

# Standardized Testing: How Can We Support Students to Navigate this Complex Landscape?

Tips from the Counsellors From both sides of the desk, and The  
Pond



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# Introductions

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# Getting to Know What You ‘Know’

Please talk with a person next to you about what tests your students are most anxious about and which one(s) they often forget they need...



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# US & UK Testing

- US Context:

- Test Prep (which test, when to prepare, how to prepare, how much to prepare)
- Testing Landscape (optional, *optional*, blind, required)
- To submit, or not to submit
- Is more testing better? (APs, A-levels, 4 HLs, etc.)
  - General Answer/Contextualized answer
  - Offer alternatives
- Test-Prep Partner

- UK Context:

- Test Prep
- Testing Advice
- Resources



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# Perceptions of Testing by Students: What do they really think?

- All or Nothing mentality: They need to study day and night or not at all
- When to test? When to prep? How many times to test? - *'early & often'*
- I will or won't apply to a university based on my test score.
- The more I pay for prep, the better I will do on the exam
- I am not sure which exam I need to take and not sure who to ask. Overwhelmed by university websites.
- I have a test score but I don't know if it will help me or hurt me to submit.
- How do I understand the difference between test-required, test-optional, test-flexible, test-recommended, test-expected, test-blind



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# What messages can we give as counsellors to better support students?

- Help student create a timeline of which exams are needed and when they should prep, register, test, re-test or abandon.
- Show students where they can find this information (website/ contacting admissions)
- Reduce anxiety by helping students realize the role of testing in the application process (not all or nothing thinking)



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# Global College Admissions Landscape: Do Admissions Officers really look at scores?

- Test optional, test flexible, testing required, test blind, test free
  - New Carnegie Mellon policy
  - Yale policy for EA
  - Policy uncertainty year on year / frustration on when policies are announced
- Language Proficiency Testing
- When and how are scores considered at NYU, UCLA and Cambridge?



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# Clarity on CMU Testing-Policy

## Fall 2026 Applicants

CMU's Pittsburgh campus will implement an undergraduate admission test policy that **varies according to college or program.**

### Test Required

The School of Computer Science will require an SAT or an ACT score.

### Test Optional

The College of Fine Arts will remain test optional and continue to require portfolios or auditions.

### Test Flexible

Test flexible means that students are required to submit test scores to complete their application; however, they may choose which type of test(s) they prefer to submit. The following test options are acceptable: the SAT, ACT, International Baccalaureate exam, Advanced Placement, Cambridge A-Levels and the French Baccalaureate.

The following colleges and programs will move to a test-flexible policy:

- College of Engineering
- Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Heinz College's Information Systems program
- Mellon College of Science
- Tepper School of Business

**We accept SAT or ACT scores and have no preference on which test is taken.** You may report the best scores from across different tests. If able, you should take one or the other in the spring of your junior year in preparation for the November 1 Early Action deadline that encompasses scholarship consideration.

When you apply, you are able to report best components from different test dates. **School codes for Purdue West Lafayette: ACT - 1230; SAT - 1631.**

*\*Purdue University expects applicants to have SAT or ACT scores. Recognizing that in some exceptional cases, applicants may not have been able to take a test, we allow submission of applications in those cases.*



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# First-year outcomes

Table 11: First Term and First Year Academic Performance of California Freshmen Universitywide

Year of First Term	Enrolled Students	First Term Average GPA	First Term Probation Rate	First Term Persistence Rate	First Year Average GPA	First Year Probation Rate	First Year Persistence Rate
2018	35,878	3.19	6.4%	98.2%	3.15	4.86%	93.0%
2019	35,514	3.21	6.4%	98.3%	3.34	3.10%	93.7%
2020	37,242	3.44	3.9%	97.7%	3.36	4.68%	92.7%
2021	39,037	3.29	6.6%	97.8%	3.25	5.96%	92.1%
2022	39,080	3.34	5.4%	98.0%	3.29	4.89%	93.2%

Source: UC Data Warehouse Undergraduate Enrollment and Longitudinal data. Probation rate = share with GPA < 2.00. First year probation rate excludes students who left before the end of the first year.

- First test-free cohort (2021)
- No noticeable declines in first-year average GPA and first-year persistence rates
- Lack of test scores, more P/NP grades in the GPA, and pandemic learning loss did not significantly impact outcomes
- Graduation data for 2021 cohort will not be available for another couple of years



## Advice from Universities about Student Admissions...

- Importance of thinking through individual school requirements/averages and whether or not testing may help a student at a test optional college or university
- Weigh whether or not taking the SAT or ACT is necessary for the schools students want to apply to. Is it really worth the time and money students and families put into test prep?
- Remember that it's just one piece of the puzzle



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## US Admissions Tests:

- <https://fairtest.org/>
- [SAT/ACT Diagnostic](#)
- [ACT Registration/SAT Registration](#) (dates & deadlines)
- [SAT Prep](#) (free)
- [ACT Prep](#) (free)
- Partnered Prep/Individual Paid Prep

## UK Admissions Tests:

- [STEP](#)
- UCAT [registration](#), [prep](#), [statistics](#), [boundaries](#)
- TMUA & ESAT [registration](#), [prep](#), & [results](#)
- [TSA](#) register & prepare
- [PAT](#) register & prepare

## Resources:



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# Partnered Prep

## Reasons to Partner:

- Testing is part of the culture in Asia
- Testing is optional/required for a large percentage of admissions
- External agents often use testing as a means to hook students

## What to look for in a partner:

- Philosophy alignment around testing
- Scope of services



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**Thanks so much for coming to our presentation!**

**Any Questions?**



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## Ask the Audience: Think/Pair/Share

- What are you seeing at your schools?
- What exams are students needing to take? (sometimes based on geographical location)
  - Are there time zone/access issues?
    - Are students paying for prep?



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