**University Counseling Morning Meeting: Common App and UCAS**

*Understanding the main application systems for US and UK admissions. Review sample accounts*

November 16, 2016

**Common Application**

-Accepted by nearly 700 colleges and universities, mostly in the US

-Student submits application directly to each institution.

**“Common App” section** - these responses go to all of your selected institutions.

-Profile: personal information, address, contact details, demographics, geography (country of birth, number of years lived in/outside the US), languages, citizenship, etc.

-Family: parents’ marital status; with whom do you live; parents’ names, occupations, and schools attended, siblings, etc.

-Education: schools attended, any colleges attended (if you received college credit for a summer program at Yale, for example), school grading system, names of current courses, academic awards, future plans (career interest, highest degree you plan to earn)

-Testing: tests taken, senior secondary leaving examinations

*Tests taken:*

* Students can self-report scores here, but these are not considered official by colleges-- you still must have your official scores sent directly to the institutions from the testing agency (College Board/ACT)
* Can list your highest score from each section (“superscore”), and specify test date
* Separate sections for old SAT (before March 2016) and new SAT (March 2016 and after), due to differences in scoring

 *Senior secondary leaving examinations:*

* If you wish, can provide your French written and oral scores and your TPE

-Activities: Include any kind of extracurricular (outside school) activities. Examples: arts, athletics, clubs, employment, personal commitments, hobbies, etc.

* Space for up to ten activities. List activities in the order of importance to you and/or level of commitment. Example: If swimming is your most meaningful activity, and you devote the most time to that, list it first.
* Include the full name of the activity and provide English translation, if necessary. Do not use acronyms-- things that seem obvious to you, like CVL, won’t mean anything to the admissions officer. Explain!
* Highlight any leadership roles you’ve held (team captain, co-leader of club, etc.). Say something more than just “member of club.” Talk about what the purpose of the club is, and how you’ve been involved.
* Provide information about the grade levels in which you participated, and roughly how many hours per week / weeks per year you spent on the activity.
* Colleges would rather see dedication to a few activities, and consistent involvement, than a scattering of activities each year. For example, say you’ve been on the soccer team for four years, and over time you’ve improved as a player. Maybe you were recently named Most Valuable Player or team captain. Highlight those things.
* Some institutions will allow you to upload a résumé, if you have more than ten activities or would like to include more detailed information.

-Writing

”Please write an essay (250-650 words) on the topic selected.” This is your main “college essay,” required by most institutions. Have a parent, teacher, or me proofread your essay. Choice of several prompts (may change each year):

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

*Additional Information section*: may enter up to 650 words

-Share any circumstances that you would like the admissions officers to know. Anything that could be concerning, explain it here. For example:

* You got mono during the first trimester of seconde, you missed a lot of school, and your grades suffered as a result.
* Your parents got divorced during your second trimester of première, you had a difficult time dealing with this adjustment, and you had trouble completing your homework on time as a result.
* You don’t feel that your SAT/ACT scores represent you well because you haven’t had much test preparation, you have anxiety about tests, etc.

**My Colleges section** - institution-specific questions and writing supplements

-Schools may ask extra questions about:

-your gender identity

-your major/academic areas of interest

-which activities may interest you at the college level (dance team, social justice groups, student government, theatre, etc.)

-whether you are interested in their community service programs

-whether you will apply test-optional, to ROTC, for financial aid or scholarships….

-whether you will submit an art portfolio

-whether you intend to live on campus….etc.

-For some schools (example: Arcadia), you can provide a link to a personal website: “Some applicants maintain an online presence that showcases their background, talents, or creativity.”

-Schools may ask how you’ve learned more about the institution: alumnus, an interview, meeting a representative at a school visit or college fair, visiting the campus, etc.

*Writing Supplements*

Important: Don’t leave the writing supplements until the last minute. Some schools have quite a few writing prompts. Below are examples from two institutions. Note that responses are required for all of these questions, with some prompts requiring several hundred words’ response.

*Wake Forest University (North Carolina)*

1. List five books you have read that piqued your curiosity.

2: Discuss a work of fiction you read on your own and tell us why it should have been required.

3. What have you done to challenge or change that which outrages you?

4. 58% of Wake Forest's Class of 2015 received academic credit for faculty-directed research across academic disciplines. Describe a specific high school assignment that sparked an academic curiosity you hope to explore further in college.

5. Increased globalization and enhanced digitization are bringing people from different backgrounds and parts of the world much closer. Please describe what you have learned as a result of meaningfully engaging with someone different from you.

6. Give us your top ten list. First, please provide a theme.

7. Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway musical Hamilton has become a cultural phenomenon. It weaves together history with rap and hip hop through the often overlooked story of Alexander Hamilton. Choose an unsung historical figure who deserves the "Hamilton" treatment.

8. Imagine it is May 2021, your ideal Wake Forest University commencement speaker is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

9. Title your autobiography: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*Tufts University (Massachusetts)*

Writing prompts may vary based on which fields you list as your academic areas of interest.

1. Which aspects of Tufts’ curriculum or undergraduate experience prompt your application? “Why Tufts?”

2. There is a Quaker saying: “Let your life speak.” Describe the environment in which you were raised—your family, home, neighborhood or community—and how it influenced the person you are today.

3. Answer one of the following questions. Think outside the box: take a risk and go somewhere unexpected. Be serious if the moment calls for it but feel comfortable being playful if that suits you, too.

A. Nelson Mandela believed that "what counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." Describe a way in which you have made or hope to make a difference

B. It's cool to be smart. Tell us about the subjects or ideas that excite your intellectual curiosity

C. Whether you’ve built blanket forts or circuit boards, created crayon masterpieces or mixed media art installations, tell us: what have you invented, engineered, or designed? Or what do you hope to?

D. What makes you happy?

E. Celebrate the role of sports in your life.

**UCAS**

-Centralized system to apply to ALL UK institutions

-Apply through our school (use the “buzzword” provided by Counseling)

-Personal details: address, passport details, contact preferences, disability info, etc.

-Choices: Enter up to five “choices.” You can choose two “courses” or programs at one institution and three programs at three different institutions, five programs at five different institutions, etc.

-Education: Provide information about your credentials/qualifications:

-French Baccalaureat and, if applicable, French Baccalaureat OIB

-Scores from Bac exams in June 2016, i.e. French written & oral, TPE

-”Modules” are each French Bac subject you’re taking this year

-Brevet results

-US high school graduation diploma, if applicable

 -Add test scores (AP, SAT Subject Tests) if you feel they’ll benefit you. Not required.

-Employment: Paid work experience only.

-Include info about unpaid internships, stage, etc. in personal statement if it’s relevant.

-Statement: Why are you well-suited for this course?

-Limit of 47 lines and 4,000 characters including spaces, approximately 600 words.

-Look for words that stand out from descriptions of the various programs (courses) you’re considering. For example, the course/program webpage may say that there is a lot of analysis and problem-solving expected in this program; so you may want to mention your specific experience and interest in analysis and problem-solving.

-Talk about how your previous academic studies and/or work experience highlights your skills in these areas.

-Admission tutors and faculty like to read that applicants have read books and articles, and followed current events, that are not on the curriculum. Shows initiative and interest.

-Pay/send: After you complete all required fields, pay the application fee by credit card.

-Once you submit the application, it will come to me (Ms. Parliman). I’ll complete the Reference section and submit it to UCAS. UCAS sends your application to each of your “choices.”