Common Application School Forms

What is the Common Application?

The Common Application is used by over 600 American universities out of over 4,000 US universities. It is somewhat akin to UCAS, in that it saves time by allowing the applicant to complete information and essays that can be submitted to multiple universities. However, bear in mind that approximately two-thirds of universities ask for supplemental information and/or essays.

In addition to the guidance provided in this document, you may also find it useful to look at the resources on the Common App YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/user/CommonAppMedia. Here, you can find some very informative videos about the application process for undergraduate study in the US, including tips and advice from Admissions Deans and Directors. Please be aware that these videos are targeted primarily at US applicants and their schools, therefore some of the information provided may not be relevant for international students and teachers.

Completing the Required Documents

1. The student will register you as a counsellor or teacher within the My Colleges section of their application. Be sure to give all students the same email address so that you can manage forms from one login.

   **Recommender Invitations**

   ![Recommender Invitations](image)

   Please note that this individual will only receive an invitation email once you assign him or her to a college.

   ![Recommender Invitations](image)

2. The student can choose two teachers and one “guidance counsellor” per university. Most students would use the same three individuals for each university. Note the teacher and guidance counsellor cannot be the same person. They will have access to different forms. It is important that the student knows which school official will serve in which capacity.

   **Guidance Counsellor:** Someone who is responsible for the school profile, school report, transcript, optional report, mid-year report and final report. We recommend the Head of Careers, Head of Sixth Form or Housemaster/mistress serve as the counsellor.

   **Teacher References:** We recommend that two A-level teachers complete the teacher reference. Teachers will submit a more specific recommendation letter about the students’ academic and extracurricular potential than the guidance counsellor whose evaluation will provide the overall picture of the student.
Ideally, the student **should also waive the right to see their reference** to maintain credibility of the letter in the eyes of the university.

3. **You will receive an email as soon as the student adds you to their School Forms section.** This email will ask what action you would like to take next—submit your recommendation form online, by post or if you would like to decline as a recommender. In the email (as noted by the red outline in the example email below) it will say whether the student chose you to be their “counsellor” or their “teacher” recommender.

4. If you click on “activate your account” option in the email, you will be prompted to create an account with the Common Application website.
5. After you have created a password, you will be taken to the Common Application homepage. Sign in using your email and new password.
We have provided guidance for (section A) Counsellors and (section B) Teacher Recommenders below

A. The Counsellor Forms

- Personal Details
- School Details
- School Profile
- Certifications
- School Report
- Counselor Recommendation (Written Evaluation)
- Transcript
- Optional, Mid-Year and Final Reports

Personal Details
After logging in, you will be taken to a Counselor Profile screen to first fill in your details, name, contact information, etc.

School Details
You will then be asked to fill in the school’s details. This involves looking up the school on their online database. You can do so by clicking the “Find School” option and searching based upon the available criteria.
If your school is not on the list, you can select “I don’t see my high school on this list”.

Note: If your school would like to be added in future, you should follow the advice in the “Helpdesk” button on the right of the screen.

3. You will then fill in the school's name and contact information. Note, in the US “public school” is equivalent to “state school,” and a “charter school” would be most similar to an “academy” or “free school” in the UK.
School Profile

1. First, you will fill in questions about the school.
   - Graduating class size is the number of students in the pupil’s year group.
   - Note the percentage of students from your school who complete (Bachelor's) degrees or two-year (Further Education, Access courses, etc.) degrees.
   - There are a number of questions that ask about different percentages regarding various demographics. If you do not have this information, it is not required and it is OK to leave these blank. However, much of this information is important when it comes to the school report and giving universities a full picture of the type of school the student is coming from. We recommend first compiling the school profile (see below) so that you can more easily complete this section.
   - For the type of courses offered at your school, please note that courses are equivalent to modules. Please note that most UK schools will not have AP or Honours classes, these are terms used by American high schools, and unless your school is an American or international institution, this will not be applicable.
   - Note whether you provide students with a Class Rank or GPA. It is OK to leave these blank if your school does not normally provide these to students.
   - UK schools are not on block schedule. (Block scheduling in the US means pupils take 3 – 4 subjects in the autumn semester and sit exams and then take 3 – 4 new subjects in the spring, as opposed to 6 – 8 subjects throughout the year.)
   - Be sure to select that you are an international school, which will then pop up an additional, required question: "Do you use an AP curriculum?"
   - "Do you complete applicants' academic ratings on the Common Application Teacher Evaluation?" This question is in reference to your student's page, where you are asked, "Compared to other students in his or her class year, how do you rate this student in terms of..." You'll then find a list of ratings. These ratings are not required in order to submit the form for the student, but become required when you answer "yes" to the question.

2. You will then be asked to upload a school profile.

The school profile provides contextual information about the school the student attends. Unlike the transcript (see below), the school profile is not student specific, but instead school specific.

Purpose of the School Profile:
- To supply important contact and other basic information for the school to US universities.
- To provide information on the school curriculum options available to the student (IB, A-levels, BTEC, etc.)
- To provide context about the school the student attends.
- Typical Student Results: What qualifications do most students at your school complete? How do students tend to perform on these? Where do your pupils tend to go to university? What type of university do your pupils typically attend?
- The School Profile should use official school letterhead at the top.

Important Components of the School Profile:
- School contact information, important personnel contact information and School Mission Statement.
- Description of the school and community.
- **Type of School (state, independent/private, etc.):** Note "public" means state-funded in the US.
- Is there anything unusual about your school or program that should be emphasised (i.e. serves mostly low income and minority students, has a high percentage who attend university, etc.)?
- School’s Curriculum Options and Student Academic Information.
- Grading Scale and Distribution.
- Admissions Process (if applicable).
3. After you have completed the school profile, it will have a section called Certifications. Please read this thoroughly and check both boxes. **It is very important that you complete this section because without completing it you could be causing delays to your student’s application decision.**

**Students**
1. After you have finished with the school profile section of the website, you can then move on to the next tab to complete the components needed for each student. You will click on the student that you are working on.

**School Report**
1. You will be asked to fill in information about the student and further questions about the grading and ranking system of the school.

**Class Rank, GPA and Curriculum:** Note whether you provide students with a Class Rank or GPA. It is OK to answer no.
2. Curriculum: US universities want to see applicants working hard in their final year of high school / college, and the most competitive universities will want to see students have selected the most rigorous options available to them, so be sure to answer this question. An important factor for US universities is the difficulty of a pupil’s chosen qualification/curriculum relative to other students at your school.

3. Rating students: If you are assisting several students from your school, try to differentiate ratings between applicants to maintain your credibility as a recommender (i.e. do not list all applicants as one of the top few you’ve encountered, unless this is really the case). If your student body is particularly competitive, rank applicants accurately within the options but note the nature of your student body, any admission criteria and achievements/post A-level plans of school leavers in your school profile.
4. **Disciplinary History:** Note that disciplinary action can come into play in the admissions decision. However, it is important to be upfront about this information.

5. **Transcript:** Upload a transcript. See our sample transcript on [http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/transcript](http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/transcript) for further guidance.

Note that “Junior Year” refers to a US student’s penultimate year of high school. This would roughly be equivalent to a UK’s student lower sixth year.

Also, we have heard from several universities that what you check in the question “Please indicate the most recent grades included on the transcript accompanying this form” does not matter, since it is not an exact translation between educational systems.
To the best of our knowledge, if your students are submitting only O-level (or GCSE/IGCSE results) and AS-level results, you may want to mark “Final Junior year grades”.

6. International School (The International Supplement): You will be asked to fill in additional “International School” questions as part of the school report.

For the “International School” section – it asks “Has the applicant already taken leaving exams?” From the university perspective, they would likely consider the A-levels to be the official leaving exams. If the student has only taken GCSEs and AS levels, to the best of our knowledge, we would tick “no”. If the student is on a gap year, and would have the exam results available, then tick “yes” and upload those results. Check with the university if you are unsure how to respond.
You will then be asked to enter the marking scale used by your school in terms of the equivalent US grades that will be presented. This is so that American universities can understand the grades presented to them and fairly assess your students’ marks.

7. Early Decision Agreement: Only if you have a student that is applying to a university Early Decision will you have this tab. As a representative of the school, you will need to review and complete this portion fully as Early Decision requires confirmation from the school that should the student receive acceptance they will definitely attend the university. This should not be taken lightly and we highly suggest that you’ve had a conversation with the student before signing this to ensure they will be attending the university if they are accepted. Universities view this as a binding contract between the school, university and student. Should the student later decide to note attend, this could have a negative impact on future candidates from your school interested in the university for early decision.
8. Counselor Recommendation: In the Written Evaluation, explain how well you know the student and why you are well-placed to comment on their academic and extracurricular achievements and potential.

A. Describe the applicant: Be strategic in which words you choose and consider what US universities are looking for in applicants. See our website for information on selection criteria (http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/admissions-criteria).

B. Upload an evaluation letter: We recommend submitting an evaluation, as a third recommendation (point of view) so to speak, alongside the two teacher recommendation letters. US guidance counsellors would assist many students applying to university and would therefore be able to make broader statements on students’ potential relative to peers and to comment on their overall performance and extracurricular involvement. See our website for tips on writing reference letters (http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/reference-letters). Note that if you enter your response into the text box, the word limit is 1,000. Print preview your submission to ensure your text was not cut off before submitting. If you upload the written evaluation, your text will not be cut. This only happens when typing directly into the online form.

9. Submission of School Report: Once you have completed the School Report, the Counselor Recommendation and any other additional information including Fee Waiver, an Optional Report, Mid Year Report and a Final Report, you will be able to review the information you have entered and will need to check the box that you have reviewed the PDF and wish to proceed.
REVIEWING & SUBMITTING

Once you have reviewed the information fully, click “submit”. At this point you will be shown a pdf version of the school report.

Note: If after submitting the forms you realise you made a mistake, Common Application’s Helpdesk has provided the following information.

“The Common Application Support Team is not permitted to make updates to any submitted forms.

The Common Application organization evaluated the issue of counsellors and teachers who want to retrieve or edit previously submitted online forms because they addressed their recommendations to specific institutions without realizing it (despite the instructions). They also evaluated the issue of counsellors submitting updated or incorrect documents. Unfortunately, in these cases, the Common Application organization must reiterate the policy that documents cannot be retrieved or edited once submitted. Schools are aware that mistakes happen and students are not penalized.

Teacher Recommenders: You may mail corrected versions of the forms directly to the schools in order to submit changes. You can find a list of addresses by clicking the name of the school on this page: http://www.commonapp.org/search-colleges

Counsellors: You may mail corrected versions of the forms to submit changes or use the Optional Report online. The Optional Report may be used at any point in the academic year to submit updated grades and/or transcripts, as well as to correct errors previously submitted on any report, but it should not be used as a substitute for the Mid Year or Final Report.

Keep in mind that this form can only be submitted once during the school season. If mistakes are made at a later date, forms will need to be mailed to the schools.”

Note about the Optional Report:
There is an option to submit an additional grade report, but it is not required. This is for schools that wish to send updated grades at a point in the year other than Mid and Final Reports (ie for Early Decision and Early Action students). You may also report any changes to the original school report and have the option to update your evaluation. It is unlikely you will need to complete this unless there has been a significant change in the student’s performance or circumstances. Please note that this form can only be submitted once throughout the school year.

Complete the Mid-Year Report:
This form is based on the US semester system, by which American students would likely have grades and an updated GPA/class rank to report in January. Additionally, those on block scheduling would have 3 - 4 classes in the first semester and a new set of classes to report for the second semester.

Please note you will have to submit a transcript. If there are no updates to what you submitted for the School Report, that is OK. If possible, in the evaluation, comment on the students’ academic performance and extracurricular involvement during the autumn and any achievements or improvements the student has made.

Note: US universities have asked us to suggest not to submit all of the school forms at once. They may delete your forms, assuming you submitted them early in error. The exception is gap year/mature students – if you are not regularly in touch and will not have updates, note this in the School Report. In this instance, you may want to ask the university if you can skip sending the Mid-Year and Final Reports.
In order to submit a Final Report in the Common Application system, you need to submit a Mid-Year Report.

Complete the Final Report:
Again, this form is based on the US semester system, by which American students would likely have grades and an updated GPA/class rank to report in early summer.

The questions are very similar to the School and Mid-Year Reports. You should submit the Final Report in August when students get their A-level, IB (or equivalent) results.

If possible, in the evaluation, comment on the students’ academic performance and extracurricular involvement during the academic year.

Please note you will have to submit a final transcript including the student’s actual results.

When you press continue, you will be taken to the submission page. Please note that once you press submit you will not be able to make changes to the form.
B. Teacher Recommendation

Note: See the Counsellor section (section A) for more detail on filling out your teacher profile.

Teacher Profile
1. After you have logged into your Common Application account, fill in your information such as name, job title, contact information, etc.

2. You will then be asked to indicate whether you are a high school/secondary school teacher or a college/university instructor. Then you will need to fill in your school’s details. This involves looking up the
school on their online database. You can do so by clicking the “Find School” option and searching based upon the available criteria. Make sure to answer the short question following the School Lookup as well.

If your school is not on the list after searching for it, you will find an option to select that says “I don’t see my high school on this list”, and then enter in your school’s address. You will then be asked to select whether you are rating your student through the Common Application, if you select “yes” you will be able to rate your student, if not this option (step 2 under Teacher Evaluation) will not be available to you.

Note: If your school would like to be added in future, you should follow the advice in the “Helpdesk” button on the right of the screen.
3. Once completed, proceed by clicking “Continue” and then the “Students” button. You can now move on to completing the evaluation for each student who has indicated you as a recommender. Ideally, the student should also waive the right to see your reference to maintain credibility of the letter in the eyes of the university.

Teacher Evaluation

1. **Subject Area:** Select subject area for your student.

2. **Rating students:** If you are assisting several students from your school, try to differentiate ratings between applicants to maintain your credibility as a recommender (i.e. do not list all applicants as one of the top few you’ve encountered, **unless** this is really the case).
2. **Written evaluation**: Be strategic in which words you choose to describe the applicant, considering what US universities are looking for. See our website for information on selection criteria ([http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/admissions-criteria](http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/admissions-criteria)). Please also note that grade levels 9, 10, 11 and 12 correspond to Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 in the UK educational system.

Upload a recommendation letter. See our website for tips on writing reference letters ([http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/reference-letters](http://www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/applying/reference-letters)). Note, the Common App Online School Forms system does not permit counsellors or teachers to customize recommendations for individual colleges.

**Note:** If the student would like to submit an extra reference letter (example: from a work experience or extracurricular activity) in addition to the guidance counsellor and two teacher letters, you may wish to first confirm with the university how they would like it submitted. Typically the referee can mail the additional letter directly to the university undergraduate admissions office.

**IMPORTANT:** Once completed, all your notes will be saved to the student’s recommendation. However, the recommendation will not be officially submitted until you click “Review and Submit” and go through the corresponding steps. **Remember that once you do this however, the recommendation will go through**
and there is no way to edit, remove, alter, and in any other way change your recommendation. It is best to be 100% positive before you submit, but it is also very important to remember to submit in the end as well.

As mentioned in section A, the Common Application states that for Teacher Recommenders:

“You may mail corrected versions of the forms directly to the schools in order to submit changes. You can find a list of addresses by clicking the name of the school on this page: http://www.commonapp.org/search-colleges.”