Frequently Asked Questions

Common Application

What is the senior class size? The senior class (2027) total is 396.

Should I list my class rank? Common App asks about class rank under the Grades portion of the Education section. By default, your class rank will not be reported on your transcript sent to Common App schools. If you choose not to report it to Common App schools, choose 'none'. If you are in the top ten percent of your class and would like to report your rank, list 'exact' for the class rank reporting question. If you list rank, you will need to complete and return the rank reporting form (available soon) to Ms. Dwinells, LASA Registrar, in the main LASA office or scan and email to cynthia.dwinells@austinisd.org. If you have questions about whether you should report rank or not, feel free to talk to your college counselor. Typically, only the top 5 students each year decide to report rank. The reason for this is that, at that level, the GPA margins are so slight, not reporting class rank might actually make you look better. Keep in mind that once class rank is submitted to colleges, this information cannot be retracted.

Which GPA should I list? The only GPA we report on your transcript is the weighted GPA. Next, you'll be asked to select the GPA scale. Choose '4.0' on a weighted scale. This may not, initially, make sense, but the theoretical maximum GPA is 4.8 on a 4.0 scale, reflecting the number of required unweighted courses as well as 1 additional grade point for pre-AP, AP, and advanced courses. All courses are included in the cumulative GPA.

Are there any senior year courses I shouldn't list? Common App allows you to list up to ten senior year courses. Do not include an off-period if you have one. If you have more than ten courses, which is possible because of semester courses, prioritize your list. Your core classes should be listed first followed by electives. Credit value for a year course is 1.0; semester courses should be listed as 0.5.

What does it mean to 'waive' or 'do not waive' access to my recommendation letters? You will see this on the Common App FERPA Release & Authorization section (under Recommenders and FERPA in the My Colleges tab) and perhaps some application forms. Waiving access to your recommendations means you will never, in the future, be able to see them. Colleges prefer that you choose this option because they consider those letters to be the more truthful assessment of you and your abilities and hence, they are given more weight in the admissions decision. (Note: some LASA teachers will only write recommendation letters for students who waive their access.) If you choose, however, not to waive your access, you can see your recommendation in the future, but ONLY at the school at which you decide to enroll (after you are enrolled). Consider this: by that time, you've already been accepted...so really, what's the point?

What is a CBO? In the Education section of Common App, there is a question about community-based organizations (CBO) or programs that have provided you with free assistance in your application process. Examples include Breakthrough Austin, Educational Talent Search, Questbridge, and Con Mi Madre. If you have worked with one of these programs or any of the ones listed, answer accordingly.

Common App asks me if I wish to self-report standardized test scores. Should I? If you are required to submit test scores or choose to report your test scores to a test optional college, you should report your scores here. There are some colleges (mostly private, selective colleges) that are now accepting self-reported scores without the student having to submit official score reports until they confirm that they will enroll. This section also allows you to report scores for AP scores you are most proud of. To students, this usually means AP scores of 4 or 5, but it's totally up to you.

The Activities section allows me to list only ten activities, clubs, internships, etc., but I have more. What should I do? There is an Additional Information option in the Writing section where you can list anything that you couldn't include in the Activities section or if you need to elaborate on any piece of your application.

What is LASA's school code? The code (referred sometimes as the CEEB or ETS code) is 440069. You'll need to list this code on just about every college application and when you're signing up to take SAT, SAT Subject tests, or ACT.

How many colleges should I apply to? A majority of LASA students apply to 6-8 colleges usually consisting of 2-3 reach schools, 3 likely or target schools, and 1-2 safety schools. Typically, the more schools you apply to, the more stress is involved. Our suggestion to those students applying to more schools would be to plan, organize, and prioritize your process accordingly. Be aware of all of your deadlines and create those checkpoints along the way. You want every application you send to be the strongest representation of you as possible.

I see that the colleges I'm applying to are visiting LASA this fall, but I've already been on their campus or have attended a virtual information session. Do I still need to attend the info session? If you can get out of class, yes. Even if it's just to pop in and say hello to the admissions counselor. More likely than not, the person visiting our campus is the first reviewer of your application. They could be very influential in your admissions decision. Introduce yourself, express your strong interest, get their business card, and follow up with a thank you email. Demonstrated interest is very important for some schools, and a small gesture could go a long way. If you can't attend though due to a test, presentation, etc., no worries! Attending virtual information sessions hosted by colleges is also showing demonstrated interest.

Texas A&M University-specific questions on the Common App

Are you enrolled in an early college high school program?
No, LASA is not an early college high school.

How many college credit hours will you have earned by your high school graduation date? If you have not earned any hours enter '0'.
Count only your ACC dual credit here, not AP credit, which you will eventually receive college credit for if you end up attending a Texas public university. Most ACC classes, e.g. Government, Economics, US History, etc., are 3 credit hours each.

Please provide your high school counselor's Name and Phone Number, including area code.
Enter either your academic counselor or college counselor. See directory here. For phone number, enter 512-414-5272.

Coalition Application

My colleges will accept both the Common Application and the Coalition Application. Which one should I use? LASA's recommendation is for students to use the Common Application whenever possible. The drawback is that the Coalition Application, even though you can request school documents through their site, does not allow us to see which schools you are applying to or where our documents are going. We cannot track submission or receipt from the colleges like we can with Common Application member schools. If you decide to use the Coalition Application for schools that also use the Common App, please let your college counselor and recommendation writers know. There are many workarounds we need to explain.

***We understand that there are a handful of colleges that use the Coalition Application exclusively: University of Florida, Virginia Tech, and University of Maryland-College Park. If you are applying to one of those schools, then yes, obviously you need to use the Coalition Application.

Texas A&M University Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR)

Which graduation/diploma plan should I choose?
Choose Foundation Distinguished, which most closely matches the Foundation Program-Distinguished Level of Achievement, Texas's highest graduation plan.

Where do I find a copy of my courses and grades?

Your counselor may have emailed you a copy of your transcript as part of your most recent credit check. If not, you are welcome to email Ms. Zeledon (A-L) at rubi.zeledon@austinisd.org or Mr. Ganesan (M-Z) at vyasar.ganesan@austinisd.org for a copy of your transcript. Or your academic counselor will send you a copy with your senior credit check in early September.

What course level distinction do I choose for non-AP courses?
For a weighted academic course that isn't an AP level, choose Honors as the distinction. There are other distinctions that are comparable, but that's the category that AISD uses. LASA classes that are Regular, non-Honors weight include: the first two years of all languages other than English, Literary Magazine I, Fashion Design I, Art I, all performing arts I and II level courses, Advanced Woodworking, PALS, Sports Medicine I and II, and all physical education courses.

When asked to report middle school courses, how do I know which ones count for high school credit?
Looking at your transcript, the code next to middle school classes is J. Even if you took high school level courses in 7th and 8th grade, you may have to list them all in one year. Also, you won't be able to indicate the middle school where you completed that work. That's fine. A&M realizes there are limitations to the SRAR entry system.

UCAS

What is UCAS?
UCAS, the Universities and College Admissions Service, is an independent charity that manages the application services for all higher education courses in the United Kingdom. When submitting a UCAS application, a student may choose to apply independently or apply through a UCAS approved school or centre. LASA is an approved UCAS centre. The benefit of applying through LASA's centre is this: once you complete your application and pay your application fee, the application comes through LASA's centre to 1) check and approve the qualifications (SAT, ACT, AP exams, pending HS diploma) you entered, 2) provide predicted grades for future test administrations and final GPA and 3) upload your preferred letter of recommendation. After verifying the information, we will send your application directly to UCAS for review by the institutions you selected. Note: it is absolutely fine to apply independently. You will need to enter the name and email address of your referee so they can upload your recommendation directly and enter predicted grades/exam scores.

How do I link to LASA's UCAS centre?
You will be asked to enter a buzzword to link to LASA's UCAS centre. **The buzzword is: LASACOLLEGE**. If you already registered your UCAS account independently but would like to link to LASA's centre, you still can! Click on 'Options' when you are signed in to Apply. Click on 'Link your application to your school, college or organisation' and type in the buzzword. The school name will be displayed for you to check it's correct. Your request is then sent to LASA's centre portal for us to accept, so let us know once you've done it.

What qualifications should I enter into the Education section?
Choose the 'below honours degree level qualifications' option as your highest level of qualification. That's the correct classification for a student coming from an international school. In addition to your AP exams/scores (those taken and also those you plan to take senior year) and SAT or ACT qualifications, be sure to add USA-High School Graduation Diploma with the date May 2024. There is no need to list all of your courses.

I am applying to Oxford or Cambridge and need to take a pre-interview assessment. What's my next step?
LASA is not a testing center for UK applications this year. If you have to take an admissions test for your application process, make sure you register for that at the closest testing center. Here is the link to learn more about the Oxford testing provider. Here is the link for you to explore the Cambridge Testing centers near you.
Keep in mind that Cambridge does not deliver the MAT test anymore. Oxford is in charge of this test now, please click on this link to learn more.

Recommendation Letters

How and when do I ask for Teacher/Counselor Recommendations?
It's fine to ask teachers and your counselor (in person, if possible!) in the fall semester of your senior year**. Be sure to ask at least one month in advance of your first application deadline.** Colleges that use the Common Application require a counselor recommendation letter. If you do not submit your rec materials at least one month before your first college deadline, your counselor reserves the right to check a box on the school report that we are NOT sending a counselor recommendation.

How many recommendation letters do I need?
The more selective colleges and universities (Common Application member schools) typically require three letters of recommendation as part of the application process. These come from:

- High School counselor
- Two classroom teachers (typically one Math or Science and one English or Social Studies)—teachers from core academic subjects (electives within the core are fine) in the junior year are preferred though it's fine to ask teachers from senior year. Sophomore year is usually a little too far back unless that teacher has you again in one of their classes this year; however, this year, it will be fine as it may be harder to connect remotely with your senior teachers.
- Letters from mentors or members of the community are usually permitted (check with your specific colleges), but these are considered supplementary letters and are sent in addition to (not in lieu of) your counselor and teacher recommendations. Same thing goes for letters from fine arts elective teachers. If you are wondering whether you should request an outside rec—after all, too many recs is not always a good thing--ask your college counselor.

Note: when you ask a teacher or a counselor to write your recommendation, they will write one letter and send it to all of your schools. You do not need to ask 5-6 teachers to write for different schools.

I'm only applying to public institutions in Texas. Do I need a recommendation letter?
Texas public institutions, e.g. UT, Texas A&M, etc., do NOT require recommendation letters. Be aware that some schools, like Texas A&M University and The University of Texas at Austin, will only read two recommendation letters. Also, some Honors programs, like UT Business Honors or Natural Sciences Honors, do require a teacher recommendation.

Once my teachers and counselor have agreed to write my letter, what do I need to give them?
You will provide your recommendation writers with the following documents:

- a list of schools you're applying to with appropriate deadlines and applications you're using
- copy of your resume
- student brag sheet responses
- parent brag sheet responses
- teacher interaction sheet (class highlights page)
- any other related documents or items that the recommendation writer requests, e.g. sample work, etc.

Most teachers and counselors would like students to email a Google folder with their rec materials. Be sure to ask your recommendation writers if they prefer an electronic or hard copy. See sample folder here.

Most LASA teachers and all LASA counselors can send your materials to your schools electronically. Add your teacher recommendation requests in the letters of recommendation link in the *system* under the colleges I'm applying to section. Once this is completed, they have access to submit documents on your behalf electronically. Only teachers need to be added in this section, not counselors.

How much time should I give to my recommendation writers?
Please give your teacher, counselor, or college counselor a minimum of one month before the deadline to complete their part of your application and even sooner if you have a December 1st deadline (Thanksgiving holidays fall before this due date) or January 1 deadline (winter holiday break falls before this due date).

What are you looking for exactly in my brag sheet responses?

Students—this shouldn't be cause for stress. Think about it as good practice for your college application essays. We're especially looking for things that won't already be presented in your application. We want to provide a new, interesting glimpse of you as a student and individual. Parents—this is your chance to brag, brag, brag since most students tend to be pretty modest in their responses. We love the brag sheets, especially parent brag sheets. Give us lots of examples and anecdotes; they make your letters come to life!