

**Higher Education Search Handbook  
2012-13  
Higher Education Counselling**



**DISCOVERY COLLEGE**  
**智新書院**

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## Higher Education Counselling Overview

Our purpose is to assist students in career exploration and to emphasise the link between academic engagement and their path to university. We ask students to take ownership of the search process with the goal of finding the university that best fits their academic and career interests, world region choices, and personal goals and aspirations.

To achieve our purpose we offer group and individual higher education counselling, including university search timelines for each region. In addition, we liaise with representatives from universities around the world, assist with the application process, keep the Guidance Centre updated with relevant resources, and are committed to professional development.

We look forward to collaborating with students, parents, teachers and administrators to guide all of our students towards their best fit for postsecondary life. We know that each student's path will be a little bit different and we strive to help them take ownership of the process and focus on what is best for them as they narrow their academic and university interests, prepare their applications, make their final decisions and transition to their chosen university.

We welcome students and parents to engage with the Guidance Centre and our Higher Education Counselling staff. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,  
Paula Myers  
Higher Education Counsellor

### Contact Information

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Guidance Centre, 4/F

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### School Codes

CEEB Code: 670734  
UCAS Code: 46220

## **The International Baccalaureate and Higher Education**

### **Entry to Institutions of Higher Education**

As IB students have the opportunity to attend universities worldwide, it is important that they spend time researching entry requirements independently. In addition, students are encouraged to use Guidance Centre resources and to seek advice and information about entry requirements from the Higher Education Counsellor.

In Year 12 and early in Year 13, one-to-one consultation sessions take place with the Higher Education Counsellor to ensure that the necessary research is in progress, and that applications are being made. Deadlines are set and applications are reviewed.

### **Academic Transcripts and Courses of Study**

Transcripts, based on the 1-7 scale, will be available upon request to students leaving either during the IB Diploma Programme, or having completed the full two-year programme. Courses of Study indicating enrolment period will also be available.

In a number of countries (e.g. Canada, China, Singapore, USA), many tertiary institutions will require internal grades for Years 10 to 13, which will be provided by the Higher Education Counsellor. A profile of the school grading system will accompany each transcript. Transcripts of IB results will be sent by the IB to each university, in July, at the request of the student.

### **IB Single Subject Courses**

Individual course results, particularly at Higher Level, will be recognised by many institutions for purposes of placement or credit.

### **Discovery College Graduation Diploma and ESF Advanced Diploma**

The Discovery College Graduation Diploma and the ESF Advanced Diploma may be used in conjunction with the academic transcript for applying to colleges whose entrance requirements include documentary evidence of continuous internal assessment at the senior secondary level.

The future belongs to those who prepare for it.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)  
American essayist, lecturer, and poet*

## **What is the student role in the university search process?**

Students, this is your process. It is very important that you are fully engaged in deciding what you would like to study and what type of environment most suits you. Finding a university is about identifying the *right fit for you*. That may not be the same as others you know, but it will be a place that matches *your* academic and co-curricular interests best.

As international school students, there are so many options open to you that it can seem overwhelming. Choose to experience this process as a wonderful opportunity instead of a difficult chore, and you will not only find yourself on your way to university, but you will have learned a great deal about yourself along the way.

You will need to ask many questions and find honest answers for yourself and those supporting you. As you work your way through this process, remember that your family, teachers and counsellor are all here to guide you. Consider all they tell you about their own experiences and the wisdom they have gained as well as the strengths and qualities they see in you.

## **What is the Higher Education Counsellor's (HEC) role in the university search process?**

The HEC's role is one of guidance and advocacy for students. Students will have one-on-one and group meetings with the HEC, who will explain the admissions process and get to know individual student's goals in order to provide the best advice.

Parents will be invited to information evenings and are welcome to meet with the HEC along with their child. The HEC will publish timelines for the search process and application deadlines for each region, keep resources up-to-date in the Guidance Centre, and act as a liaison with colleges and universities.

Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world.  
*Maria Montessori (1870-1952)*  
*Italian physician, educator, philosopher, humanitarian*

## **Tips for Students**

- The best preparation for the university search and university life is to engage in your learning and focus on your academics
- Take advantage of the resources in the Guidance Centre
- Attend visits by University representatives when they visit school. Make sure that you prepare yourself for these visits by doing some research on the universities you are interested in and drafting questions to ask in advance
- Figure out a system to organize your search. Whether it is through a spreadsheet, a notebook, or another method, it is important to keep a record of deadlines as well as what you have completed
- If the universities you plan to apply to require standardized tests, make sure that you are aware of when they are offered and that you prepare in advance
- Do not dismiss a university because of old information or because you are not familiar with it. Instead, do some research!
- If you have the opportunity to visit a university, take advantage of it
- Discuss your search with your family and be clear about what is important to you. Keep communication open and be sure to ask them about financial considerations as well as university choices
- Plan to narrow your application list to 6 universities (8 if you are applying in more than one world region). If you apply to the United Kingdom, you are only permitted to apply to 5 courses at up to 5 institutions (only 4 for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine).

## **Tips for Parents**

- Support the academic and co-curricular engagement of your child
- Encourage your child to explore career paths and develop goals
- Make sure that you and your child have discussed each other's expectations in regards to the university search, including financial considerations. Open and frequent communication goes a long way
- Encourage your child to become active in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community service activity
- Encourage participation in meaningful summer activities
- Attend university and career fairs and if possible, tour university campuses.

*If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade,  
plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.  
Chinese Proverb*

## Timeline for University Search Process

### Year 11

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests.

- Begin to ask yourself how what you study and participate in now connects with what you might study in the future. Begin to explore courses/majors you might be interested in
- Explore career options. Optional opportunity to take the InterQuest Career Assessment.
- Consult with Higher Education Counsellor if you have questions about how IB subject selection relates to your university goals
- If you are interested in U.S. higher education, optional opportunity to take the PSAT exam in October
- In Term 3, attend the Higher Education Counselling Evening for students and parents

### Year 12

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests

#### Term 1

- Attend Higher Education Counselling Information Evening for students and parents
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Gateway
- Participate in individual meeting with Higher Education Counsellor (required).

#### **Year 12 Questionnaire #1 due**

- Attend information sessions on the application process for regions you are considering and/or courses/majors you are thinking of studying
- Continue to research careers, courses/majors and university options.

#### Term 2

- Continue to research careers, courses/majors and university options
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Gateway
- Attend information sessions on the application process for regions you are considering and/or courses/majors you are thinking of studying
- Identify and register for any summer programmes or courses
- Attend resume writing workshop
- If you are planning to study in the U.S., register for the SAT exam
- If you are required to submit an English language test, register and take the TOEFL or IELTS

### Term 3

- Continue to research universities and develop your first list of possible universities. **Year 12 Questionnaire #2 due**
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. Find information about these opportunities in the Guidance Centre and on Gateway
- Request teacher recommendations from teachers
- If you are planning to study in the U.S., take the SAT exam

### Holiday Break

- Investigate universities on your long list more thoroughly. Visit universities, if possible
- Begin writing your personal statement/essay, if required
- Prepare your short list of intended university applications

## Year 13

Engage in learning and focus on academic work and co-curricular interests

### Term 1

- Participate in individual meeting with Higher Education Counsellor (required). **Year 13 Questionnaire #1 due**
- Attend visits and events held both in and out of school by university admissions representatives. These may include interviews
- Follow up on teacher recommendation requests (August)
- Complete personal statement/essay, if required
- Complete applications by deadlines set for each region/Higher Education Counselling

### Terms 2 & 3

- Begin receiving decisions from Universities

March—UCAS Extra opens

April—deadline to reply to UK offers

May—deadline to reply to US offers (non-rolling admissions).

**Year 13 Final Questionnaire Due**

June—Transition to University workshop. If needed, apply for your student visa

July—IB results reported to Discovery College, students, and requested universities

*Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.  
Nelson Mandela (1918-) former President of South Africa, anti-apartheid activist*

## Overview of Application Requirements by Region

Please find general information about each region, including method of application and what is required for application submission. Please note that DC Deadlines are listed only by month and that specific deadlines will be published in June of each year. It is important that you attend regional workshops and research university and/or course entry requirements.

### Australia

Australia is home to 39 universities, of which 37 are government/national universities and 2 are private. Students apply directly to individual universities or through the University Admissions Centre (UAC), a centralized process.

**DC Deadline:** February

**Timeline:** Applications due in September/October for February/March intake and in March for July intake

**Study duration:** 3-4 years, depending on course

**Academic Calendar:** Most universities run on a semester system. Semester 1 begins in late February and ends in late June and semester 2 begins in mid July and ends in late November

### Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Course Application**
  - Up to 6 courses at 1 or up to 6 institutions
  - Requirements vary by course and may include a personal statement, reference or additional documentation
- **Academic Qualifications**
  - Copies of transcripts
  - Any English language testing
- **Fee**
- **Reference**
  - No reference is required unless requested through specific course requirements

### Useful Web Sites

Australia Unlimited-Australian Trade Commission  
University Admissions Centre  
Australian Education Network  
The Good Universities Guide

[www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au)  
[www.uac.edu.au](http://www.uac.edu.au)  
[www.australian-universities.com](http://www.australian-universities.com)  
[www.gooduniguide.com.au](http://www.gooduniguide.com.au)

The important thing in science is not so much to obtain new facts as to discover new ways of thinking about them.

*Sir Lawrence Bragg (1890-1971) Australian physicist, x-ray crystallographer, Nobel Laureate*

## Canada

There are over 90 public and private universities in Canada. Students apply directly through each university or through a centralized admissions service by province such as the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC), Apply Alberta or Apply BC.

**DC Deadline:** December

**Timeline:** Applications due in January for September intake

**Study Duration:** Most courses take 4 years

**Academic Calendar:** Generally 2 semesters run from early September to early December and early January to late April. Universities may also offer summer session (June & July)

### Application Requirements:

- **Programme Selection**
  - Varies by University and/or Province, but generally will be ordered.
- **Personal Information**
- **Academic Information**
  - High school curriculum, grades, transcripts
  - Any English language testing
- **Some Universities may require**
  - Personal profile or personal statement and references

### Useful Web Sites

Association of Universities & Colleges in Canada	<a href="http://www.aucc.ca">www.aucc.ca</a>
Schools in Canada	<a href="http://www.schoolsincanada.com">www.schoolsincanada.com</a>
Macleans On Campus	<a href="http://www.oncampus.macleans.ca">www.oncampus.macleans.ca</a>
Imagine Studying in Canada	<a href="http://www.educationau-incanada.ca">www.educationau-incanada.ca</a>
Ontario Universities Application Centre	<a href="http://www.ouac.on.ca">www.ouac.on.ca</a>
Apply Alberta	<a href="http://www.applyalberta.ca">www.applyalberta.ca</a>
Apply BC	<a href="http://www.applybc.ca">www.applybc.ca</a>
CanLearn (financial aid)	<a href="http://www.canlearn.ca">www.canlearn.ca</a>

Without knowledge the world is bereft of culture. And so we must be educators and students both.

*Roberta Bondar (1945-) Canadian, first female astronaut from Canada, neurologist, former head of space medicine for NASA*

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong is home to 15 publicly funded universities and 6 private institutions. Applicants from international schools apply directly to each institution.

**DC Deadline:** December

**Timeline:** Applications due in December/January for September intake

**Study Duration:** 3-4 years, depending on course

**Academic Calendar:** Generally, 2 semesters and optional summer session. Semester 1 runs from early September to mid December and semester 2 runs from early January to mid May

### Application Requirements:

- **Personal Information**
- **Choice of Curriculum**
- **Academic Qualifications**
  - Exam results
  - Transcripts
  - Personal statement of extracurricular activities/personal achievements/ work experience (not more than 2 pages)
- **Academic Reference**
  - Focus on academic profile in relation to what the student plans to study, but also can include information on extracurricular activities
- **Fee**

### Useful Web Sites

Hong Kong Education Bureau  
iPass

[www.edb.gov.hk/](http://www.edb.gov.hk/)  
[www.ipass.gov.hk/](http://www.ipass.gov.hk/)

*Study extensively; Enquire accurately; Reflect carefully; Discriminate clearly; Practise earnestly.  
Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) Chinese, doctor, revolutionary, political leader,  
Hong Kong University graduate*

## New Zealand

In New Zealand, there are 8 universities and 20 state owned polytechnics, which focus on vocational education. Applications are made directly to each university.

**DC Deadline:** February

**Timeline:** Applications due in September/October for February/March intake and in March for July intake

**Study duration:** 3-4 years, depending on course

**Academic Calendar:** Most universities run on a semester system. Semester 1 begins in late February and ends in late June and semester 2 begins in mid July and ends in late November

## Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Intended course/programme**
- **Academic Qualifications**
  - Academic transcript
  - High school qualification results
  - English language competency
- **No fee or reference required**

## Useful Web Sites

New Zealand Educated  
Ministry of Education

[www.newzealandeducated.com](http://www.newzealandeducated.com)  
[www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)

Scientists are not dependent on the ideas of a single man, but on the combined wisdom of thousands of men, all thinking of the same problem and each doing his little bit to add to the great structure of knowledge which is gradually being erected.

*Ernest Rutherford (1871-1937) New Zealander, renowned chemist and physicist, 1908 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, pioneer in nuclear physics*

## United Kingdom

There are over 180 higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Students apply through the University & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

**DC Timeline:** September 15 for Oxford and the University of Cambridge; October 1 for Medical school applications, November 20 for all other UK applications

**Timeline: Applications due:** October for dentistry, medicine, veterinary science and for all courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, January for all other courses except some art and design courses, March for some art and design courses. All for September/October intake.

**Study Duration:** 3-4 years, depending on the course

**Academic Calendar:** Varies by university. Can be divided into 2 semesters, 3 terms, or both.

## Application Requirements:

- **Personal Details**
- **Course Choices**
  - Up to 5 courses at up to 5 institutions (4 for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine)
  - Possible admissions test/interview (based on course)
- **Education**
  - Qualifications
  - Units/modules (for some qualifications)
  - English Language Testing if required
- **Employment History**
- **Personal Statement**

- Should include student's motivation for applying to the course, relevant experiences, understanding of the subject and enthusiasm for the course. Read by an Admissions Tutor, who is an academic in the department the student is applying to join
- **School Reference**
  - Student references will be completed by a Higher Education Counsellor in collaboration with teachers chosen by the student
- **Fee**

## Useful Web Sites

Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
 Unistats [www.direct.gov.uk/unistats](http://www.direct.gov.uk/unistats)  
 British Council [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)  
 Open Days [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)

What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of  
 difference you want to make.  
*Jane Goodall (1939-), British, primatologist, ethologist,  
 and UN Messenger of Peace*

## United States

There are over 4,000 higher education institutions in the United States. Students apply directly to each institution or through a centralized admissions process, including the Common Application (used by over 450 institutions) and centralized state university applications.

**DC Timeline:** Early Decision and early action applications and University of California applications due October 25. Regular decision applications due December 1.

**Timeline:** Applications due in October/November for University of California schools, October, November and December for Early Action/Early Decision 1, January for regular decision and Early Action/Early Decision 2. Some universities on rolling admission.

**Study Duration:** Usually 4 years

### Application Requirements:

- **Personal Information**
- **Academics**
  - Grades, including class rank, if available, class size, grading scale
  - Testing, including ACT, SAT, AP, IB, Any English Language testing
  - Transcript including current courses
  - Academic distinctions or honours
- **Co-Curricular Activities**
  - Includes in and out of school activities, athletics, work experiences, leadership positions
- **Essay and Supplemental Essays**

- Varies by university. Generally, readers are looking to learn something about the student that they could not learn from the rest of the application. Topics may focus on academic suitability, personal insight, creativity, or a combination. Students may send the same essay to universities that use the Common Application. Each of those may or may not require supplemental writing.
- **References**
  - Generally 2 teacher and one guidance counsellor recommendation
- **Fee**

### Useful Web Sites

College Board	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a>
Council of International Schools	<a href="http://www.cois.org">www.cois.org</a>
Petersons	<a href="http://www.petersons.com">www.petersons.com</a>
Common Application	<a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a>
EduPass (financial aid)	<a href="http://www.edupass.org">www.edupass.org</a>
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	<a href="http://www.fafsa.ed.gov">www.fafsa.ed.gov</a> (for U.S. Citizens)

The function of the university is not simply to teach breadwinning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment from which forms the secret of civilization.

*W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) American historian, sociologist, civil rights activist, Pan Africanist, author and editor*

# Factors to Consider During Your University Search

## Get to Know Yourself

Many times, students begin their search by researching universities before thinking about what they are looking for. Knowing yourself is the first step to finding the university that will be a fit *for you*.

Ask yourself some questions:

- What are your academic interests? What classes have inspired you? What do you enjoy most about learning?
- What are your career goals?
- How do your academic interests and career goals match up with each other?
- What types of co-curricular and outside activities are you most passionate about? Why? Do you want continue these during university? Are there other new activities you hope to find at your university?
- What is your academic profile? What are your overall marks? If you have taken standardized tests, what are your results? How does this profile represent you?
- How would you describe yourself to someone who had never met you? What would you want them to know about you?

## What Type of University Will Be the Right Fit for You?

Answering this question will be different for each student. You will need to decide what is most important to you, prioritise, and determine what is negotiable and what is not. Remember, this is a process. Your priorities may shift as you go and you won't have all of the answers at once!

### Academic Offerings and Environment

- Courses/majors offered and type of curriculum
- Class size and access to faculty
- Degree of competitiveness
- IB recognition policies
- Research opportunities

### Student Enrolment

- Number of undergraduate students
- Diversity of student body
- Male/female ratio
- Retention rates

### Location and Characteristics

- Urban, suburban, rural
- Climate, weather
- Size of student body, campus and city or town

- Proximity to family and friends
- Transportation options
- Accessibility and support for learning development
- Specific type: eg. art and design school, music conservatory, polytechnic, religiously affiliated, single sex or coeducational, historically black college or university (U.S.)

### **Student Life (On & Off Campus)**

- Housing options
- Dining options
- Out of class activities on and off campus
- Athletics and recreational facilities
- Library and technical support
- Safety and security
- Support for religious life

### **Entrance Requirements**

- Selectivity
- Course academic requirements
- Standardised tests
- Personal statements/essays
- Application process and deadlines

### **Financial Considerations**

- Costs per year: tuition, fees, housing, books and equipment, board, transportation
- Availability of financial aid and/or loans
- Work opportunities

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.  
*Chinese Proverb*

## Standardised Testing

**It is important to note that it is the student's responsibility to find out what tests each university requires. In addition, students should remember to have official test results sent directly by the testing agency to each university.**

### English Language Testing

If you have completed the IB curriculum, most universities will not require you to take an English Language Test. However, if English is not your first language and your marks in English are low, or you struggle with writing in English, you may want to consider supplementing your application with an English language test.

There may be specific universities that require English language testing for anyone for whom English is an additional language, therefore it is important that you explore requirements in advance of applying to universities. In addition, your scores may be used by immigration officials to confirm your English proficiency when granting your study visa.

### Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

[www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl)

Widely accepted English language test run through Educational Testing Services. This test evaluates listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. There are 30-40 test dates per year in over 165 countries.

Here in Hong Kong, there are test centres in Kowloon, Kwai Chung, Sai Kung, San Po Kong, Tsuen Wan, and Yuen Long.

The cost ranges from \$160-\$250USD, roughly equivalent to \$1200-\$2000HKD.

### International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

[www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

Widely accepted English language test jointly owned by the British Council, IELTS Australia, and Cambridge ESOL. There are two versions of the test, the Academic and General Training tests. If you are taking it for entry into tertiary education, you should take the Academic test, which measures listening, reading, writing, and speaking. There are 48 fixed test dates per year and it is offered based on local demand.

In Hong Kong, there are test centres in Admiralty and Wan Chai.

The cost is \$1500HKD.

## Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)—United States

Most U.S. universities will require you to submit an **SAT I** score as part of your application. This test consists of 3 parts; critical reading, mathematics and writing. We recommend that if you plan to apply to U.S. universities, you take this test prior to the end of Year 12.

Some universities will require you to submit **SAT II** scores as part of your application. These tests are subject specific tests. Some will ask for specific tests to be submitted and others might ask for you to take one or more of these tests of your choosing. It is your responsibility to find out the application requirements for each university. For more information on the SAT II, see <http://sat.collegeboard.org/about-tests/sat-subject-tests>.

### To prepare:

- Take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). This is a practice exam, usually taken by students in Year 12 (sometimes Year 11), which can also qualify U.S. Citizens for National Merit Scholarships (Year 12 only). This test is offered each year in October. For more information on the PSAT see <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html>.
- Practice online or through a study guide: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>
- Take a preparation course. It is quite possible to prepare for the SAT on your own, but some students like the structure of a course.

### To Register

The SAT is offered several times throughout the year. You must register in advance to take the SAT. When you register, you will need to pay a fee of \$78USD. You can find more information here: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/> and in the Guidance Centre, 4/F.

Discovery College's code is: 670734

An additional standardized test for U.S. university entrance is the **ACT**. It is not necessary to take both the SAT and ACT. For more information on the ACT see <http://actstudent.org/>.

## **Teacher and Counsellor References**

Reference letters from your teachers and counsellor are an important part of your application for Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States. Generally, references are not required for Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, but could be requested for some courses. References may be required for other regions of the world. Please see your counsellor for specific information.

### **Hong Kong and the United Kingdom**

- Require one school academic reference
- Letters will be written by your counsellor and will include written input from your teachers, which you will need to request (see Teacher Reference Request and Counsellor Reference Request forms)
- Letters will also include your predicted IB scores, which will be provided by your teachers

### **United States**

- Most schools will require 2 teacher references and 1 counsellor reference (often called recommendation or evaluation)
- Letters will be written by your teachers and counsellor separately (see Teacher Reference Request and Counsellor Reference Request forms)
- Counsellor letter will include your predicted IB scores, which will be provided by your teachers

### **What do you need to know about requesting references?**

- It is very important that you choose teachers who know you well and can speak to your academic skills, potential for success, and your character. Make sure at least one of the teachers you choose is a teacher who has had you in class recently and can speak to your work in the diploma programme
- Be sure to meet deadlines and ask your teachers in advance. This is not only courteous, but will ensure that your teachers have time to spend on your reference
- If there is something that your counsellor needs to know in regards to mitigating circumstances affecting your academic record, or relevant outside experiences you want to make sure are included in your reference, please be sure to discuss this prior to submitting your reference request or include pertinent information in the request