



WELLINGTON COLLEGE
INTERNATIONAL
SHANGHAI

Applying To University



**Wellington College International Shanghai
University Handbook
2024 – 25**

Be You. Be More.

Introduction

Welcome to the Wellington College International Shanghai handbook for university admissions. Navigating the world of university admissions is a complicated process that requires self-reflection, research and planning. Because admissions processes are constantly changing, and because there are many thousands of universities and courses for pupils to choose from, no handbook can provide all the details that pupils and parents will require to make the best decision about their future pathway. Nevertheless, we believe that you will find the contents of this guide useful as it introduces many of the most important aspects of university admissions and shares information about how we support Wellington's Senior School (secondary school) pupils through this exciting and challenging part of their academic life. So please enjoy this guide and reach out to a member of the Higher Education and Careers team if you have any questions!



Message From the Head of Senior School

Making the decision about where to pursue higher education is an exciting one, perhaps the first real adult decision many of us ever make. Selecting the right course at the right university is important, a decision that has the potential to significantly shape the course of our pupils' careers and the life they will lead. Guiding pupils through this process is a responsibility we take extremely seriously. We are proud of the outstanding destinations our Old Wellingtonians have elected to study in pursuit of their undergraduate degrees and excited to be a part of the journey of all of our pupils to come.

Pupils undertaking the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma at Wellington thrive, each year achieving outstanding point scores which opens the door to the world's finest higher education institutions. However, as the world of higher education is becoming an increasingly larger one, Wellington pupils have a huge number of options and choices at their disposal, including courses, university or indeed countries that they may not have even considered.

The demands of the IB Diploma Programme are significant. It is a challenging and rigorous course and arguably the best possible preparation for the demands of an undergraduate degree. Our academic expectations of our pupils are high, and rightly so, as they mirror the institutions our pupils aspire to attend.

However, outstanding academic achievement is simply not enough. The world's best institutions seek applicants who can offer more than an excellent academic record. From leadership skills and qualities, to participation in sport and on stage and wider academic pursuits, universities seek well-rounded pupils with a breadth of knowledge and interests gained outside of the conventional classroom setting.

Not only do we offer an abundance of these opportunities at Wellington, we help our pupils frame their experiences in a manner that allows them to make applications with confidence, successfully showcasing their talents and skills.

Wellington pupils are supported by a considerable team of people as they begin their journey towards higher education. Through offering pupils and their parents bespoke, one-to-one support, creating opportunities to meet representatives from the world's leading universities and drawing on the experiences of our talented teaching faculty, we enable our pupils to explore what is possible.

Dr Charles Debieux
Head of Senior School (secondary school)



Message From the Director of Higher Education and Careers

Hello from the Higher Education and Careers (HEC) department. My name is Joshua Beard, and I am the Director of Higher Education and Careers. I have been at Wellington Shanghai for four years and have worked in university counselling for nearly 10 years and in education for nearly 20 years. I am delighted to support you and your children through the process of deciding what and where to study after graduating from Wellington on the way to a fulfilling professional life.

I am joined in providing this support by a team of dedicated HEC counsellors whom you will see on the next page, and our HEC team is joined by all the Wellington staff in supporting pupils through this process. That includes the form tutors and Heads of Year who keep close tabs on pupils' progress, the classroom teachers who help pupils dive deeper into their favourite subjects, the CCA supervisors who help them develop key skills and characteristics that universities value and many other members of staff besides. And you, the parents, who not only help your children become the best version of themselves but also cheer them on when this process – and everything else that life throws at them – becomes stressful or scary.

With so many people supporting and encouraging our pupils, it is no surprise that year after year they have great outcomes when it comes to university admissions and go on to great success in their future studies and professional endeavours!

Joshua Beard

Director of Higher Education and Careers



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Higher Education Pathway

Pupils at Wellington Shanghai follow a clear higher education pathway to ensure that they receive the most appropriate guidance to fully consider all their post-secondary options. This begins long before they reach the sixth form (years 12 and 13), with younger pupils guided and encouraged to assess their academic and personal strengths, explore potential career paths and build a portfolio of activities that deepen their academic knowledge and help them develop valuable skills. All of this helps them to lay a solid foundation for future university applications. Much of this guidance takes place in dedicated HEC lessons that span years 10 through 13, with each lesson focusing on an age-appropriate topic related to the pupils' future options. In addition to these lessons, pupils in years 10 – 13 have one-to-one meetings with an HEC counsellor throughout the academic year to discuss their thinking about the future and what they need to do to best prepare for their preferred pathway. Finally, pupils have access to a range of events and resources that help them further explore their options, including dedicated university guidance software, visits by university representatives, career talks and more.

Below is a brief synopsis of what takes place in years 9 through 13 that relates to higher education and career opportunities.

Year 9

This is the first year that pupils and their families need to make a decision that can have a significant impact on their university options: namely, they need to choose their IGCSE options for years 10 and 11. Our HEC counsellors support families in making this decision by giving presentations to both pupils and parents on the implications of various IGCSE choices. They then conduct a one-to-one meeting with every pupil so that they can share their preliminary thinking about which IGCSE choices they prefer and learn what implications those choices might have on their unique plans for the future.

Year 10

This year represents a big jump in importance for the university process, as it is the first year that grades earned will be shared on any transcript the pupil needs to submit as part of the university application process. It is also the first year in which pupils might be asked to share a list of activities they have been involved in outside of the classroom.

It is no surprise, then, that this is the year when the HEC programme begins in earnest, as the HEC counsellors begin delivering regular HEC lessons to the pupils about topics related to their university and professional options as well as providing one-to-one meetings throughout the academic year. This is also the first year that pupils are signed up on the Maia Learning platform used to research university options as well as the first year they are invited to attend university visits and participate in the annual university fair.

Year 11

This year represents another big jump in importance for pupils' future applications as the IGCSE exam results they earn at the end of this year will be used as a major indicator of academic strength and potential by universities around the world. It is also the first chance for pupils to participate in the PSAT, an exam that can forecast future performance on the SAT, which is expected by most US universities. Additionally, this is the year that they complete the Morrisby assessment, which helps pupils better understand their strengths and interests in relation to various study and career options.

During this year, the HEC counsellors continue delivering dedicated HEC lessons to pupils as well as conducting their one-to-one meetings throughout the academic year. Those meetings are even more important, however, given that this year the pupils will choose the IB choices that comprise their IB Diploma Programme. This is a major decision point

for pupils to ensure that they are on track to access their preferred university and career pathway based on any entry requirements they might face. For more about entry requirements, see the 'Grade Requirements' topic later in this guide.

Year 12

During this year, the HEC counsellors support pupils in researching their university options using a variety of sources to help them create a shortlist of institutions and courses to which they will likely apply. The counsellors also advise pupils on choices, like what subject area and specific topic a pupil should focus on for their Extended Essay (EE), the key piece of independent research that all IBDP pupils complete before graduation. This is also the time when pupils applying for the US will study for and begin taking either the SAT or ACT and decide which faculty they will ask for teacher letters of recommendation (LOR).

Before the end of year 12, pupils are required to complete a preliminary Common App and/or UCAS profile (if they are applying to the US or UK) as well as a draft of any major written components like the US

essay and the UK personal statement. This is also the time when pupils applying for Oxbridge begin receiving mentoring from a faculty member in their particular area of interest and begin receiving support for any subject-specific exam they will need to complete as part of their Oxbridge application. Finally, this is the time when a small number of our US-focused applicants will choose to take one or more AP exams as a way to augment or supplement their IB curriculum. For more about all of the components mentioned here, see the 'Other Requirements' topic later in this guide.

Year 13

This is the year that it all comes together: when the lessons and conversations of the last three years culminate in the completion of the pupils' strongest applications to their top-choice universities and courses. This is done with ample time to meet one-on-one with the HEC counsellor. Together, they revise and finalise drafts of writing, complete application documents, secure teacher LORs, prepare for interviews and more. This is also when the HEC counsellors will write the counsellor LOR for US applications and the academic reference for the UK and other destinations. Finally,

this is the time when pupils applying for Oxbridge will take their subject-specific exam and have an interview and when US applicants will typically take their final SAT or ACT. And later, when pupils have received offers from multiple institutions, our HEC counsellors continue providing support as they choose which offer to take up and then prepare to transition to their new country and community abroad.



List of Higher Education and Careers (HEC) Lessons

Below you will find a list of the current list of HEC lessons taught by year group.

Year 10	
Introduction to the HEC Programme for Year 10	How to Succeed in the University Fair
Signing up for the Maia Learning Platform	Exploring University Majors and Courses
Key Skills and Characteristics That Universities Value	Introduction to Different University Destinations
Learning About Yourself Through Personality Assessments	Introduction to Career Pathways
Making the Most of Your Summer Vacation	Year 10 in Review

Year 11	
Introduction to the HEC Programme for Year 11	Making Smart Choices for Your IB Courses
Finding Fit and Making a University Shortlist	Creating a CV / résumé
Learning About Yourself Through the Morrisby Assessment	Applying to the United Kingdom
Making the Most of Your Summer Vacation	Applying to the United States
How to Succeed in the University Fair	Year 11 in Review

Year 12	
Introduction to the HEC Programme for Year 12	Making the Most of Your Summer Vacation
How to Research Your University Options	How to Write the US Essay
How to Apply to Oxford or Cambridge	The Common App Essay Prompts
How to Write the UK Personal Statement	Brainstorming the US Essay
The Art and Design Pathway	Applying to Australia
Requesting Letters of Recommendation	Writing US University Supplements
Applying to Hong Kong and Singapore	Applying to the University of California
How to Succeed in the University Fair	What to Know About Financial Aid and Scholarships
Applying to Canada	Making a UCAS Account
Applying to Europe	Making a Common App Account
Creating an Activity List	Year 12 in Review

Year 13	
Introduction to the HEC Programme for Year 13	Preparing for US Admissions Interviews
Applying for US Financial Aid	Using UK Extra and Clearing Options
Making a Coalition Account	Transitioning to the United Kingdom
Preparing for Oxbridge Interviews	Transitioning to the United States

A Focused Strategy

Given the increasing competitiveness of the most popular universities and courses around the world, it makes sense for pupils to make multiple applications. However, there are also many good reasons for pupils not to make too many applications. The demands of applying to elite universities, particularly those in the US and UK, are considerable, and it is often difficult for pupils to balance those demands and maintain their best possible grades, which are typically the most important considerations for admission. Pupils are therefore strongly advised to limit the number of applications to 10 – 12 and to choose those applications wisely.



Considerations About Where to Apply

In choosing where to make those applications, pupils should focus their application strategy to ensure that they maximise their chances of success:

- Group applications through UCAS (UK applications) and the University of California (UC) system, for example, allow a pupil to use one set of application materials to apply for multiple courses or campuses.
- Similarly, universities in Canada, Australia and Hong Kong allow pupils to apply for multiple courses with the same application.
- Looking for destinations or specific universities where materials can be appropriately reused can also be a good strategy. For example, the personal statement and academic reference needed for UK applications can also be used (with some modification) for universities in Hong Kong.

A Balanced List of Options

Pupils should also make sure that, wherever they apply, they do so with a sensible range of universities, which could look like this:

- **1–3 ‘reach’ options.** These are courses or universities that represent the pupil’s highest aspirations but are very competitive, either for all applicants or simply for this particular pupil.
- **4–6 ‘target’ options.** These are courses or universities that realistically reflect the applicant’s current academic performance and future potential.
- **1–3 ‘safety’ options.** These are courses or universities with requirements which should be easily attainable by the applicant.

With the above mix of applications – and good preparation of the materials to be submitted – a pupil can expect to receive several offers and admissions from which they can choose when the time comes. But how do you know how well a pupil matches with a university academically? In the following section, you can learn more about the kinds of grade expectations that pupils will see and can begin to consider which sorts of universities and courses would fall into the reach, target and safety categories for your child.

Other Considerations

Besides making sure that a pupil’s university shortlist is balanced in terms of how well they match with the academic expectations of a particular university or course, there are two other considerations worth mentioning now.

- One is the number of application requirements a particular university or course will have. Each of these takes time to fulfil and having a lot of them can be challenging for pupils to complete. For more about these requirements, see the next section of this guide.
- Another consideration is the timing of the applications in question, as some happen at the same time while others happen at very different times. For more about when applications are due, see the country-specific descriptions later in this guide.

The ideal would be to make sure both the number of requirements and the time when those requirements need to be completed were well understood and coordinated to help the pupil succeed in completing them all.

University Requirements



General Grade Requirements

When it comes to university admissions the most important consideration, although certainly not the only one, is academic performance. A pupil's record in this regard is shared with universities in two ways:

- **Predicted grades.** This is a list of predicted IB exam results for each subject the pupil is taking as part of their application. These are collected one or more times during year 13, typically in the weeks before a pupil makes a particular application. They are based on the teachers' best judgement of what result a pupil is likely to receive, and that judgement is informed primarily (but not exclusively) by the three or more term reports pupils have received leading up to the collection of their predicted grades.
- **Transcript.** This is a record of all the grades awarded to a pupil each term, typically from the beginning of year 10. It includes the predicted grades mentioned above as well as the IGCSE exam results from year 11.

Universities convey their expectations for such academic performance by publishing entry requirements as well as data on admitted applicants' secondary school grades, SAT scores and the like. The IGCSE curriculum our pupils complete in years 10 and 11 is among the most widespread curricula in the world, and the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) our pupils undertake in years 12 and 13 is understood and highly regarded by universities worldwide. In general terms elite universities and highly selective courses expect excellent IGCSE results (mainly A*s / 8 and 9s) and an IB predicted score of 40+ points out of 45 possible.

Subject Requirements

Beyond these general expectations, many courses have subject requirements or preferences as well. For example, applicants for any medical degree will either be required or expected to study mathematics and chemistry as well as another science (typically biology) at higher level (HL). For any physical science, engineering or computer science programme, mathematics and physics at HL would be necessary. Courses in economics and economics-related subjects, such as business or finance, often require a high standard of mathematics as well. Besides expecting that pupils have simply taken the above classes, many universities and course providers will set a score of 6 or 7 in those HL classes as an entry requirement as well.

Whatever the course, the relevant subject requirements will be explained clearly on an individual university's admissions or course pages. The subject requirements for possible degree choices must be carefully checked before any IB options are chosen. Pupils are encouraged to check with the HEC team if they are uncertain about these requirements. It is also important to remember that universities will change these requirements from time to time, so make sure that you are up-to-date on what a specific university is now tending to expect or requires concerning a specific course.

Besides being aware of what the subject requirements for a course are, it is also important to be well prepared for success in that course. For example, you can see above that HL mathematics is a commonly required or expected part of an applicant's IB courses, but not every pupil can succeed in the very challenging IB HL mathematics course. That is why subject teachers or Heads of Department must also be consulted when making these decisions so that the pupil is taking classes that both fulfil the requirements of the courses they are likely to apply to and suit their academic and intellectual abilities.

Other Requirements

As mentioned above, grades (predicted or otherwise) are typically the most important factor for admission to a university or course, but they are not the only factor. Additional requirements or expectations might take the form of:

- **Written components.** This typically refers to a significant piece of writing, whether a personal statement, an essay or a series of short-answer questions. The shortest of these might be 300 words, but longer documents might be 1,000 words – and our pupils often must write several of these depending on how many applications they are making and where. Therefore, producing these pieces is best done over several months, starting with brainstorming in the spring of year 12, drafting the documents by the end of that year, further developing them over the summer and finalising them early in year 13.

The personal statement is a 650–1000 –word explanation of why the applicant is well suited to study their chosen course, and it typically focuses on things like what a pupil has learned in their HL classes, what they chose to investigate in the EE, what extracurriculars they were involved in that relate to their subject of interest, what work experience they have gained that relates in some way to their future studies or profession and so on.

The 650-word essay, on the other hand, is typically less about academic preparation for a particular course and more about something in the applicant's character or perspective that they think makes them stand out from other great applicants. The topics for such essays are as varied as the pupils who write them, but they all try to add something revealing or otherwise memorable to the rest of the application.

Short-answer questions fall somewhere in between the personal statement and the essay. They often cover both academic topics and things related to the applicant's life experience, values etc. While each of these may be as short as 50 words, some of them may stretch



to several hundred words. A pupil may be asked to complete such questions for a dozen universities or more depending on where they are applying!

- **Recommendations.** This refers to a document prepared not by the pupil but rather by someone writing on their behalf, and it usually takes the form of either an academic reference or even multiple letters of recommendation.

The academic reference is prepared by our HEC counsellors with input from several subject teachers, and pupils do not need to do much for this – besides being a great pupil in their classes, of course!

For a letter of recommendation (LOR), however, the pupils need to complete a brag sheet for each teacher as well as the HEC counsellor that will write one on their behalf, and these brag sheets can be time-consuming to prepare well. (Some universities also allow outside recommenders, such as a research supervisor or even a friend, to provide such recommendations as well.)

- **Admissions Testing.** This is a test that is either required or simply allowed as part of the application process. Commonly completed tests of this sort include those required by courses at Oxbridge, those for highly subscribed courses like medicine or those used for US university admissions generally (SAT or ACT, AP tests etc.).

For Oxbridge exams, pupils first need to identify which course they want to take at which university (Oxford or Cambridge) and which college at that university, as all three of these can determine whether an exam is required or not. Once they know this, they can begin studying for their required exam as late as June when they have their first exam prep session with our partner organisation, Oxbridge Applications. This study continues for

around four months leading up to the actual exam in late October. For more about Oxbridge Applications, please see the ‘Applicant Support’ topic below.

For the SAT or ACT, we recommend that pupils begin studying around Golden Week (early October) of year 12. They should make studying for the exam a part of their weekly schedule, dedicating one to two hours per week. This should continue throughout the entire year leading up to their last exam for US applications, which will be either in October or December of year 13. This studying can be done on their own, but we recommend having the support of an experienced tutor like the AList Education trainer who runs our own SAT prep class for pupils in year 12. For more about AList, see the ‘Applicant Support’ topic below.

AP Exams are much less commonly a part of our pupils’ application process than Oxbridge exams or the SAT. That is because AP exams fulfil essentially the same role as our IGCSE exams and IB predicted grades do – that is, they help universities gauge the real academic potential of applicants. Nevertheless, there are some cases where pupils are advised to consider adding one or more AP exams to their university preparation plan, and these are best discussed as part of the ongoing conversation with their HEC counsellor.

- **Activity List.** This is a list showing a pupil’s community involvement, work experience, social service and the like. This list will ask pupils to not only state what they were involved in and for how long (number of years, hours per week, etc.) but also what was the impact, or result, of their involvement in that activity. The activity list on Common App, which is used for applying to most US universities, has space for pupils to list 10 activities, but universities often state

that they prefer to see applicants with deeper involvement in a smaller number of activities than minimal involvement in a larger number of activities.

- **Interview.** An interview will be required by a range of different universities (e.g. Oxbridge) and courses (e.g. medicine), optional at others and not offered at still others. For those pupils that have such interviews, we offer a range of support to prepare them depending on the type of interview. This support includes mock interviews by our partner organisation Oxbridge Applications, practice interviews with our own staff and practice with our HEC counsellors as well. For more about Oxbridge Applications, see the ‘Applicant Support’ topic below.

- **Portfolio or Research Project.** For pupils applying for art and design (A+D) programmes, or for those applying to US universities for other majors but who nevertheless want to highlight their creative talents, they can submit a collection of their best works as part of a portfolio. In doing so they will have the support of the Wellington staff who oversee the creative area (drama, dance, music or fine art) that pupil hopes to pursue at university or simply contribute to their future university community (but not study as their major). For producing a research project, pupils typically engage a PhD supervisor to oversee their research and assist them in preparing a high-quality, well-documented report that can be shared with universities, published in various publications and platforms or both. Note that this would be in addition to the EE that all IBDP pupils must complete as part of the IB Core.



University Requirements

Below, you will find a list of application components organised by destination. This list will help you see which components a pupil can expect to include as part of their overall application process. You may note that the last two items listed above – portfolio and research project – are not listed. In the case of a portfolio, this would only be required for those applying to A+D courses. Research projects are not a required part of the application process for any applicant to any destination.

Requirement	US	UK	HK / SG	Europe	Canada	Australia
Transcript and/or predicted grades	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Significant writing (PS, essay, etc.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe		
Additional writing (short answer questions)	Yes			Maybe	Maybe	
Reference / LORs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe		
Interview	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe			
Activity list	Yes		Yes	Maybe		
Admissions test	Yes	Maybe		Maybe		

Getting to Know Universities

Given all of the above considerations about grade expectations, application requirements and the like, pupils must get to know the wide range of different universities and courses open to them. Below you will find several suggestions for how you can learn more about universities and courses to make the best shortlist for your child's particular pathway.



University Research

There are several ways that families can learn more about universities online. Here are some of the ones that we recommend:

- **Universities' Websites.** This is the single best place to find what you are looking for, as it should be the most up-to-date and comprehensive. These sites not only provide comprehensive information about the university's study options and other opportunities (such as student activities, internships, study abroad programmes, etc.), but they also provide the most accurate list of application requirements, application deadlines and statistics on admitted applicants. In the UK and elsewhere, this will include any entry requirements for a particular course, while in the US this will include SAT ranges as well as admission rates for their early action, early decision and regular decision plans (if they offer all of these options).
- **University Search Sites.** While universities' sites are the best place to get the comprehensive information needed to make informed decisions about where to apply, they are often not the best place to start the research process. That is because there are so many universities to choose from that pupils do not always know which ones to focus on at the beginning. University search sites can therefore be very useful for quickly getting key information about several universities and courses. In the US, sites like Big Future and Niche are very popular, while in the UK the UCAS website is great as well. (Most other destinations either have no such 'one-stop shop' or the ones they have are not as useful – or as necessary – as those listed above for the US and UK.)
- **Rankings.** These rankings, including the QS rankings that Wellington Shanghai uses to report its outcomes annually, can be helpful to get you started if you are unsure about which universities to target. However, we strongly recommend that you do not rely solely on rankings as the primary factor in deciding which universities to investigate. Ranking lists provide a subjective view of how specific universities match up against one another using a variety of criteria, which is why the same university can have a vastly different position in different sets of rankings. Therefore we recommend that pupils who plan to use rankings look at multiple rankings and look at subject rankings as well as overall rankings. Those focused on specific subjects will typically suggest different universities to investigate than the ones you saw on the first rankings you looked at. A good example is Carnegie Mellon. It is ranked #52 in the QS World Rankings but ranked #2 in the QS Subject Rankings for computer science.

University Visitors, Fairs and Tours

Many university representatives visit Wellington Shanghai, as well as other venues around Shanghai, throughout the year to introduce their university and provide valuable insights into the application process at their institution. These opportunities are regularly advertised to parents via The Week Ahead and to pupils via the Maia Learning platform and our dedicated HEC Teams. For more about Maia Learning and how we use MS Teams, see the 'Software We Use' topic below.

In addition to these university visits, pupils and parents should take advantage of the school's annual Global University Fair, which typically takes place in mid-March. This event provides excellent access to a large number of university representatives. The fair typically attracts around 100 universities, many of which are highly ranked, from 15 – 20 destinations around the world.

Lastly, pupils and their families are encouraged to go and visit the universities they are interested in whenever possible. This will help pupils to understand the community they will be joining for the three to four years of their life after Wellington. Wellington offers an annual university tour of several institutions in either the US or UK that pupils can join, or families can make their own arrangements for such visits with or without the support of a specialised tour company. For more about the external provider we use for our university tour, see the 'Applicant Support' topic below.

Country-Specific Information

The following information is intended to provide a brief introduction to the most common destinations our pupils choose each year. Keep in mind that there is a wide variety within each destination when it comes to what different universities are like, what they offer in terms of study options and what requirements they have for applicants.

The United Kingdom

The UK has historically been the most popular destination for our pupils. The 24 most well-known and respected UK universities belong to an association called the Russell Group, while the most prestigious of those universities – including Cambridge, Oxford and Imperial – belong to the so-called ‘G5’. These universities offer degrees that typically last three years, though a course may last four years if the pupil chooses to study abroad, work during their degree or pursue a master’s degree at the same time. Scottish undergraduate degrees are different in that they last four years and the first year typically includes more general courses. In both cases applicants are applying not to a university but to a particular course at that university

(referred to below as ‘direct entry’), making it difficult to change to another course once they matriculate.

All UK applications go through the Universities and Colleges Application System (UCAS), and this system limits applicants to five course options (though medicine and arts applicants have different limits). All UCAS applications require predicted grades, a personal statement and an academic reference, while applications to the most selective universities, like Oxford and Cambridge, and most highly subscribed courses, such as medicine or law, require either an assessment test, an interview or both. The personal statement is limited to 4000 characters (or roughly 650 words) and



explains the applicant’s suitability for studying their chosen course.

The deadline for most UK courses is late January, but applications to Oxford or Cambridge, as well as applications for medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences, are due in mid-October. Offers from the UK tend to be conditional, meaning that the offer is not truly secure until a pupil receives their IB results showing that they have met all the conditions set in the offer. Pupils can hold two offers – one their firm (favourite) choice and the other their insurance choice – to help ensure pupils will be able to take up a course even if their exam results are lower than expected.



The United States

The US was the second-most popular destination for Wellington Shanghai pupils every year until 2023, when it became the most popular for the first time. Well-known universities in the US include those in the Ivy League, which includes Harvard, Yale, Princeton and five others, as well as universities such as Stanford, MIT, Caltech and the University of Chicago (often referred to as 'Ivy+'). The US also has well-known liberal arts colleges (LACs) such as Amherst and Barnard that are attractive for their high quality of teaching as well as their small size. US degree programmes typically last four years and offer a wide variety of options. Students can often change majors after matriculation and adding a minor or second major as well. This distinguishes them from the direct-entry schemes in most other destinations.

Most US universities are part of the Common Application system, which means that one online application can be used to apply to many different universities. (The biggest exception to this is the University of California, which uses its own application system.) All Common App applications require a transcript, an essay of 650 words, one or more letters of recommendation and an activity list, with most universities requiring some supplemental writing (250 – 1000 words) as well. Submitting an SAT or ACT score is optional at most universities at this time, though we strongly recommend pupils submit such a score whenever it is possible to achieve a score that is a good match for the university they are applying to.

US application deadlines tend to fall into two groups: The first is for Early Action (EA) or Early Decision I (EDI) plans, both of

which are usually around November 1 and guarantee a response will be made around mid-December. The other deadline is early to mid-January for Early Decision II and Regular Decision (RD). Offers in the US are usually called unconditional, meaning once a pupil has received an offer, they likely will not lose it even if their IB exam results do not match what their teachers predicted earlier in year 13.



Canada and Australia

Applications to Canada and Australia are increasingly attractive for our Wellington Shanghai pupils for many reasons. Canada has three world-class universities: the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Toronto and McGill, all of which are ranked in the global top 35 as of 2024. The best-known Australian universities include the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne, and those two along with the University of New South Wales are all ranked in the global top 20 as of 2024. Degrees in these destinations are direct-entry and tend to be three years but maybe four depending on the particular course or whether the pupil adds something to their degree (e.g. an honours course in Australia). One benefit of these applications is that universities in both destinations tend to allow pupils to submit two or more course choices in one application, and they can receive offers for any courses included in that one application.

Applications to both Canada and Australia are often very straightforward, usually only requiring one online application supported by predicted grades, a transcript or both.

UBC as well as select programmes at both Canadian and Australian universities may ask for writing, an interview or other additional requirements, so pupils should research their options thoroughly to ensure that they fulfil all their requirements. Some Canadian provinces like Ontario do have joint application systems, but generally, pupils have to finish the application process for both Canadian and Australian universities on the universities' websites.

Application deadlines for Canada tend to be in January – February, though some, like those for scholarships, can be as early as November, and offers from Canadian universities tend to be conditional. Most applicants to Australia wait until after they receive their IB results to apply in September for entry the following January or February. Any offers they receive are, therefore, unconditional. This is due to the inverted academic calendar of universities in the southern hemisphere.



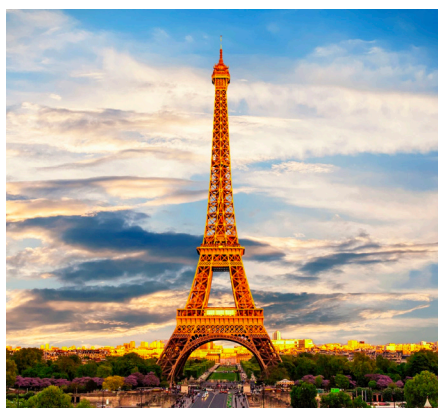
Hong Kong and Singapore

Both Hong Kong and Singapore are home to very well-known universities that increasingly compete with the best higher education institutions from around the world. These include the University of Hong Kong (HKU), Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Degrees at these institutions can be three or four years in length and tend to be direct entry. Like Canada and Australia, a benefit of these applications is that universities in both destinations tend to allow pupils to submit two or more course

choices in one application, and they can receive offers for all courses included in that one application.

Applications to both Hong Kong and Singapore tend to combine elements of the US and UK admission processes. For example, both destinations require an academically focused personal statement but also allow for the submission of an activity list, and both accept an academic reference but will often offer pupils the chance to submit additional recommendations as well. Finally, both offer the option of submitting an SAT score, which is rarely accepted outside the US.

The deadline for applying to Hong Kong is either November to receive an early answer from the university or as late as April to be notified later in the spring. These offers will be conditional. Singapore applications are typically due in February – March, and because decisions on these applications are not made until after IB exam results are submitted to the university in July, these decisions arrive sometime in the summer and are therefore unconditional.



Europe

An increasing number of European universities now offer degrees taught in English at a very favourable price, offering pupils an attractive alternative to studying in more common destinations. The widest range of English language degrees can be found in the Netherlands, but many such degrees – especially in specific subjects like business or engineering – can be found in France, Spain and Germany as well. And of course, there is also Ireland for English-language options.

In Europe, the university application process tends to be fairly simple. However, there is a lot of variation not only between countries but also between types of universities within the same country, and therefore applications may require predicted grades or a transcript, a letter of motivation (similar to a personal statement), an academic reference or recommendation or in rare cases a university-specific test.

Applications to Europe tend to be due in the spring (March – June), but some programmes will have earlier deadlines (as early as January) or will simply offer pupils the chance to apply early if they are ready to do so. Offers from European universities typically come quite quickly after the application is received and are usually conditional.



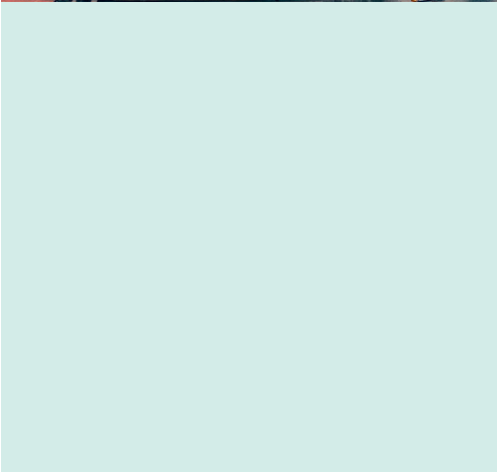
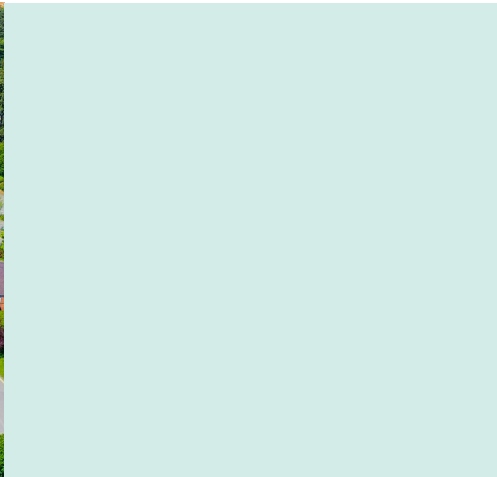
Mainland China

Studying in mainland China is becoming more popular with our Wellington Shanghai pupils for many reasons, and the number of study options is growing as well. Even though our pupils do not complete the traditional Gaokao (高考) route to apply to Chinese universities, several highly ranked Chinese universities – including Peking, Tsinghua, Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong – offer several degree programmes taught in English. Besides these local options, there is a growing trend for UK and US universities to set up campuses in China as well. For example, NYU Shanghai is just a few minutes' walk from Wellington here in Qiantan and Duke University has opened an undergraduate campus in Kunshan as well. For British options, there is Nottingham University in Ningbo and

the University of Liverpool in Xi'an, among others.

The application process for these different institutions typically reflects their parent destination. So applying to NYU Shanghai and Duke Kunshan can be done via Common App just like other US institutions, and the application process for the British universities named above typically requires the same application components – personal statement, academic reference, etc. – that universities in the UK do. Chinese universities are more varied in their application processes, and they also have somewhat complicated regulations on who can apply for these programmes based on passport status and residency.

Just as the application requirements for these universities are varied, so is the time to apply for them. NYU and Duke Kunshan both offer early decision (ED) options with deadlines in November while the British universities do not require an application to be submitted until the end of January. The Chinese universities have deadlines that fall at various times in the calendar and must be researched more thoroughly to ensure the correct deadline is known and met.



Professional Pathways



Medicine

Medical programmes have long been the most demanding and competitive of all higher education pathways. Applicants must achieve consistently excellent grades, have evidence of relevant work experience, undertake at least one subject-specific exam and undergo a highly competitive interview process. The competitiveness of this pathway is not only because of the aforementioned requirements but also because of the especially limited number of spaces for international applicants in medicine courses. Anyone considering a medical application, therefore, needs to identify several viable courses, possibly in more than one destination. Pupils may also wish to consider courses in other health-related fields such as biomedical sciences, pharmacy, physiotherapy, etc. In terms of destinations to study medicine, the top choice for Wellington graduates is the UK. Another common option is Hong Kong, though the competition there can be extremely high and speaking Cantonese may be a requirement if not simply a preference. There are many other options to consider including Ireland, other destinations in Europe, Malaysia and elsewhere. (The US does not offer medicine as an undergraduate major.)

In terms of preparation, there are several things that pupils can do to ensure they are strong applicants when the time comes, including:

- **Class choices.** At the IGCSE level, pupils would need to keep all three 'hard sciences' – that is, chemistry (which is compulsory), biology and physics. Then for IB pupils would need to choose biology, chemistry and mathematics: analysis and approaches for their HL classes.
- **Extracurricular choices.** The best fit would naturally be our medical society (the key CCA for mentoring in this field), which pupils can join as young as year 9 with the supervisor's permission. Other excellent choices would be Biology and/or Chemistry Olympiad. During the holiday pupils should find an opportunity to volunteer in a local hospital or complete one of the internship opportunities offered by some of our local healthcare providers.
- **Test preparation.** Most of our pupils take the UCAT exam as part of their medicine application process, and study for this can be done throughout year 12 with the test best taken over the summer before year 13. This preparation can be done via self-study, and Wellington provides every pupil interested in medicine with access to The Medic Portal platform to do such

self-directed practice. Still, the best method is to study with an exam trainer. This can be arranged either through Medic Portal or via a local exam training centre.

- **Interview preparation.** Our Wellington staff provide pupils with a rigorous mock interview experience during the Michaelmas term of year 13. Those who wish to have more mock interview training are encouraged to engage an outside trainer, which can be done the same as arranging an exam trainer.

Engineering

Engineering is one of the most popular courses for our Wellington Shanghai pupils, but it is also one of the most competitive. In terms of requirements engineering courses tend to expect top grades or predictions in STEM classes taken at HL along with evidence of hands-on experience related to the area of engineering they are interested in studying. These could look like:

- **Class choices.** In addition to IGCSE chemistry (which is compulsory), pupils interested in studying engineering should first take two of the following sciences at IGCSE: physics, computer science, design technology or biology. At the IB level, the most important classes to take at HL would be mathematics, then physics, then another science subject depending on the engineering route the pupil hopes to pursue. Again, these additional options would include computer science, design technology and biology with sports science now available as well.
- **Extracurricular choices.** Wellington Shanghai offers several classes that relate well to the engineering pathway, including Physics Olympiad (the key CCA for mentoring in this field), Chemistry Olympiad, VEX robotics, AI racer, STEM electronics and bamboo structures.
- **Other preparation.** Pupils who pursue an engineering course at the most selective institutions may be required, or simply want to distinguish themselves, by taking a subject-specific exam. For Oxbridge, this would include exams like the Physics Admissions Test (PAT) or the Engineering Admissions Test (ENGAA). For US admissions, pupils may want to take one or more AP tests in physics (4 options), computer science (2 options) and/or calculus (2 options).

Law

Every year, we have one or more pupils who wish to study law for their undergraduate degree, and they often go on to do so at some of the most prestigious universities in the UK. (The US does not offer law as an undergraduate major.)

To be strong applicants for such law courses, pupils are encouraged to prepare themselves as follows:

- **Class choices.** Pupils interested in studying law should first take at least two of the following humanities at IGCSE: history, geography, psychology or business studies. At the IB level, there is not as much emphasis on what a pupil takes as for subjects like medicine and engineering, but common HL choices include economics, history, English A, psychology, etc.
- **Extracurricular choices.** Wellington Shanghai offers several CCAs that relate well to the law pathway, including law society (the key CCA for this field), mock trial team, debate (English and Chinese) and Model United Nations (MUN).
- **Other preparation.** Pupils applying to the UK would have to take the LNAT. In addition, pupils would be strongly encouraged to look for an internship or job shadowing opportunity at a law firm for the summer between years 12 and 13.

involvement being of equal or possibly lesser importance. The portfolio is a collection of the pupil's best works from their particular area of art and is formatted to fit the requirements of the particular courses to which they are applying. Note that for 'live arts' such as music, drama or dance there may be an audition instead of, or in addition to, a collection of recorded performances that would take the place of a portfolio.

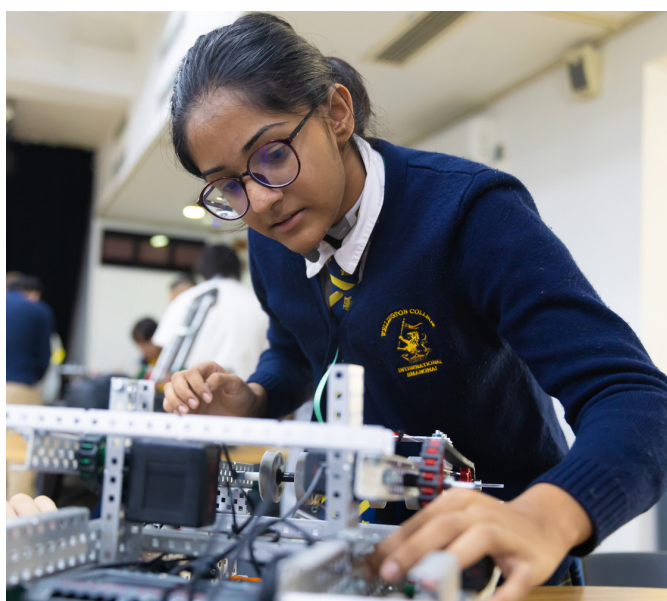
- **Class choices.** Pupils who are interested in an A+D pathway will typically take whatever is offered at both IGCSE and IB in their particular artistic discipline, be it visual art, design technology, music, dance or drama. Then depending on the interests of the pupil, other IB HL choices could include English A, mathematics or computer science (for digital arts), physics (for architecture), etc.
- **Extracurricular choices.** Most pupils pursuing this pathway will choose to spend additional time in the art open studio or DT open studio, which they can do several days a week through our CCA programme, or by being a part of related artistic groups such as theatre productions, orchestra, etc.
- **Other preparation.** The biggest thing is for pupils to be working on their portfolio or preparing for their audition, which they can do in CCAs but would require time outside of school as well. Weekends and the summer between years 12 and 13 are the times that most pupils rely on to develop great works to be shared with universities during the application process. Depending on the particular art pathway the pupil is pursuing, they can request advice on the creation and curation of works for the portfolio/audition from their visual arts, design technology, music or drama teachers as well as other staff members who support them in their artistic endeavours.

Art and Design

Every year, several Wellington Shanghai pupils pursue a pathway in the arts. This could include fine arts (e.g. painting), digital arts, drama, dance or music. The majority of Wellington pupils who wish to study art and/or design (A+D) choose to apply in the UK, the US and Canada. Popular universities in these destinations include University of the Arts London (UAL), Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Parsons and Emily Carr.

Not only are the above A+D schools popular, but they also tend to be highly competitive. Admission is often based primarily on the strength of an applicant's portfolio, with other factors such as level of academic achievement and extracurricular

There is also the option of a foundation year, which is an additional year completed before the beginning of the typical three-year undergraduate course. While completing such a foundation year is fairly rare for other subjects, it is quite common for pupils studying A+D and is an effective way for pupils to get into the best art schools (those that offer such a foundation year, anyway).



Finance and Scholarships



Going to university is certainly not cheap. Pupils and parents should, therefore, discuss the cost of studying at likely destinations. If cost is a major concern, then exploring scholarship and other cost reducing strategies and opportunities at an early stage is strongly advised. There are several such options to explore:

- **Scholarships.** This is money that applicants are given based on something in their applicant profile, be it their academic strength, athletic talent, membership in a group from which the university wants to increase enrolment, etc. This money is often given independently of a family's financial situation. Some such scholarships require a special application and additional requirements (e.g. an extra essay) while others may be offered to applicants automatically. These are often called 'merit-based aid'. These are most commonly found at US universities but are also possible in places like Canada, Hong Kong and, to a lesser extent, the UK.

- **Need-based financial aid.** This is money that applicants are given because their family is deemed unable to pay the full cost of tuition at that institution. This typically requires a separate application or form as well as the submission of various documents that prove the family's financial situation is such that this aid is needed. This is typically only available in the US, and the amount available is often limited for international applicants.
- **Tuition-reduction strategies.** These are things a pupil can do to pay less than full tuition at a particular institution or destination. These include things like:
 - Receiving IB and/or AP credit for good scores on these exams (popular in the US and Canada), which reduces the time a pupil needs to study at university to receive their degree and thus lowers the total cost of tuition.
 - Taking more classes per term than the typical student (usually only offered in the US and Canada), which could allow the pupil to graduate earlier than normal and thus save on non-tuition costs (e.g. housing, student fees, etc.).
 - Starting at a community college and later transferring to a four-year university (US only). These schools tend to charge half or less than half of the tuition at four-year institutions.
 - Choosing to attend university in a destination known for lower-cost tuition, including countries in Europe as well as Hong Kong and mainland China or a destination where the applicant's passport status offers home fees (like Scotland offers to UK citizens, even those who have been abroad for many years).
 - Taking a gap year. For some families having a child take a gap year may be helpful if they are currently paying for one or more older siblings to attend university at the same time. During that time, the pupil may choose to work and save money that they can contribute to their university expenses.

Again, the best course of action for anyone who thinks the cost of university might be an issue for their family is to discuss it early on, consult a member of the HEC team about the different options available, and make a plan for how to pursue the best of those options given the pupil's future interests and applicant profile.



HEC Resources, Partnerships and Opportunities

Below you will find descriptions of some of the things we use to further support pupils in various aspects of the university application process, including software platforms, internal staff, external providers and targeted opportunities.

Software We Use

The following is a list of the software platforms that we use in our work with pupils:

- **Microsoft Teams.** As most parents will already know, Wellington Shanghai uses a variety of Microsoft programs to facilitate our educational programme. Our HEC team is no different, and the primary program we use is Teams. This is how we communicate with pupils directly, and it is also one way that we inform them of things including HEC lessons, university visits, deadlines to sign up for the tests like the SAT, etc. In years 12 and 13 each pupil is given their own private channel on Teams, where they can share documents related to their university applications with HEC counsellors for review and feedback.
- **Maia Learning.** This is the platform that pupils can use to explore subjects of interest, take several personality assessments, research universities, record their extracurricular activities and more. For our HEC counsellors, this is also the software we use to transmit many of the documents used in the application process, particularly for those pupils applying to the US. Parents of pupils in years 10 – 13 can be set up with an account that allows them to see their child's account as well. If you are interested in this option, please let Ms Rebecca Yang know.
- **Morrisby.** This is the major personality assessment administered by the HEC department, and it takes place in year 11. The assessment lasts around two hours, and the feedback it provides, coupled with the information it gives pupils access to, is often very helpful for pupils who want to explore their study and career options further. Pupils have access to the Morrisby platform for life after completing the assessment, and most parts of the assessment can be taken again as the pupil feels their interests or strengths continue to develop.
- **Medic Portal and Lawyer Portal.** Access to these platforms is provided to pupils in year 12 who are interested in a medicine or law pathway respectively. Each platform provides a variety of resources related to that particular pathway, including practice questions for the exam that pupils will need to take as part of the application process (UCAT for medicine courses and LNAT for law courses).



Applicant Support

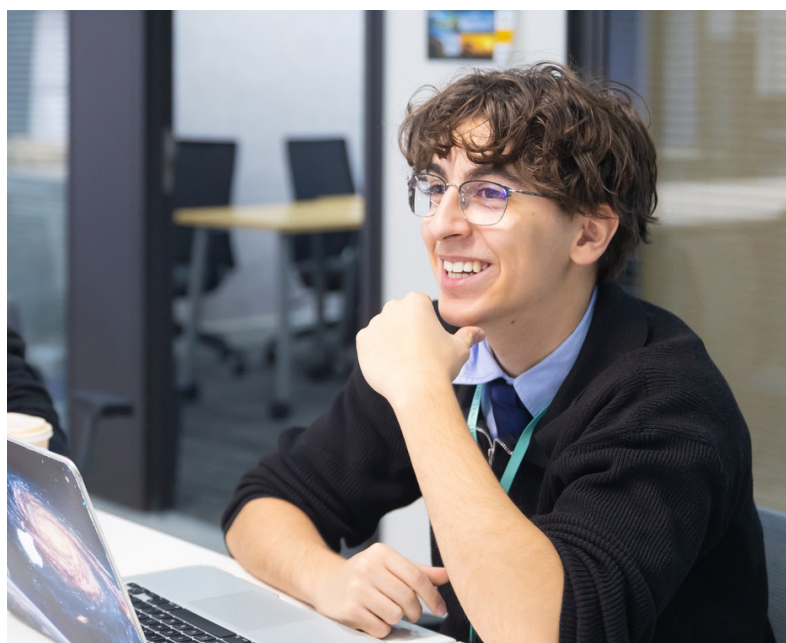
In addition to the software above, we also augment the support our HEC counsellors provide pupils by engaging many internal staff and external providers. Those include:

- **Staff Mentoring.** Pupils who are applying to Oxbridge for any subject, as well as pupils applying for medicine, law and engineering courses, are offered the chance to receive mentoring from a faculty member in or adjacent to their subject of interest. This mentoring takes place primarily through the CCA programme, specifically through one of the key CCAs including medical society, law society, Physics Olympiad (for engineering) and the like. Through their involvement in these key CCAs, pupils have the opportunity to discuss their super-curricular learning with their faculty mentor and share that learning with the other members of the CCA, many of whom are considering a similar pathway.
- **Oxbridge Applications.** This company specialises in supporting applicants applying to Oxford and Cambridge, and we use them for a variety of services. These include preparing pupils for the subject-specific exam they may need to take for their chosen Oxbridge course as well as preparing them for any interview they are offered by an Oxbridge college. Support for exams begins in June with an introduction to each of the exams followed by the pupil's first full mock exam and feedback on their performance, then at the start of year 13 the pupils are given four additional mocks with feedback leading up to their exam date in mid-to-late October. Support for interviews takes place starting in October with an introduction to the unique style of interviewing that Oxbridge tutors favour followed by two mock interviews and feedback from a graduate of the particular course the pupil has applied for. To learn more about this company and their services, visit their website at www.oxbridgeapplications.com.
- **AList Education.** This company, which is affiliated with Oxbridge Applications, provides the trainer for our on-campus SAT training course that takes place every October. This course is open to pupils in year 12 as well as a select number of year 11s, and it runs from Golden Week until the June exam of the SAT. Sessions run one day a week for approximately 1.5 hours per session, and several mock exams take place throughout the course as well. This company is also one option we share with pupils who are interested in making sports/athletics part of their application to the US, as the company has a dedicated member of staff who supports athletes in their unique application process.
- **TS University Tours.** This is the company that we have used to arrange our US university tour, which takes place at the end of the academic year. To learn more about this company, visit their website at <https://tscollegetours.com/>.

Career Exploration

Besides the support outlined above, the HEC department also offers many opportunities related to career exploration and development. These include:

- **Internship Opportunities.** These opportunities are sourced, vetted and staffed by our HEC counsellors, and they typically take place during one of the longer school holidays (winter break, CNY holiday or summer). One requirement that we have for these internships is that the work being done by the pupil is genuinely beneficial to the mission of the business or organisation where they are working. Previous internships have been offered in a range of industries and have called for the use of a wide variety of skills, from translation to marketing to data analysis and more. There is usually some sort of application process or other steps to ensure that the pupil understands what would be expected of them during the internship and that they are capable of fulfilling those expectations. If you believe that the company or organisation you work for would be interested in providing such an internship opportunity for our Wellington pupils, please let Ms Emily Williams know!
- **Career Talks.** These talks are arranged throughout the year, typically taking place at lunchtime. They offer the pupils a chance to not only hear from working professionals in a wide range of industries but also to ask questions to further their understanding of the profession's benefits, challenges and future prospects. Again, if you believe that you would be interested in sharing experiences and insights about your career with our Wellington pupils, please let Ms Emily Williams know!



Support for Parents



Throughout the year we offer a series of presentations introducing parents to important topics related to the university application process. These presentations are open to parents across the College, not only those with children in the Senior School (secondary school). The topics covered include:

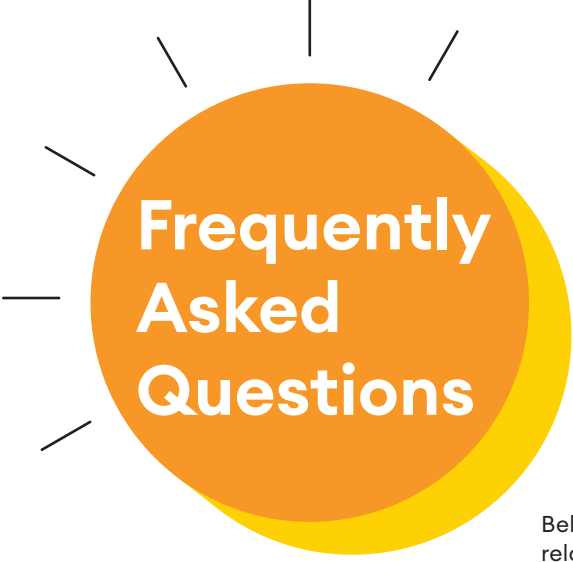
- **An Introduction to the Higher Education and Careers (HEC) Programme.** This presentation highlights all the different kinds of support that pupils (and their families) receive through the HEC programme beginning in year 9 through graduation in year 13, many of which have been mentioned elsewhere in this guide.
- **How to Apply to the United Kingdom.** This presentation focuses on the UK but looks more generally at the subject-specific application process, elsewhere called ‘direct entry,’ that is used both in the UK and in other destinations such as Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, etc.
- **How to Apply to the United States.** This presentation focuses on all the ways that the US admissions process is different from the process used in nearly every other destination that our pupils apply to.
- **Standardised Tests in the US Admissions Process.** These exams, including the SAT and ACT, are such an important and confusing part of the US application process that we have given them their own presentation, which is typically hosted by our AList Education SAT trainer.
- **Making the Most of Summer Vacation.** This presentation introduces parents to some of the most popular ways that pupils can spend the summer to strengthen themselves as future university applicants, including independent research, internships, academic enrichment programmes, community service and more.
- **Making IGCSE and IB Course Choices.** This event, which is

hosted in collaboration with the Head of the Sixth Form and Head of Senior School, explains the pupils’ options related to these two curriculums and highlights some of the ways that these choices may impact the pupils’ access to future pathways.

- **How to Apply to Global Universities.** This presentation focuses on the various application processes and timelines of the other destinations that our pupils commonly apply to, including Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Netherlands, Australia and more.
- **An Introduction to the Art and Design Pathway.** This presentation discusses the preparation pupils need to pursue this pathway as well as the numerous professional opportunities that art and design graduates have access to when they begin their careers.
- **An Introduction to HEC Support for Sixth Form Pupils.** This presentation is a more thorough explanation of how our HEC counsellors support pupils in years 12 and 13 as they prepare and then make their applications to universities. Note that this presentation is typically for year 11 parents only as it ensures more time for them to ask the questions they have as their children transition into the final stage of their university preparation.

Each of these presentations is followed by a coffee reception, where parents can sit with the entire HEC team to discuss questions they may have based on the presentation or anything else that is on their minds!

In addition to these presentations and coffee receptions, our HEC counsellors are available for one-to-one meetings with parents by appointment, and if you are interested in this opportunity, you may contact Mrs Rebecca Yang (rebecca.yang@wellingtoncollege.cn) to make arrangements for such a meeting with your child’s HEC counsellor.



Frequently Asked Questions

Below you will find some of the common questions we receive from parents related to the university application process.

Does our family need a university agent/consultant?

We know that here in Shanghai it is very common for parents to engage such a consultant to help them navigate the university admissions process and help their children achieve better admissions outcomes than they would have otherwise. While we understand the desire of every parent to support their children however they can, and while we acknowledge the process is indeed complicated and challenging, we nevertheless believe that most families simply do not need such an agent. That is because we believe that the support pupils are provided by the school – not only from our HEC counsellors that they regularly meet with and have lessons from but also from the teachers and Heads of Department, form tutors and Heads of Year and many other staff – is more than enough for the typical pupil to be able to understand the admissions process, to develop themselves to the best of their ability and to present themselves the best way possible. Furthermore, we find that some consultants do things that actually harm pupils' chances of admission, including fabricating credentials, completing writing requirements for the pupils, and otherwise presenting their clients in inauthentic ways. Universities are very familiar with these kinds of applications and are wary of them. That is the opposite of what parents and pupils want from such consultants.

Is there ever a time when a pupil would benefit from having outside help?

Actually yes, there are two situations where we encourage pupils to seek out such additional support if they think they need/want it. The first is art and design pupils who want to have more support in developing their portfolios, and it is especially important if the pupil's artistic interest is something that the school only offers limited resources for. Typically, the pupils who seek out this help spend many hours each week – in the evenings after school, on the weekends or both – in the studio of their art consultant, and this is something that they just cannot expect to do with their art teacher at Wellington. The second situation is for pupils who wish to make athletics a part of their application profile, and this is typically only for applications to the US. In these cases, having an outside consultant who is in close contact with coaches in that pupil's sport and can make introductions, advise on training camps and outside competitions, etc. can be very helpful in leveraging a pupil's athletic ability in the admissions process.

Is AP the better curriculum for my child if they plan to apply to the US?

The Advanced Placement (AP) programme is a curriculum developed by the College Board – the same organisation that makes the SAT – and is primarily used in American schools and international schools who want to provide an American model. Each AP course is one year in length and includes a test at the end. Pupils at AP schools may be able to start taking such courses as early as year 10, but some schools will restrict these classes to older pupils and may also restrict how many classes a pupil can take at one time.

One difference that many people note about AP exams is that they can be taken before the pupil applies to university, so when they apply they already have a set of verified exam outcomes for universities to use in considering their academic strength. While it is true that IB exam results are not available until after pupils apply to university, our pupils do have the results of 9 – 11 IGCSE exams that they completed in year 11, and these can play the same role as early AP exam results.

Another difference is that, because AP classes only last one year, pupils can take more of them throughout their secondary school time (assuming that the school they attend does not restrict the number). The flip side of this is that the two-year-long IB courses allow pupils to go into greater depth in the smaller number of courses that they take.

A third difference is that the IB curriculum includes the IB Core of TOK, EE and CAS, which the AP curriculum does not include. These elements bestow substantial benefits on pupils in terms of both their intellectual growth and their development of key skills needed for university (like research, report writing, etc.).

Is A Levels the better curriculum for my child if they plan to apply to the UK?

A Levels is a curriculum developed in the UK and is primarily used in British and international schools who want to provide a British model. Each A Level course is two years in length and includes a test at the end. Pupils at A Level schools typically take three subjects, though some schools allow very able pupils to take more than three.

One difference that many people note about A Levels is that they seem to be a better fit for British and other universities that use subject-specific ('direct entry') admissions schemes, where applicants are applying to one particular course of study. So pupils interested in studying physics would likely do A Levels in physics, maths and perhaps another science like chemistry as preparation for a university physics course. In the IB curriculum, this is provided for with the selection of three HL classes, in which pupils cover more curriculum and complete more challenging work than in their other three courses (called Standard Level or SL).

Another difference is that the IB curriculum includes the IB Core elements of TOK, EE and CAS. The A Levels curriculum does not. These elements bestow substantial benefits on pupils in terms of both their intellectual growth and their development of key skills needed for university (like research, report writing, etc.).

Does Wellington calculate GPA or class rank for its pupils?

Some universities – typically those in the US – advertise the average grade point average (GPA) of admitted applicants as an indication of the academic requirements needed to apply to their institutions. As Wellington uses the IB grading scale, the grades indicated on our transcripts differ from those of a typical US high school. Like most international IB schools, Wellington does not convert its grades into a US-style GPA. It is not necessary. Universities, including those in the US, are very familiar with the IB curriculum and are accustomed to assessing the academic merits of IB pupils using the IB's seven-point scale. Universities may convert IB grades into a GPA to compare international and domestic pupils, but they will use their own method to do this. The fact that Wellington does not provide a GPA in no way disadvantages pupils who apply to the US.

Class rank is similar to GPA in that it offers a quick way for universities to compare the academic achievements of various applicants. Class rank is a ranking of pupils according to their grades (or GPAs) such that the pupil with the best grades is given a rank of 1, the pupil with the second-best grades a rank of 2 and so on. Again, in line with the majority of international IB schools, Wellington does not calculate class rank for pupils. This is because it is not in the interests of our pupils to do so. Wellington has small, very able classes (particularly at IB), and a pupil who might be ranked 10th in a cohort at Wellington is likely to be ranked much higher in another school. Not providing a class rank allows us to comment on our pupil's merits – typically in their academic reference and/or letters of recommendation – without unfairly disadvantaging them by assigning them a numerical rank. The fact that Wellington does not provide a class rank in no way disadvantages pupil applications.



Conclusion

We hope that you have found this handbook helpful in better understanding some of the considerations related to university admissions. We encourage you to speak with your child about what you have read in this guide to see which of these considerations seems most relevant to your child's likely future pathway.

Once you have done that, please let us know what questions you have. You can do this by emailing your child's HEC counsellor directly using the email addresses provided earlier in this guide. Or, if your child is not yet in year 10, when HEC counsellors are first assigned to particular pupils, you can email Ms Rebecca Yang and she will pass along your questions to the best person. If you would like to come in to meet with an HEC counsellor and discuss your questions or concerns at length, Ms Yang can assist you with that as well.

So, once again, thank you for taking the time to read through this guide. We look forward to working with you and your family as you plan your child's future after Wellington!

The Higher Education and Careers Team

Below you can find the names, contact details and photos of our Higher Education and Careers (HEC) team. Please feel free to get in touch with us if you have questions!



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to serve and help shape
a better world.**