



US Boarding School Handbook for Students & Parents
Campion College Guidance Department, 2017
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Timeline & Recommended Activities

Sometimes students and parents decide that they would prefer to go to a Boarding School at the end of fourth or fifth form. Some even decide to go at the end of third form. If this is a route you would like to take, you will need the assistance of the Campion College Guidance and Counselling Department. We have developed these guidelines that we strongly advise students and parents to follow.

Timing

You should ideally begin your boarding school search more than a year in advance of when you actually want to enrol. This should give you enough time to thoroughly research schools and arrive at well-informed decisions about where to apply; this also helps ensure that you have enough time to create a thoughtful application, and that your teachers and counsellor will have enough time to write suitable recommendation letters.

Meet with your Counsellor: You will need to be interviewed by your assigned guidance counsellor who will then write your recommendation. Before you can make an appointment for this interview, you and your parents will need to complete a “brag sheet” and registration form available from the department. Remember, it is much easier to write a strong recommendation for a student who a counsellor knows well, so take the time to make contact with your counsellor very early in the process and keep them abreast of your plans. **Note: the Department requires at least four weeks notice for all recommendations to be completed.**

Request Transcripts: It is recommended that you request your transcript from the main office as soon as you return to school in the September before your applications are due. You do not have to have a final list of schools. You will simply select electronic application (which means any online application platform) and pay the required fee. (Very few schools require a mailed copy of your transcript anymore.) In about a week, you should go and collect your unofficial copy. Your unofficial copy will be useful to you in completing your applications. Check that all the information is correct and confirm this with the main office. Then, the office will send the official copy to your counsellor. Ensure that you have sent the relevant email request via the application platform to your counsellor who will then upload your transcript and your recommendation. Your counsellor will also automatically upload your Easter term grades when they become available and your final transcript at the end of the year.

Ask for Recommendations: Teachers are busy people. Please be respectful about when and how you ask for recommendations—generally, the earlier, the better (at least four weeks in advance), and in person. You should also tell them what your deadline is (official or perhaps your personal one). Once they have agreed, send the relevant email request via the application platform. After a few days, check that the email request was received. If your deadline is approaching and the recommendation has not been uploaded, you may do a gentle reminder. If you have changed your mind and will not be applying anymore, please advise them of this change so that they do not waste their time. And, of course, always send a thank you note and inform them of your acceptances.

Complete your Testing: Aim to complete your testing as early as possible. This will give you the option to retake the test and decide on which test score to send to the school. You should not be taking the test in December for the first time. Getting the scores back and sending them to the schools takes time (about one month). Check your school’s testing deadlines to ensure you can meet them. Do as much prep work as you can so that you can do your best. Testing is not cheap!

Take Time with your Essay: Start your draft in the summer and allow enough time for people you trust to read it through and make comments. There are multiple online sites that offer tips on how to write a good application essay as well as examples of really good ones to inspire you. Some tips are:

- Make it personal—this is a wonderful opportunity for the schools to learn more about you.
- Use real life examples—don't just tell them you are dedicated or brave etc, show them through examples within the story.
- Make sure it is your own work—do not allow an eager aunt or other adult to take over your essay. It should sound like your voice and be your story.
- Check and then double-check—spelling, punctuation and grammar are very important. Ask a teacher or other person with this skill to read the essay through to check for errors.

Fill out the Financial Aid Forms: In order to receive financial aid from a school, your family must demonstrate that it is in need of this aid by reporting on its financial circumstances and eligibility, and providing proof of such. There are no guarantees and often families are required to pay for a substantial portion of these expenses. There are also many expenses involved in studying abroad that are not stated explicitly such as airfare, transportation, winter clothes, computers, phone service, personal care items etc. Create a realistic budget and discuss a plan for how you and your family will cover all the costs involved.

If you decide to apply for aid, you should know that it usually comes as a package in a combination of grants (money that you do not have to pay back), loans (which you do have to pay back) and, if applicable, merit scholarships.

It is important to note that financial aid is very limited for international students. Having said that, there are many high achieving students from Campion and other Jamaican schools that have been awarded very generous packages by a variety of schools over the years. However, students and families should expect (and be prepared) to pay for some of the many expenses and part of the cost of tuition.

To request financial aid, most colleges require students to complete the **Parents' Financial Profile** at www.nais.org. Check your school's financial aid section to learn more about which form is required and what is the deadline for filing. All of these forms will need to be completed by you and your family and/or guardian with accurate financial information.

Search for Scholarships: In addition to offering financial aid, many schools offer a few merit based scholarships which often require separate applications and recommendations, and have earlier deadlines. Do your research and act early.

Get Ready for the Interview: Most schools will request an interview by phone, Skype or via a visiting representative or alumni. You should prepare for this by practising with your friends and adults. Sites such as College Board offer advice on interviews and sample questions. Also, ensure that you are up-to-date on current and world affairs and especially major developments in your area of interest. An interview is a great opportunity to impress the admission officers: ensure you have researched the school in order to answer questions and also have your own list of questions on hand. Be sure to get the name and contact information for the person who interviews you and send them a formal thank you email afterwards.

Keep in Touch: Keep your Campion counsellor up-to-date with your plans and progress. Perhaps you have won a prize that you think should be included in your recommendation. Or perhaps you are having trouble deciding between two schools. Your counsellor can guide you along this often confusing journey but only if they know what is going on. Your Campion counsellor will also be your best advocate in communicating with schools. *Also, note that hiring an outside boarding school counselling service is not a requirement for admission to any school. Most of our students do their own research and apply on their own and have been successful in their applications.*

Work Hard: In the Easter and Summer term, teachers often observe a lack of energy and effort by those students who may have already been accepted to a boarding school. Try to avoid this. You want to end on a high note with a strong term report. There is also the matter of your school's acceptance offer: your final transcript can be negatively affected by poor grades in this term and, this has been known to lead to withdrawal of offers of acceptance by some schools. Do not let this happen to you!

Acceptances: Most schools notify applicants by April 1 and require a reply (and deposit) by May 1. Information on your financial aid award and on obtaining visas, medical records and finances will be provided in your package. Read everything carefully especially the information on the financial aid award. Feel free to contact the school's financial aid offices with questions on the specifics of the award and, to update them if something has changed in your family's circumstances such as a parent's illness or job status. Should you need to appeal the award, be polite and honest in your letter knowing that yours is one of many appeals they will receive.

Enjoy These Final Months: If you have been doing your best while at Campion and have worked hard on your testing and applications, you should now be in a position to enjoy the last few months here with friends who you may not see for a very long time.

Below is a sample calendar to help keep you on track. This calendar has been adapted from The Boarding School Review <http://www.boardingschoolreview.com/appcalendar>

Month	Steps to Take
May	<p>Begin with a self-assessment: Think about what academic, athletic, and extracurricular opportunities you're looking for. Consider what experiences you'd like to have in the next few years (e.g., being more independent, being exposed to students from different cultures, improving on a sport or artistic talent etc.).</p> <p>Start researching a wide-range of boarding schools and consider how well a boarding school meets those needs relative to local schooling options.</p>
June	<p>If boarding school seems like a good option to consider, create a list of 10-20 boarding schools that seem like good choices to explore further.</p> <p>Within this list, you'll want to have 3 groups of schools: Schools where you are very likely of getting accepted (safety) Schools where you have a moderate chance of acceptance (target) Schools that will be competitive for you to get into (reach)</p> <p>Note: This is not always an easy exercise, particularly for families that have less time to spend researching schools. Request information from these schools and explore their websites thoroughly.</p>
July - August	<p>After learning more about each school, narrow down your list of schools according to the key criteria that are most important to you. For example, a student might seriously look at 7 schools - 2 of those may be "safety" schools, 2 of those may be "reach" schools, and 3 of those may be schools where the student's likelihood of acceptance is moderate "target".</p> <p>These numbers are large enough to give you options, but are still small enough to be manageable from a time-management perspective.</p> <p>Schedule visits and interviews for your short-list of schools in the September-December period. Key point: a campus visit is the best (and sometimes only) way for you to see what's behind the glossy brochures and fancy websites, and so see if a school is right for you.</p>
September - October	<p>Begin visiting campuses and do interviews. (If visits are not possible, schools may be willing to do Skype interviews with you.)</p> <p>Check with schools to see what standardized testing is required (SSAT etc) and register for them.</p> <p>Arrange for test preparation (e.g., take test prep courses and/or do self-study with relevant books and web sites) as necessary.</p>

<p>October - November</p>	<p>Take your standardized tests. Take the earliest test possible as you may want to redo these tests in later months.</p> <p>Wrap-up school visits and interviews. There is usually a boarding school fair in Kingston with representatives from several US and Canadian schools. This is a good opportunity to learn more about the schools and to hold your interview in person.</p> <p>Ask your teachers (as needed) if they would be willing to write a recommendation for you. If they agree, send the relevant links to them for the submission of these recommendations.</p> <p>Contact your Campion College Guidance Department for College Advising and Brag Sheet Forms.</p> <p>Complete and submit College Advising and Brag Sheets before making an appointment for an interview.</p> <p>Send online application links to your counsellor for your recommendation and transcripts.</p> <p>Begin drafting essays and filling out applications. Make a note of all deadlines. (Depending on the school, deadlines typically range from mid-January to early February but there may be earlier scholarship application deadlines that you will want to meet.)</p>
<p>December</p>	<p>Complete essays and applications.</p> <p>Begin filling-out financial aid forms.</p> <p>Meet with your counsellor and update him/her on the progress of applications.</p>
<p>January - February</p>	<p>Complete financial aid forms.</p> <p>Submit school applications and financial aid forms.</p>
<p>March</p>	<p>Early March - wait for school decision letters.</p> <p>Revisit schools where you were accepted (if possible or as necessary); begin finalizing your school choice.</p> <p>With your parents, carefully review financial aid and scholarship packages.</p>
<p>April</p>	<p>Early April - notify schools of your decision.</p> <p>Notify Campion of your decision and withdrawal from our programme.</p> <p>Send thank you letters to your recommenders, notifying them of your decision.</p> <p>Review information packages from your school which will include instructions on visas, medical information, summer reading lists, tuition payment schedules, etc.</p>
<p>May-June</p>	<p>Continue to work hard and prepare for your end-of-term exams. A final transcript will be required by your new school that will include these grades. Offers of acceptance and financial aid can be affected by a drop in your grades.</p>