for application and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
- Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.

- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

**After You Receive Your Admissions Decisions:**

- You must notify each university whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the university you wish to attend, but no later than May 1. It is understood that May 1 is the postmark date.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one university. The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a university and are later admitted to that school. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify a college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.

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The handbook was updated in 2021. Additional resources were added, minor renditions to processes, as well as specification and emphasis of submission of online university applications.

