



Albanian Scholarship Effort

Student Resource Package

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Parathënie

Ky dokument është i përgatitur nga konsulentet e Albanian Scholarship Effort për nxënës, mesues, dhe familjarë të interesuar në programin tonë. Dokumenti “ASE Resource Package” përmbledh çdo informacion, duke filluar nga misioni dhe vizioni i ASE e deri tek detajet e aplikimeve për bursë në gjimnaze dhe universitete të huaja.

Siç e përmenda, kjo paketë nuk është e përgatitur vetëm për nxënës sepse aplikimet për bursa janë një punë në grup ku mësuesit dhe prindërit luajnë role kyçe. Duke thënë këtë, vullneti dhe niveli i nxënësit ngelen prioritete, prandaj mbas prezantimit të Albanian Scholarship Effort dhe kriterëve tona, pjesa tjetër e paketës ka për të qenë në gjuhën angleze.

Ka disa arsye për këtë, por më kryesoret janë: 1) Prioriteti ynë është që nxënësit që marrim janë më të përgatiturit. Kjo do të thotë që niveli i tyre i gjuhës angleze duhet të jetë i lartë në mënyrë që ato mund ta kuptojnë këtë paketë; 2) Të folurit për aplikimet jashtë shtetit me bursa përbën shumë ide dhe terminologji të cilat nxënësi duhet ti njohë në gjuhën origjinale të aplikimeve — në gjuhën angleze.

Çdo vit, Albanian Scholarship Effort ka për të selektuar nxënësit më të talentuar shqiptar nga moshat 12 deri në 15 vjeç me premisat më të mëdha për të qenë lider akademik dhe intelektual. Këtyre studentëve do ti ofrohet një mentorship 2 vjeçar nga konsulentët tanë. Shqipëria ka shumë talente por ne nuk kemi kohë dhe kapacitet mjaftueshëm, prandaj ne nuk mund të ndihmojmë çdo njeri të interesuar. Ky dokument shërben edhe për ata nxënës që nuk selektohen nga ne. Këtu keni çdo info. Shumë më shumë se sa kemi pasur ne, konsulentët e ASE, kur kemi qenë në kohën e aplikimeve dhe kemi punuar për të fituar bursa.

Gjithashtu, në këtë paketë keni edhe informacion se si të përgatiteni për bursa universitare -- aplikime me të cilat unë dhe ASE nuk mund të punojmë për shumë arsye. Përsëri, në këtë pjesë do keni shumë më shumë info se sa kanë pasur disa konsulentët tanë që kanë ikur nga gjimnaze shqiptare në universitete si Harvard University ose NYUAD me bursa të plota.

Ju lutem lexojeni mirë këtë paketë përpara se të na kontaktoni, ose do të harxhoni kohën tuaj si dhe kohën tonë. Shpresoj që një nga gjërat me kryesore që do të mësoni nga kjo paketë e madhe është që ASE nuk është bamirësi, por një investim për një gjeneratë liderash intelektualë, për një Shqipëri më të mbarë.

Faleminderit,

Besart Copa dhe ASE



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1. Çfare është Albanian Scholarship Effort?

Albanian Scholarship Effort (ASE) është një iniciativë e ndërmarrë nga një grup studentësh shqiptarë të cilët studiojnë në disa nga institutet akademike më prestigjioze në botë. ASE, si një iniciativë akademike, ofron konsultim pro bono mbi bursa akademike për nxënës shqiptarë nga mosha 12 deri në 17 vjec.

Ne kemi ndërmarrë një iniciativë për të ndihmuar bashkëmoshatarët dhe bashkatdhetarët tanë për të studiuar dhe për t'u edukuar në insitutet e mësipërme. ASE është në kërkim të mendjeve më të ndritura në shtetin tonë: studentë të talentuar me një ekselencë akademike dhe me një ambicie unike, të cilët për arsye ekonomike dhe mungesë informacioni nuk kanë mundur të vazhdojnë edukimin në këto institute, jashtë shtetit. Qellimi i ASE është të ndihmojë këta nxënës të shkojnë nëpër shkolla prestigjioze nëpër botë pavarësisht gjendjes së tyre ekonomike. Ëndrra finale e jona është që këta nxënës, duke punuar shumë dhe duke marrë edukimin më të mirë të mundshëm të shekullit të 21, të bëhen ambasadore të denjë të kombit tonë, dhe qytetarë të vlefshëm të botës.


Nevoja për krijimin e një iniciative të tillë është e madhe për kombin tonë. Përfaqesimi i studentëve universitar shqiptarë në universitetet më të mira në bote ka qënë përhere i varfër në krahasim me fqinjët tanë në Ballkan. Kjo ndodh për shume arsye, por një nga arsyet kryesore është mungesa e informacionit dhe përgatitjes. Është përgjithësisht vështirë që të aplikosh dhe pranohesh nga gjimnazet shqiptare drejt universiteteve elitare (por jo e pamundur!), ndaj ASE synon të konsultojë dhe ndihmojë nxenesit shqiptarë që në mosha të reja për te shkuar në gjimnaze internacionale, nga ku më pas ata do të mund t'u drejtohen më lehtë universiteteve prestigjioze. Konsultuesit e ASE vijnë nga Harvard University, Princeton University, Cambridge Univeristy, New York University, Duke University, etj; dhe eksperiencat tona do të jenë të vlefshme për konsultën tonë drejtë nxënësve të interesuar.

Albanian Scholarship Effort perqëndrohet mbi nxënësit e grupmoshave 12-17 vjec në Shqipëri. Këto janë moshat më të përshtatshme për të filluar me aplikimet në gjimnaze te huaja. ASE ka një database te gjere me gjimnaze konviktore internacionale nëpër të gjithë botën të cilat ofrojnë bursa të plota: në Amerikë, Kanada, Zvicër, Angli, Francë, Norvegji, Kinë, Singapor, Australi, Izrael etj; ku këta nxënës mund të aplikojnë. Disa kërkesa te përgjithshme që duhet të plotesoj një nxënës i cili ka dëshirë të shkoj në këto shkolla janë:

- 1) **njohuri të mira të GJUHES ANGLEZE** në të folur dhe në të shkruar dhe aftësi për të studiuar tekste akademike. Shumë shkolla kërkojnë dhe vërtetimin e nivelit të gjuhës angleze nëpërmjet testeve të ndryshme si TOEFLI ose IELTS.
- 2) **NOTA të mira në shkolle.** Kjo NUK do të thotë 10 absolute. Zakonisht, mesatarja minimale për një aplikant nga Shqipëria në gjimnaze internacionale është 8.5.
- 3) **një etje shumë e madhe për DIJE.** Nuk ka rëndësi se çfarë dege akademike, për sa kohë aplikanti dëshmon pasionin dhe dëshirën për të punuar, cilësi këto që mund të tregohen me anë të aktiviteteve jashtëshkollore, etikes së punës, kërkimeve shkencore-sociale individuale etj.
- 4) **një VULLNET unik.** Vullneti mund të konsiderohet si faktori me më shumë peshë. Vullneti është esencial për një student 15 vjeçar i cili shkon në një gjimnaz të huaj, në një botë të huaj, dhe synon të korri sukses. Për të matur vullnetin e tij një aplikant mund të pyesi veten: “Duke marrë parasysh burimet dhe mundësitë që unë kam pasur, çfarë kanë qenë arritjet e mia; dhe a jam në gjendje unë të bëj më shumë në jetën time nëpërmjet një rrugëtimi të vështirë akademik dhe individual?”
- 5) **një karakter personal për PUNË VULLNETARE.** ASE synon krijimin e një grupi intelektualësh dhe akademikësh që në të ardhmen do kontribuojnë në zhvillimin e shtetit tonë, dhe të botës. Ky është një koncept *shumë* i rëndësishëm në karakterin e një studenti ASE. Për ta matur këtë koncept në vlerat e një aplikanti, ajo/ ai duhet të pyesi veten “Kë përveç vetes, familjes dhe miqve të mi kanë ndihmuar arritjet e mia?”

Këto janë kërkesat dhe cilësitë tipike që duhet të ketë një aplikant për bursë në gjimnaze internacionale, jo vetëm nga Shqipëria, por nga cdo vend i botës. Duke thënë këtë, ASE e KUPTON që shumë fëmijë në Shqipëri nuk e kanë mundësinë drejt burimeve të ndryshme të cilat i zhvillojnë këto karakteristika, ASE e kupton që në qoftë se familja juaj vuan nga ana ekonomike nuk ka mundësi që të të dergojë nëpër olimpiada, kurse private, shkolla private, iniciativa vullnetare, etj. Albanian Scholarship Effort KUPTON gjithashtu, nga eksperiencia personale e mentorëve të saj, që VULLNETI dhe DIJA mund të zhvillohen shumë mirë dhe në kushte të varfëra, ndonjëherë dhe shumë më mirë se sa në kushte të pasura. Duke thënë keto, Albanian Scholarship Effort nuk ka autoritetin të japë bursa në menyrë direkte, organet të cilat e bëjnë këtë gjë do të jenë përherë institucionet akademike ku nxënësit do të aplikojnë.

Albanian Scholarship Effort synon të krijojë një komunitet akademikësh dhe intelektualësh, një komunitet dishepujsh të dijes, të cilët do të jenë lidera të një të ardhmeje më të mirë për brezat e



ardhshëm. Do jetë detyra e këtyre liderave të punojnë drejt një të ardhme më të artë për Shqipërinë, dhe për mbarë botën. Studentet e ASE do të jenë individë për të cilët Shqipëria do të jetë krenare, dhe do të jetë gjithashtu djepi i kontributeve të tyre në kulturë, arsim, filozofi, muzike, sport, pikturë, teknologji & inovacion, siguri etj.

Nëse keni dëshirën dhe mendoni që i përshtateni karakteristikave të përmendura më sipër, **APLIKONI!** Është nderi ynë të ndihmojmë çdo student shqiptar për të eksploruar, zhvilluar dhe përdorur potencialet e tyre në të mirë të kombit, familjes dhe vetes.

Me respekt,

Besart Çopa & ASE.

Sqarim: [Albanian Scholarship Effort](#) nuk ka asnjë lidhje administrative me organe politike, fetare dhe të tjera këtij lloji. Duke thënë këtë, ASE ka për të qëndruar hapur drejt suportit të çfarëdolloj organizate e cila beson në misionin tonë, përsakohë ajo organizatë nuk vendos kushte mbi aktivitetet tona dhe nuk cënon të Drejtat Universale të Njeriut, si të përshkruara nga Asambleja Gjenerale e Kombeve të Bashkuara. Konsultimi dhe aktivitetet e ASE janë, dhe do të jenë, përherë falas për çdo kënd; dhe nuk do të ketë asnjëlloj diskriminimi politik, fetar, racor, social, gjinor etj. Përsëritje: ASE nuk ka autoritetin të japë bursa në asnjë menyrë, organet të cilat mund ta bëjnë këtë gjë do të jenë përherë institucionet akademike ku nxënësit do të aplikojnë. E vetmja gjë që ne mund të bëjmë është të ndihmojmë me informacion dhe konsultim. Shërbimet e ASE janë për çdo nxënës shqiptar, në çdo cep të Shqipërisë, në çdo cep të botës.

2. CRITERIA

The “Criteria” section will offer a more elaborate explanation of the five main criterias mentioned in the intro. Read each criteria carefully as they are all crucial in building up a good profile for scholarship applications. At the ASE, when we talk about “high school scholarships” we are talking about international high schools which admit and give scholarship to students from all around the world such as Aiglon College in Switzerland or United World Colleges . When we talk about “university scholarships”, we are mainly talking about colleges in or from the United States which admit and give financial aid to international students, such New York University in Abu Dhabi or Duke University.

A) Proficient English and Good Grades

We’ve put these two criterias together because they are the main ones. If these two criterias are not fulfilled, you have no chance of being considered as an applicant.

The most important thing one should have in order to be even considered for applications in international schools is a *proficient level* of English -- not excellent, just proficient. “But what does *proficient* mean?” Proficient means that you are able to write about and discuss about fairly complex and academic topics in English — ranging from sciences to humanities. One good way to check your English level is to read an academic book of your grade level in English and see if you understand the material. One source to do this is BBC Bitesize:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects>.

Almost every school will ask for a standardized test to prove your English level; the popular ones are IELTS and TOEFL. Prospective students should prepare for these tests as soon as possible, even one year ahead of time. There are many online resources to practice for these tests such as: IELTS Academic Test Preparation, EDx.org

(<https://www.edx.org/course/ielts-academic-test-preparation-uqx-ieltsx-1>) dhe “TOEFL® Test Preparation: The Insider’s Guide“, [EDx.org](https://www.edx.org/course/toefl-test-preparation-insiders-guide-etsx-toeflx-3)

(<https://www.edx.org/course/toefl-test-preparation-insiders-guide-etsx-toeflx-3>).

You can always check your English level for free on online proficiency tests:

-<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/content>

-<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/test-your-english/>

-<https://www.kaplaninternational.com/free-english-test>

Another important thing to do in order to improve your English is to read quality journalism online and get acquainted with the academic writing style of these journals. Here are some of the most popular international journals: The Economist, The New York Times, The Atlantic, Quartz, Financial Times, Foreign Policy, The New Yorker, and The Economist's' 1843. Try to read articles of your interests from these portals 20 minutes per day. Keep a notebook and write down in English things/ ideas that you learned, as well as new vocabulary words.

The Grade Point Average (GPA) criteria is pretty self explanatory. Before being institutions which foster leadership and the advancement of human knowledge through arts, sciences, and humanities, all Western high-schools and universities are academic institutions, therefore you have to be an excellent student above all other things. The best and only way to show this in your application is through your grades, through your GPA. The GPA should be higher than 3.5 to be qualified for admissions, but a strong application would be with a GPA of 3.75-4.0. In Albanian terms, a GPA of higher than 8.5 will be admissible, but one above 9 will make the application strong.

B) “Academic Curiosity”


Starting with this criteria, we are going to delve more into the “holistic” criteria. Holistic criterias are the ones that are not measured by any set scale. Nonetheless, they can be measured by a combination of numerous indicators which should be present in your application folder.

(Def) holistic: “characterised by the belief that the parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole.”

For more information on what “holistic” means you can read how the admissions offices’ describe it in their own words:

- <https://www.andover.edu/Admission/Pages/WelcomefromtheDeanofAdmission.aspx>
- <https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply>
- <https://admissions.yale.edu/what-yale-looks-for>
- <https://www.amherst.edu/admission/apply>

You will notice there are no GPA or test score cut-offs, because it’s a “holistic” process, which means that each candidate is evaluated in their own unique context. However, keep in mind, while all of the below-mentioned criteria are as important, the United Kingdom university applications are not holistic, which means that if you have not achieved a certain GPA or standardised test score, you will not be considered for admissions.



Now, let's talk about “academic curiosity”.

Having good grades it's not enough; you need to show *passion* in your search for knowledge — voracious curiosity and intellectual restlessness. You need to show that you have asked the holy questions — the “why” and the “how”. These are questions which enable and enhance your *critical thinking* — the key word of Western education systems. You need to have shown perseverance in questioning things in pursuing truth and reason.

In more practical terms, you need to show that you have taken a personal initiative to learn about a subject more than it is required. For example, you really liked a chapter in Biology about ageing so you went to Google and searched “ageing”. You saw an article from a reliable source and then you clicked the article “The Economist: Blood from young animals can revitalise old ones”. You then read about how blood transfusion can become a solution to some health problems based on laboratory trials done by scientists around the world. You should be able to describe your wormhole of curiosity in order to demonstrate how excited you are about *learning*.

You can also prove academic curiosity by engaging with your field — olympiads, research, blogging, art exhibitions, volunteering, etc.

Most importantly, you need to READ! READ! READ!

Almost every field has their most important “holy books” and their most important “thought leaders”; read the books, and read about/follow the influencers. See how the most influential people in your field got where they did, what did they do? You can almost never copycat their journey but you can most definitely learn from it. You can find this information by *a simple Google*.

Read NEWS about your field. Be updated!

There are many reasons why you should fill your knowledge bank — more you learn, more innovative you become as you have more information to play around with. You start connecting the dots (or your unconsciousness does), and you get a clearer and better understanding of the “reality” of your field, you get “instinctive insights”.

All of these things will become evident to the admission officers from your essays AND your interview. You have to show passion by writing and talking about information that you have sought and learned on your own.



Here is a list of suggested readings from our very own ASE Consultants:

Fiction:

- Lord of the Rings Trilogy, by J. R. R. Tolkien
- The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
- The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown

Non- fiction:


- Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, by Yuval Noah Harari
- Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow, by Yuval Noah Harari
- Agents of Empire, Noel Malcolm
- The Social Animal, David Brooks
- The Evolution of Everything, Matt Ridley
- Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl

C) “Distinctive Ambition”

This is the second most important criteria.

If **YOU** don't have an immeasurable, passionate, and fiery desire *to do more for yourself* then no grades, English fluency, or extra curricular activities will be enough. You have to want it more than ANYTHING else. When 15000 qualified applicants — all with great scores and extracurricular activities — apply to these selective schools, this is what makes the greatest difference. Are you the one who wants it the most? Your personal drive will be evident both from your essays, your teacher recommendations, and your interview.

Having a personal inner drive to succeed is important for numerous reasons. You will go abroad alone; while the school community will support you, there will be no one reminding you of your work and responsibilities. You are the only one responsible for yourself. You will be faced with problems which only you should and can solve. At some point, you will understand that your friends and family back home cannot fully understand your new reality; you have to have the courage to face this alienation and make close friends in your new home. You have to have enough energy and passion to be able to adapt to new environments — and thrive in them!



Most schools, especially high-schools, which give scholarships don't do so for charity; scholarships are an investment, a scholarship student is an investment! They are willing "to buy" highly ambitious students to join their school because these students will add something to their community — be that a new club, a new sport, or a new initiative. *They will add something.* They want students who have a traceable inner desire to do more in their own communities (proven by extra curricular activities), and who have reached a point in which they have used all their local resources and need extra ones.

The school will offer you these resources; you have the duty to take advantage of them and *create!*

D) "Volunteering Leadership"


This is a criteria which is not only important for good college application, but also for a good, fulfilling life — volunteering is the basis of a leader's character. It is also the basis of the Albanian Scholarship Effort. We don't want to produce only great students, we want to grow leaders, or as Ashoka.org puts it, ***Changemakers***.

Volunteering is not measured by the number of certificates you have from the Red Cross, or the number of charity events you have participated on. Volunteering is simply measured by the number and the way that your achievements have *truly* benefited someone else apart from yourself and your family.

Ask yourself, ***"If I disappear tomorrow, who except my family and my friends will feel my absence?"***

You need to go out and become active in your local community. This is the foundation of every *real* volunteering work — the local context. Bukowski wrote: "You begin saving the world by saving one person at a time; all else is grandiose romanticism or politics." Keep these words in mind as you think about ways in which you can bring a *tangible* impact in the life of your community. It doesn't need to be big, it just need to be *real* and *measurable*.

Think about the problems that exist in your local community, the needs that your community has. Then think about ways in which you can start contributing to the solution of these issues, slowly and one step at a time. Work with something that you are passionate about, not with something that *you think* will sound good in your application. They want to see how your inner passion has manifested itself in an outside impact. Remember that the people who will evaluate your application have probably seen thousands of applicants; *they will know* if you are doing it all for show.



As you start thinking about these local problem-solving projects, keep in mind that you will most probably fail numerous times — and that’s ok. *You need to learn how to fail* and learn from failure, it’s a crucial skill that will help you not only in your admission applications, but in your professional life as well. Learning from failures is such an important life lesson that application forms will almost always have a prompt question about it “When was the last time you failed and what did you learn from it?” So, DO FAIL.

Growing a generation of **changemakers** is the ultimate goal of the Albanian Scholarship Effort. Our two year mentorship program will be based on the personal — leadership and volunteering — development of our selected students. While you can easily learn how to navigate the application process (and even how to get into good schools!), learning how to become an intentional and active citizen, an impact-oriented intellectual leader, is a lifelong mission in which we are trying to give our students a head-start.

Throughout our mentorship program, we intend to help our students brainstorm on local problem-solving ideas, initiate them, and develop them. By using our small yet impactful national and international network, we will train and help our students grow as active agents of their communities.

Albanian Scholarship Effort itself is an example of a local project, as are many other initiatives that the ASE mentors have started in Albania as well as abroad. The ASE started after I went to Switzerland on a full scholarship and thought about how many other talented peers in Albania were not aware of such great opportunities. This was the problem I recognised: Albanian students not knowing about these incredible international opportunities. So, I got in contact with the few Albanian students who had successfully won international scholarships and told them about the idea of creating a group of consultants who would help interested students *for free*. The ones who liked the idea became part of the ASE and in less than two years we consulted more than 100 Albanian families. The project was simple. The need for our services is what gave ASE traction and attention. Eventually I recognized another problem: the fact that Albania did not only need great academics, but also great **changemakers**, intellectual leaders. So the ASE consultants and I devised the mentorship program to not only help students with their academic development, but also with their personal one. The ASE was nothing incredible, it’s just a simple solution to a local problem. However, while it was simple, it was and *still is* far from being easy.

3. Different high school systems around the world.

We consult our students for high-school scholarships because the earlier you get on the “application process” groove the better it is. This is one of the main reasons why we only select students from 12 to 15 years old: the sooner you become familiar with how admissions processes

work, the more prepared you will be. So, even if you don't get a scholarship for your high school studies, you will now know how the application processes work for schools abroad and so you will be prepared to apply for college financial aid as well.

a) College-preparatory boarding schools in the United States

Finding your right fit:

- What to look for in a boarding school? There are different ways to narrow down your school search.
 - Your preferred geographic location(New England, East Coast, West Coast, Midwest etc.)
 - Your ability to afford the school (financial aid policies of each school is on their websites; be careful, there are not many schools that offer full financial aid but there are quite a few.
 - the preferred extracurriculars available
 - school size (big, small, medium size)
 - Faculty to student ratio (I personally recommend a low teacher to student ratio.)
 - Co-Ed(girls and boys) vs Single Gender school
 - Classes(look at their course catalogs and see which catalog interests you the most!)
 - Anything that sticks out for you! I would recommend that you look into the **Harkness method** as a big factor in your decision. Look it up!!
- Tools to research boarding schools:
 - <http://www.boardingschools.com/find-a-school/>
 - <https://www.boardingschoolreview.com/find-schools>
- Some schools to start your research!(ones that offer full financial aid)
 - Phillips Exeter Academy, located in Exeter, NH, is ranked as the #1 high school in the United States. The Harkness method is used in every single class, which makes for great discussion-based learning---no more boring lectures. It houses around 800 students and there are around 200 additional day students. 10 percent of the student body are the international students. Teacher to student ratio is low, and the dorm life is warm, small and tight. It has the largest high school endowment in the US, (over 1 billion dollars)
 - Phillips Academy Andover is the rival, equally as good school of Phillips Exeter, except it is in Andover, MA and their mascot is a gorilla.
 - Also some of the most elite schools to look into: Groton (great financial aid program, small school,) Deerfield Academy, Lawrenceville Academy, Choate Rosemary Academy, Hotchkiss,

The Governor's School, Ms. Porter's School, West Nottingham Academy, Tabor Academy, St. Paul's Academy, etc..

- o Google these schools and stalk their websites as much as you can! Visit if you can, but don't worry if not.
- o Remember---there's more to the school than just the name! You can find your right fit anywhere!
 - Take into consideration financial aid. Thoroughly research each school's policy.

Applying!

Different schools have their own applications, but in general they all have the same characteristics.

- Apply to some top notch schools with lower acceptance rates but also apply to some schools with higher acceptance rates. This just makes sure that you are exploring all your options and have the best chance to get a great education. Getting into the lowest acceptance rate schools is always hard and you shouldn't count on it. You can and should definitely try though!

Start early! Apps open early fall, and I suggest getting an early start on them.

Application

- o 2 essays. Most schools will want you to write 1-2 short essays. They can be on topics like "something about which you are passionate," or "tell us about your neighborhood and how it shaped you growing up," etc..
 - Be careful to use only the best grammar in the essay. Good sentence structure and no typos is a must. It is also imperative that you show yourself. Do not put a list of accomplishments. Only show your true original self. Don't worry about the admission officers liking it or not. Worry about writing a good essay that brings out a part of you. The essay should be written in your style and your voice---no fancy words you had to look up in the dictionary. This is your chance to present your true character to the admission officers. Be you!
- o Recommendations
 - Should be from a math/science teacher and a humanities teacher. For some schools, you also need a principal's note. Accommodate as well as you can with your teachers, perhaps showing them articles on how to write the recommendation letters and show them examples.

Useful link: <https://www.thebalance.com/sample-college-references-2062901>

- o Interview

- You can schedule interview through Skype with alumni or an admission officer depending on the school. Again, be yourself. Show them you are a nice kid. Tell them about your favorite classes, favorite books, how you spend your time. Prepare what you want them to know a bit beforehand. Be formal. Don't curse. I'm going to say that again. Don't curse.
- o Application fee
 - Most schools have a 75-100 dollar fee. Don't worry, you can get them to give you a fee waiver. Email the admission officer and ask for a fee waiver. Easy as that. Depending on the school, there might be different policies.
- o Standardized Testing
 - Usually prep schools want you to take the SSAT or the ISEE. Depending what grade you are, you might also be allowed to take the PSAT or the SAT. These tests may not be offered in your country. If they are not, then you may either go to another country to take them or simply request a local test center to host the ISEE.
 - If you are international you may need to also take the TOEFL. A good score >90 is recommended.
 - To prep for the tests, ask older students to loan you books. Ask your local library or your local news center for the prep books. Amazon is a good option for prep books for SSAT/ISEE and TOEFL. Incredible resource for the SAT and PSAT is [khanacademy.com](https://www.khanacademy.com). All the prep in there is for free! <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>
- o Transcript from middle school in English, with an explanation of the grading system, to be mailed or uploaded.
- o Financial aid
 - Different places to apply for financial aid in different schools. Best to read the school policy and instructions. Make sure to email the financial aid office or admission officers with questions---though not too often.

In the apps, show the passionate, knowledge-loving young person that you are. What makes you stick out from others? Admission officers read 4000 apps. What makes your app and your life different from all the others? If you can tell your story in such a captivating way and truly show them what is so special about you, you are all in. Now get there and crush it. Also: Apply to Exeter. Just do it. Email questions to me at megi.t001@gmail.com (Megi)

b) United World Colleges

<http://www.al.uwc.org/>

c) **Schools in Switzerland**

The international Swiss boarding schools are some of the most prestigious and the most expensive academic institutions in the world. Their high tuition rates also mean that they give a small number of very large scholarships to attend their incredible educational experience. Some of the main Swiss boarding schools that offer scholarships to international students are Aiglon College, Leysin American Schools, Institut Le Rosey, and the International School of Schaffhausen.

Swiss boarding schools mainly offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, which is completed in the last two years of high school. While there are exceptions, the Swiss schools (as most IB schools) give scholarships only during the last two years of high school.

One of the main aspects of the Swiss education is the well-roundedness and an active local life -- it is not enough to be a good student, you need to be a good citizen. The schools will require you to take part in a myriad of different activities, often not of scholastic nature such as arts, sports, and volunteering. In most Swiss boarding schools skiing is a mandatory activity during the winter season, and after-school activities such as hiking, running, climbing are also mandatory. Thus, students who show a great ambition of keeping up an academic standard while being active outside of the classroom are the preferred profile.

d) **Schools in the United Kingdom**

For many centuries, the United Kingdom has been a first choice destination by many students, since it is home to some of the most prestigious colleges and universities. Starting from lively and dynamic London and going on with famous student cities such as Oxford and Cambridge in England or Cardiff in Wales, the United Kingdom offers an endless range of choices that suit any character, academic ambition or personal preference.

English pre-university education is mainly based on two pillars: the A Level Program and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Choosing one or the other is a completely personal decision that can be influenced by the student's goals for the university destination, scientific or social inclinations or his beliefs in terms of a balance between the academic knowledge and extra-curricular activities that the program can offer.

A Level is about selecting 3-4 subjects that are studied over a two-year period. The schools that offer this program encourage students to focus on the mastery of the subjects they have chosen. This program is highly preferred by local universities, but is also embraced by a large number of educational institutions in Europe.

Several colleges offering scholarships for the A Level in UK are:

- **Cardiff Sixth Form College**
- **Kings Education**
- **Abbey Colleges**
- **CATS Canterbury**

International Baccalaureate (IB) also extends for two years, but unlike A Level, students have to choose 6 subjects, 3 of which are in the High level and 3 in the Standard Level. The program focuses on the balance of scientific and social subjects and emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive academic, cultural, social and physical formation. IB is considered a highly competitive qualification to get a place in the most prestigious universities in England, USA, Europe and many top universities in the world.

Some colleges offering scholarships for the IB in the UK are:

- Saint Clare's, Oxford.
- CATS Canterbury
- UWC

(Rea)

e) International boarding schools in other places


St. Gilgen International School, Austria

Eastern Mediterranean International School, Israel

Think Global School, International

4. Standardized testing.

When applying to colleges in the US, Europe and around the world you become part of an international pool of applicants. That means that there are tens of thousands of other students just like you applying to a specific program or college. Even though these prestigious schools have their own system of admission, they get more than 30,000 applications a year. The number might



be lower for some universities or if you are applying for a high school program, but at some state universities in the US this number can go up to 79,000.

No matter how many admissions officers there are employed to read these applications, it is not an easy task. Aside from the huge number of applicants every year, there comes another factor which is the diversity of the students applying. While it might be easier for admissions officers to understand the grades and other school performances of applicants from the US or Europe (depending on where you are applying), it is not that easy to read applications and understand grades from private or state schools in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro etc. Consequently at most universities all applicants are required to take standardized tests that will let the admissions officers understand better the students' test-taking skills and capabilities and predict the success these applicants will have at university based on their test scores and other criteria about which you will read later.


There are many standardized tests students take, however the ones that are usually required re:

1) SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test

The SAT is the most widely known standardized test taken by students who want to attend college in the US. It is designed by the CollegeBoard and contains math, evidence based reading and writing questions. It has been redesigned and the New SAT has been launched in March 2016.

It is scored on a scale from 400-1600 and it has subscores and cross-test scores which allow admissions officers and the students understand their performance better in certain areas like Social Sciences or Math. It has an optional essay which is not required by all colleges, but is recommended. It lasts for 3 hours without the essay and 3 hours and 50 minutes with the optional essay.

It has 2 Math sections, one without a calculator and has 20 questions which you need to answer in 25 minutes, and a section in which you can use an approved calculator containing 38 questions which you can solve in 55 minutes. It has 2 other sections containing passages and evidence-based reading (52 questions, 65 minutes) and writing questions (44 questions, 35 minutes). Unlike the Old SAT in the redesigned SAT there are no negative points, so there is no guessing penalty and you can try to answer every question without having to calculate the risk giving a wrong answer. For more information about the SAT, please check College Board's official site: www.collegeboard.org

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- 2) SAT Subject Tests
 - 3) ACT
 - 4) TOEFL/IELTS
 - 5) PSAT

You SHOULD start preparing for these tests ahead of time; sometimes in the US they start preparing for the SAT as soon as 3 years ahead! There are practice books you can find by a simple Google but also online free resources such as SAT Khan Academy preparation: <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>. Use this resources and prepare ahead of time. (Edita)

5. Summer Programs.

All the below-mentioned summer programs offer partial to full scholarships for talented students.

Launch X (previously known as “MIT Launch”: <http://www.launchx.com/>

Yale Young Global Scholars: <http://globalscholars.yale.edu/>

Rustic Pathways: <https://rusticpathways.com/how-it-works/financial-aid/>

Where There Be Dragons:

<https://www.wheretherebedragons.com/students/admissions/scholarships-financial-aid/>

Oxford Royale Academy: <https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/students/scholarships>

Leadership in the Business World- Wharton School:

<https://www.wharton.upenn.edu/leadership-business-world/>

Leangap: <https://leangap.org/admissions.html>

6. Extracurriculars.

The odds are that you have a life outside of academics and school—and I hope you do. During the time you spend out of school and not doing any school related work you must invest quality time on your passions. *Quality* is the key word here. There is no formula for how to have great achievements out of school that are related to your passions but it is crucial for you to have them. Top schools are not looking for straight As students who spend all their time in the library; they are looking for students who possess some kind of uniqueness. You can develop your uniqueness by getting involved in out of school activities related to your talents. As we will go through it below, you will see that it is rather about the quality than the quantity.

Depending on the person, not everyone has to go through each of the steps listed below. You have probably been through some of them but even if you have not, you are not alone.

1. Remember quality over quantity? You are going to ignore it for the first step. First, join as many clubs and try as many things as you can if you are even slightly interested in them. This can be easily done by joining after school clubs, using the internet to learn new skills, or attend various events. The whole point is to find what you like or are passionate about. If you pursue something that you are passionate about you will be motivated to achieve more in that area of interest.
2. After you have explored and you know what your strengths and passions revolve around it is time to concentrate. Commit yourself to a community/activity based on the field of interest. It might be a club, organization, team, etc.. If you cannot find one where you live you can join an online community or, even better, create one yourself. The whole point is to start becoming more knowledgeable and involved with what interests you.

Extracurricular opportunities in Albania

Before seeking to go to a international school with more opportunities, you need to show that you have taken advantage of all the local ones available to you. Here's a list of local organisations in Albania which work with youth:

- Fundjavë Ndryshe (<https://ffn.al/>)
- AIESEC Albania (<https://www.facebook.com/AIESECALbania/>; <https://aiesec.org/>)
- American Corner, US Embassy Youth Council (<http://useycalbania.org/>)
- Protik Innovation Center (<https://www.facebook.com/ProtikCenter/>; <http://www.protik.org/>)
- Albania's Business Generation (<https://abg.org.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/abg.org.al/>)
- Junior Achievement Albania (<http://junior-albania.org/>; <https://www.facebook.com/JuniorAchievementOfAlbania/>)
- Lëviz Albania (<http://www.levizalbania.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/LevizAlbania/>)
- Balkans Youth Council (<https://www.facebook.com/bycouncil.org/>)
- European Youth Parliament (<http://eyp.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Eypalbania/>)
- Political Youth Forums
- Outdoor Ambassadors (<https://www.facebook.com/OutdoorTirana/>; <http://oatirana.com/>)
- Kryqi I Kuq/ Red Cross (<http://www.kksh.org.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/kkshselia/>)
- UN Youth Association of Albania (<http://www.unyaa.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/UNYouthAlbania/>)

- Department of Youth of Tirana Activities (<http://tirana.gov.al/>; <https://www.facebook.com/rinoretirane/>)

To look up upcoming local, regional, and international opportunities feel free to use the following sites:

- <http://mundesi.al/>


Remember, as mentioned before, it is not about the number of activities you take part in, but the quality of the impact that your work has in your local community. If none of the groups in your country align with the sort of work that you want to be engaged with, start something on your own!

7. For university students.

a) Universities in the US

I am going to be honest about this one: US colleges are a big deal! So maybe, if you want to increase chances to get admitted or at least have a really good application process, it is better to get ahead of things. Here are some tips that will help you make a peaceful transition from the quiet years of high school to a very demanding process. These are some steps that I strongly consider completing ahead of your senior year:


1. Do a lot of research! It is really important that you have a very clear idea on what you want to pursue studies. There are a lot of really good universities that have rankings in specific fields of study. If you have it all figured out before applying that would be great. But even if you don't, many of US colleges offer the chance to change your subject or major through your academic experience there. Here is a helpful link of university rankings in specific fields of study: <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings>
2. Start studying and being examined for the SAT. The senior year is going to be a struggle for many reasons: applying to colleges, maintaining a good academic performance, engaging in extracurricular activities. Studying for the SAT requires a fairly good amount of time (at least it did for me), so don't let that get in your way of increasing the chances of being admitted to a US college.
3. Talk to your parents about the financial resources they can support you with. The primary financial resources for many Albanian students in general are their parents. If you click the above link I have attached, you will also find information about the financial aid that universities offer to international students, and there are not many that offer need-blind



admission to international students. Every university has their own writing supplement, which can be very demanding and time consuming, which also generally requires a lot of critical thinking. Although I strongly encourage you to try any chance at any desired academic institution, I also advise you to carefully explore all the financial details that accompany them and their admission, so you don't waste time applying somewhere you know you cannot afford.

4. Having a good looking transcript is definitely not at the end of the checklist, but it is also not on the top. Of course, there is a certain average which is required for you to be taken into consideration as a strong applicant, but you don't necessarily have to be stellar to be a good candidate in the eyes of the admission officers. Rather being a robot, be passionate about what you're learning, especially in the field you want to expand your studies on. If there is one particular subject that you can definitely set aside from the other ones, vastly engage in it. Some options of engaging are participating in Olympiads, tutoring for other students, helping your classmates, organizing projects etc. Our education system is not well-known for having very inclusive activities, but you can make them on your own.
5. Engage in the community, especially if you are undecided. The people you volunteer for are not the only ones who are going to benefit from you: you are too! By engaging in the community, you have the opportunity to gain a lot: first you help people and that is what gradually upgrades your soul to a noble level. Second, by engaging to the community you expose your personality to a large audience, thus giving yourself the chance to create more memories and have more personal experiences. And third, but definitely not last, volunteer action will be a great way to decide what you want to do in the future. You never know how particular situations can affect your desire to pursue a specific field of study in college. So, in your free time try to maximally engage in the community and volunteer for those in need.
6. Familiarize with the Common App in the very beginning. The Common App has a recovery period from July to August, and it will be back on September, ready for the US colleges applicants to be used. Now, the Common App is a commonly used platform, chosen by an agreement from a majority of American universities to facilitate the application process of all the students. The Common App has a lot of fields to be completed and a lot of sections that are formal (passport number, nationality etc). Make sure you complete these fields ahead of starting the application process or the writing supplements of universities (Many universities have writing supplements).

The application process



In order to facilitate the application process of both domestic and international students to US colleges, a majority of universities have participated in a platform called the Common App. I strongly recommend that you first get acquainted with this platform and get rid of all the formalities that they require like nationality. A very important section on this platform is the extracurricular section where you can list all your extra curricular activities and have usually one sentence to describe your level of involvement. Another really important section of the Common App is the recommendation section. Make sure you have previously discussed with your teacher and being approved for taking a recommendation from them. You have to make sure because you are going to be jeopardized if they do not respect the deadlines. Besides your teachers, you have the option to also submit recommendations from other mentors, coaches, organization leaders that testify your involvement in extracurricular activities. You might want to talk to them as well.

A bit regarding the common app essay.

This essay is for the sole exact purpose to get to know you better. Having a compelling story is a great bonus to receiving a welcoming letter from your dream university. The topics that are enabled for this essay are designed specifically so that you express a very important and identifying part of you. This is not about showing that you are better than anyone: they want to know you for the real you. Whatever topic you choose do not try to make the standard structure where in the end you are the one who is better than anyone. Let them know a more human, humble and humankind side of you. There are ten thousands of application essays and that is the main factor that sets you apart from other students. What you want is to be remembered in the eyes of the admission officers, somebody with a unique story and that can offer something to the community.

As I mentioned earlier, many universities have their writing supplements. It is very important that you answer exactly to the question they are asking. One thing I mentioned earlier: RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH! Your dream school doesn't have to be necessarily ranked first to be like that. Make sure you find the right fit for you. There are many social media like Quora Digest where you can ask questions about social life, clubs, academic rigorosity to the current students in those universities. There are many online blogs where students write about the social life at their universities and that is a great way to get to know the real nature of the university. (Greis)

Students in Albania should also take advantage of [Qendra Informative e Arsimit Amerikan ne Shqiperi \(EDUSA-UMB\)](#) which offers free counselling to students interested to start their bachelors in the USA.

Online resources for college application preparation: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/study-in-usa>

b) Apart from the US universities there are many other universities in the world which offer undergraduate (bachelor) and graduate (masters, PhD) for international students. Below you some of the most comprehensive lists to these scholarships:

a) Bachelor/ Undergraduate:

<http://www.scholars4dev.com/category/level-of-study/undergraduate-scholarships/> ;'

b) Master's/ Graduate:


<http://www.scholars4dev.com/category/level-of-study/masters-scholarships/>

8. Blueprint

What is the ASE?

The Albanian Scholarship Effort(ASE) is an initiative founded by a group of Albanian students in world's best universities in order to help create a generation of intellectual leaders for their country. The ASE team offers pro bono college counseling for talented and ambitious low-income Albanian students who want to study abroad through scholarships. Through advocating quality education, local activism, and international citizenship, the ASE aims to grow a generation of intellectual leaders who will become changemakers for a better future.

The ASE believes that leadership and education go hand in hand, ergo instead of simply offering college counseling, we decided to devise a two-year mentorship program for 10 selected Albanian students from the ages 12 to 15. While the end goal of this two-year program is for the students to receive international scholarships, the most fundamental goal is for the student to *learn how to be locally active*.



We try to teach this concept by requiring our students to do a local project which aims to solve a local problem in their community. This on-field experience, combined with the guidance of our experienced mentors, will give life to the "leadership gene" of our students at a young age. The local project is the focus of the first year of the two year mentorship. During this year the student will also go over a designed leadership-focused curriculum with their respective mentor, treating subjects such as the nature of leadership, volunteering, responsible citizenship, and social change.

The second year will continue to grow on the idea of leadership, but the attention will be more on the details of applying to schools abroad — the application process, essays, recommendations, standardized testing, and interviews.

Is there an ASE for your country?

If you are a student from a least developed country who is studying for a scholarship in a prestigious academic institution abroad, you should consider creating *your very own ASE*. Creating the ASE was simple, but not easy. Many other countries have their own versions of ASE: Slovakia has "LEAF", Ukraine has "Ukraine's Global Scholars", the Philippines have "CAMP", Education USA is present in many countries as well. Some of them try to encourage *change* in their countries, some of them simply help students go abroad. We are big advocates for the former. So, before thinking of creating something new, check if there is already an initiative in your country.

If there is not, then here are the basics of creating your very own ASE:

- 1) Find other students from your country who study abroad in order to create a group of dedicated mentors.
- 2) Write down the vision your group, ideally one involving the betterment of your origin country!
- 3) Create an application process to find the most talented students based on your desired criteria.
- 4) Select your stars and help them grow, as good applicants but also good citizens!



....
1357) Make the world a better place!

This is how it should start. Then there are a lot of details which will come up on the way and you will solve them accordingly. Refer to our Student Package (it's in English!) to read about our way of operation and feel free to take whatever you need from it for your own work. Contact us if you need any further advice and we'd be glad to help you!