

Guidance Bulletin 4, 11th July 2016

Years 11 and 12: Notes from the application workshop by Claremont McKenna on 27-May-2016

The US application process is designed to place each student in context. To assess the student admissions staff at highly selective institutions want to learn, among other things, about background, parents, education and personality. This information allows for informed decisions in the creation of a diverse community on the campus. Reviews are holistic. Typically a selective institution comprises no more than two thousand undergraduates. This comparatively small size affords the chance to explore every aspect of an application. The crux of the matter is to ensure that those admitted can thrive academically. Institutions in the USA are very different from one another. How free time is spent can therefore have a strong bearing. A command of languages by an international student can look interesting. Admissions staff will often superscore SAT or ACT results. In other words, however often a test has been sat, only the best score will be considered. In the case of an applicant submitting scores from both the old-style (maximum of 2400) and the new-style (maximum of 1600) SAT, the two sets of data may be kept separate by some institutions. Extracurricular activities can frequently be the most revealing data for admissions staff as these reveal a lot about a student. This contrasts with highly selective UK institutions where supercurricular activities are generally more important. Any supplementary essays should be addressed directly to each institution. Sharing writing between institutions is never recommended. Teachers should be asked in good time about writing letters of recommendation. Students can help their teachers by giving them prompts for these letters of recommendation: a particular episode in a lesson, for instance, or any other shared activity in the past. Linguistic variation is perfectly permissible. Thus US teachers may perhaps employ more superlatives in their pieces, while teachers of other nationalities may possibly be more circumspect. Any extra material that is marked as optional should really be submitted. Claremont McKenna College, for example, allows for the submission of a short video. If an interview is possible, whether in person or by Skype, applicants should seize the opportunity. After applications have been sifted by individual admissions staff, the final decisions are made by a committee. This last part of the process can take a few minutes for some students and an hour for others. The ability to thrive both on the course and on the campus lies at the heart of decisions to admit or deny. The fierce competition at highly selective institutions inevitably means that many perfectly viable applicants are unsuccessful.

Year 12: TOEFL and IELTS

For a student whose first language is not English, TOEFL or IELTS will be needed for entry to US universities and colleges. The requirement to take TOEFL or IELTS is not affected by the current level of English enjoyed by a student or the English class level. Both tests are computer based and are conducted in various locations around Geneva. Registration can be completed at www.ets.org/toefl or <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/locations/switzerland>. Since Geneva is a popular test centre, it is recommended that students take a test before the start of Year 13. For entry purposes most UK universities will ask for a 5 or above in Standard or Higher Level IB English. Some, however, may ask in addition for IELTS. TOEFL is not accepted by UK universities.

Year 12: UK tuition fees for Swiss students

Universities in the UK have two tiers of tuition fees: home and international. Students holding Swiss nationality need to fulfil three main criteria before they can be classified as home. They must: (a) be the child of a Swiss national; (b) be ordinarily resident in the UK by the first day of the first academic year of the course, in other words before 1st September; and (c) have been ordinarily resident in the European Union and/or Switzerland for the three years leading up to the first day of the first academic year of the course. There is no requirement for a Swiss parent to be economically active in the UK. A student can be classified as home part-way through a course if, for example, a parent later becomes a Swiss national. For further details see www.ukcisa.org.uk. Even if they do not fulfil the criteria to be classified as home, students holding Swiss nationality do not currently need a visa to study in the UK and can remain to seek employment after their course has finished.

Years 10, 11 and 12: Psychometric tests

Another way of exploring future possibilities is through psychometric tests. There are two which are particularly suitable for students in Years 10, 11 and 12. They can be taken from home. Morrisby (<https://www.morrisby.com/product/morrisby-pass/>) suggests a range of ideas based on strengths and weaknesses. Centigrade (<http://www.centigradeonline.co.uk/>) suggests a range of ideas based on likes and dislikes. Both provide further reading and Morrisby offers a telephone interview with an adviser.

Years 11 and 12: Medical experience

Premed Project offers a range of exciting projects to students who are looking to apply for university courses in either medicine, nursing, midwifery or dentistry. Students can choose to travel to India, Thailand or the UK to work in hospitals. All students live together in Premed Project houses with all meals and activities provided with full support from UK doctors, teachers and Premed Project staff. Premed Project is open to students aged sixteen or above. For more details go to <http://www.premedprojects.co.uk/year-11-13-summer-projects>. Students are welcome to contact Premed Project for further information and can confirm their place on the programmes via the website.

Years 9, 10, 11 and 12: IHTTI Neuchâtel

David Mubangizi graduated from the Campus des Nations in June 2015. Currently studying Hospitality Management at IHTTI Neuchâtel, he features in a video that describes his experiences of undergraduate life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeTw0GHXCBY&feature=youtu.be>. What follows are the notes I made on a visit to IHTTI in May 2014. IHTTI (International Hotel and Tourism Training Institute) was opened in 1986. It is officially recognised by the canton of Neuchâtel as a for-profit private school. The emphasis of the institute is on personal growth and development. Classes are therefore small, with often under ten students, while the lectures number no more than twenty. Camaraderie is developed among the students by eating, living and learning together. The course is a good balance between practice and theory. For example, on the practical side there is AutoCAD, Sketch Up, and the interior decorating project; while on the theoretical side there is interior design, decorating, banqueting décor and room operations. The BA degrees are accredited by the University of Derby in the UK. One element of the course focuses on luxury branding. For the development of new hotels students look at the work Hirsch Bedner Associates and for service design at Concierge. Great hotels are all about economical buildings, superior technology and the total experience of the guest. ITHHI gives students specialised skills, for example as a sommelier, concierge, luxury designer and leadership qualities, all under the umbrella of hotel management. On the campus there are about 200 students, up to five per cent of whom are Swiss. The course modules are examined using a variety of formats: presentations, written papers, practical assessments and role play. All the presentations are recorded and everything is assessed by an external examiner. The pass rate is excellent and the institute prides itself on the high retention rate. Careers stemming from a degree in hospitality include hotel management, human resources, marketing, project management, interior design, catering, event management and real estate.

Years 9, 10, 11 and 12: UK summer school

Bucksmore Education provides quality English Language summer schools for individual students from all over the world. It offers a range of English Language courses to ensure that the needs of every student are met. Bucksmore has been hosting quality English Language summer camps and schools for children and teenagers for 33 years, and has welcomed more than 10,000 students from over 60 countries and nationalities. Young learners at Bucksmore participate in a wide range of afternoon and evening activities as well as going on exciting cultural excursions. All the while students improve their English language skills. For more details go to <http://www.bucksmore.com/>.

Years 11 and 12: PSAT

PSAT is provisionally taking place at the official test centre of LGB on 15-Oct-16. For US citizens this provides the opportunity to enter for the National Merit Scholarship. In May 2016 Andrus Hatem in Year 13 was one of the recipients of this prestigious award. Further details about registration will appear at the start of the winter term.