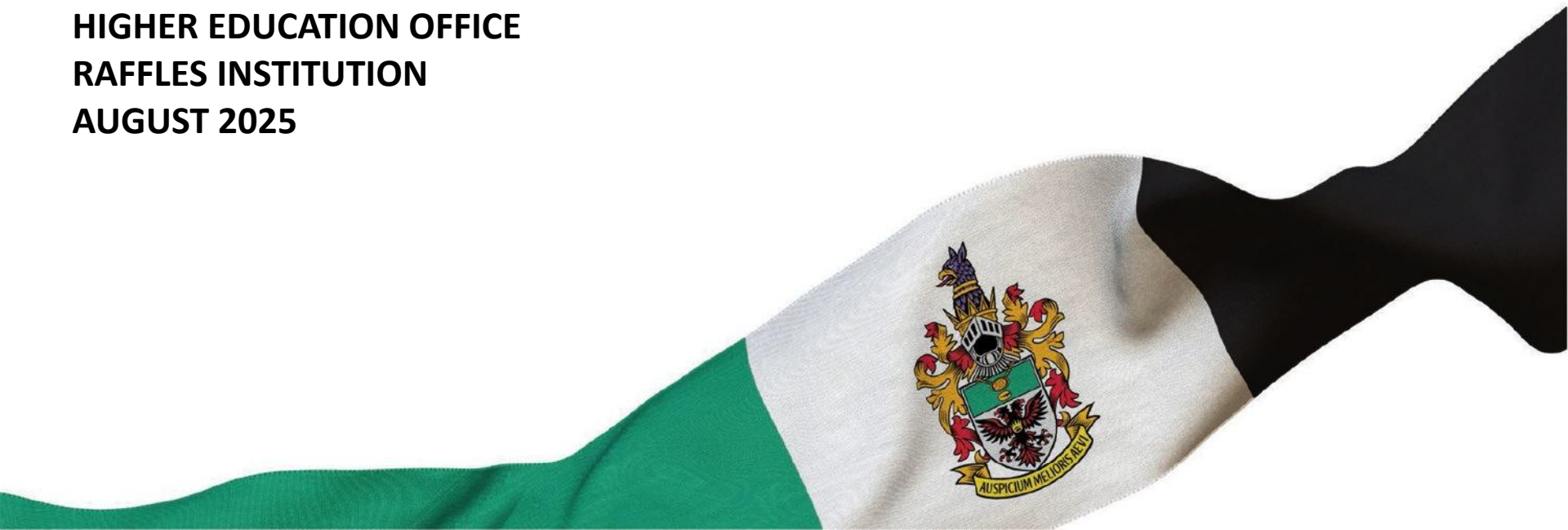


# **COMMON APP AND CIALFO GUIDE**

## **FOR ALUMNI WHO HAVE APPLIED IN PREVIOUS CYCLES**

**HIGHER EDUCATION OFFICE  
RAFFLES INSTITUTION  
AUGUST 2025**



# CONTENT

- 1) Counsel & Key US Deadlines
- 2) What is Common App and Cialfo?
- 3) Common Application (CA) account
  - Setting Up
  - Details for filling up sections
  - FERPA Waiver
- 4) **Reactivating Cialfo Account**
  - Reactivating Cialfo
  - Re-linking with CA Account
  - School List
- 5) Teacher Recommendations
- 6) Early Application Programs vs Regular Decision
- 7) Non-CA Schools

**#HEOprotip:** Be aware that activation of Cialfo can **take up to a week**. Avoid last-minute rush: **set up Cialfo asap**. Good to do this in **by late Sep (for Early) or late Oct (for Regular)**. This means slides #11-#22, #24-#32. Don't procrastinate on this.

# *Before you go further, words of counsel*

- While the academic system in the US remains one of the best places for interdisciplinary learning, given the current geopolitical and social climate in the US, it is wise to first and foremost consider the environment you can thrive in, and to keep a close watch on geopolitical events.
- Your key question: **is the US right now an environment you are ready to take on for four years, and can thrive in? Are you prepared to deal with sudden policy changes, which may upend your university education?**

# *Before you go further, words of counsel*

- Good US apps take **months** of time, effort and work. It should **not** be initiated out of FOMO, or on a whim.
- It also involves your teachers. Be considerate thus in adhering to **RI deadlines**, so that you give your teachers sufficient time to help *you*. The next slide shows the **deadlines to adhere to**.
- For alumni who have applied before: consider well what you can cope with now, given your own NS commitments. **HEO's recommendation is 5-8 schools**, so that quality of writing is not compromised. Should you wish to apply to more, that's fine: simply ensure you adhere to Common App's limit, and are being sensible and realistic about things.
- HEO closes **28 Nov**. Any requests thereafter to open CIALFO accounts will **not** be accepted. **Students reading this after the office closes are strongly advised against applying**. Late apps rarely, if ever, yield. *Timelines* and the US writing guide were published since May for this reason.

# KEY US DEADLINES TO ADHERE TO

SUN 5 OCT	<b>Last day</b> for Early applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u>
FRI 17 OCT 1700hrs	<b>Last day</b> for Early applicants to confirm Early school list and application plan <u>on CIALFO</u> .
SAT 1 NOV	Deadline to submit your application package for most Early application plans
1 OCT – 1 DEC	UC application period on <u>UC portal</u>
FRI 21 NOV	<b>Last day</b> for Regular applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u>
FRI 28 NOV	HEO closes for the year to process applications
MON 15 DEC 1700hrs	<b>Last day</b> for Regular applicants to confirm Regular school list <u>on CIALFO</u>
EARLY JAN - FEB	Deadline to submit your application package for most Regular application plans

The detailed timeline is available on IVY (for current students) and our open RI website (for alumni).

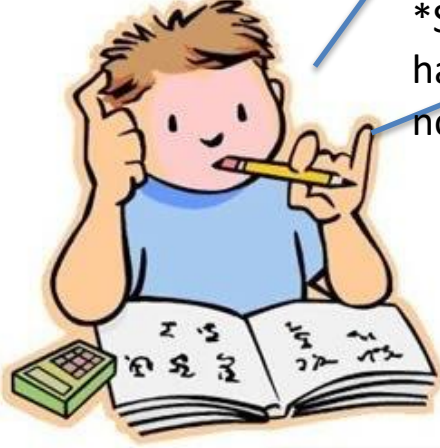
# COMMON APP AND CIALFO

common  
app



Your apps are sent  
once payment is  
made

Student submits  
applications (educational  
info, activities and  
honors, essays)



\*Some colleges like MIT and UCs  
have a separate portal that does  
not use CA and Cialfo



Your transcripts,  
references and other  
documents are sent by the  
Higher Education Office

Student requests  
recommendations via CIALFO



CIALFO



Teacher deposits  
recommendations  
and evaluations

# COMMON APPLICATION

It is an undergraduate college admission application portal that you will use for applying to its member colleges (mainly US, although it also includes some Canadian, European, Japan and HK schools).



FIND A COLLEGE Plan for college ▾ Apply to college ▾ Support your students

Sign in

Create an account

# Your future starts here

Apply to college for the first time or transfer to complete your degree. Navigate your entire college application journey with Common App.



# COALITION



It is another undergraduate college admission application portal. However, we **cannot support** the transmission of your transcripts and teacher recommendations over Coalition.

**For schools with a choice of CA/Coalition, you should choose CA.**

**Important:** For Coalition-only schools, inform us in advance of the specific materials required, and exactly how your documents are to be delivered, if required. We will facilitate according to the instructions of the university. **As the office will be closed from 28<sup>th</sup> Nov, please inform us before this date if any documents are required to be sent on your behalf.** All late requests will only be processed when school reopens in Jan 2026.



# Schools on their own portals: To-dos

- **MIT:** apply directly via the MIT portal. Ping your tutors directly from the MIT portal for references. Do so by our **internal RI deadlines**.
- **University of California (UCs):** Apply directly via the UC portal. All apps are self-reported, and there is no need for teacher recommendations.
- **Georgetown:** Apply directly on Georgetown's portal. Ping your CT (Counsellor) for the reference & school report as needed.

You should include all these schools in Cialfo (see Slides 51-55). This is to facilitate the later stage of offers & acceptances, where relevant.

The list above is non-exhaustive. Please check with HEO at [collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg](mailto:collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg) if unsure. Do not apply out of FOMO!

# COMMON APPLICATION ACCOUNT (CA)

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

Goto [www.commonapp.org](https://www.commonapp.org)

You can login with the same account you have from the previous cycle. Answer some simple prompts.

Hi, Stamford! Welcome back.

Welcome to the new application year. Before you continue, please answer a few questions so we can update your account.

Which best describes you? ? \*

- ☐ Applying as a first-year student and plan to start college in 2025 or 2026
- ☐ Planning to start college in 2027
- ☐ Planning to start college in 2028 or beyond
- ☐ Already a college student
- ☐ Transferring colleges

Cancel

Continue

## College list updates

Which colleges would you like to keep on your list? ?

- ☐ Keep all of my colleges
- ☐ Carnegie Mellon University

Back

Continue

## Account updates

Is Raffles Institution your current or most recent high school? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you currently based in a European Union country, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom? \*

Refer to our [European Union General Data Protection Regulation FAQ](#) for more information.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Back

Done

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

You will need to fill in your Profile, Family, Education etc again.

The screenshot shows the Common App dashboard interface. On the left is a sidebar with the 'common app' logo at the top. Below the logo, there's a 'Dashboard' link with a home icon. Underneath, there are two sections: 'APPLY' containing 'My Common Application' (with a document icon) and 'My colleges' (with a graduation cap icon); and 'EXPLORE' containing 'College search' (with a magnifying glass icon), 'Direct admissions' (with a document icon), and 'Financial aid' (with a dollar sign icon). At the bottom of the sidebar are 'Settings' (with a gear icon) and 'Sign out' (with a sign-out icon). At the very bottom of the sidebar is a user profile section showing a person icon, the name 'Stamford Raffles', and the CAID '38108800'.

The main content area has a dark blue header with a white illustration of a person sitting and reading under a crescent moon, with a telescope and a guitar nearby. To the right of the illustration, it says 'Good evening, Stamford!'. Below the header, the word 'Dashboard' is displayed in large, bold letters. Underneath, there's a section titled 'My Common Application' with a caret icon. Below this title, it says '0/6 sections complete' above a progress bar. Below the progress bar are six links, each with a circular icon and a text label: 'Profile', 'Family', 'Education', 'Testing', 'Activities', and 'Writing'. Below this is another section titled 'My colleges' with a caret icon. Underneath this title is a large illustration of a paper airplane flying towards the right, with a dashed line indicating its path. Below the illustration, it says 'Nothing here yet! Add some colleges to your list to get started.'

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “PROFILE” and “FAMILY”

Pretty self-explanatory.

In **“Geography and Nationality”** under **Profile**, If you already have a U.S visa, check the category you belong to accordingly.

For all Singaporeans and other non-US citizens, you will have to apply for a visa if you do not already have one. The visa type is **F-1 Student**.

The screenshot shows the 'My Common Application' profile page. On the left is a sidebar with a navigation menu containing icons for Home, Profile, Search, Documents, and Settings. The main content area is titled 'My Common Application' and lists several sections: Demographics, Language, Geography and Nationality (which is highlighted with a blue border), Common App Fee Waiver, Family, Education, Testing, Activities, Writing, and Courses & Grades. To the right of the sidebar, the 'Geography and Nationality' section is expanded, showing a 'List countries of citizenship\*' dropdown menu with 'Singapore' selected. Below this is a question 'Do you currently hold a valid U.S. Visa?\*' with radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No', where 'No' is selected. There is a 'Clear answer' button. Another question 'Do you intend to apply for a new or different U.S. Visa?' has radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No', where 'Yes' is selected, with another 'Clear answer' button. At the bottom, the 'Visa type' dropdown menu shows 'F-1 Student' selected. A blue 'Continue' button is at the bottom right.

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “PROFILE” and “FAMILY”

Note that some questions are not compulsory. Respond to the compulsory questions truthfully, for example, questions pertaining to your parents’ education level, degree and year of obtaining the degree(s). Your application may be voided/rescinded if you are found to have provided false information.

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “EDUCATION”

- Current or Most Recent School: School CEEB Code: 687241
- Date of entry: Jan 202x (RGS/JAE Class of 202y), Jan 202z (RI Class of 202y). Amend accordingly if different.
- Graduation Date: Dec 202y.
- Counselor’s first name/last name: Your CT’s first name/last name.
- Grades:
  - ✓ Class rank reporting: None
  - ✓ Graduating class size: 1200 (for all applicable cohorts)
  - ✓ GPA: Leave this blank as we do not calculate GPA
- Current or Most Recent Year Courses:
  - ✓ Course Title, etc: List all H1, H2, H3 subjects. For example, GCE Advanced Level H2 Mathematics, GCE Advanced Level H3 Economics, etc.
- Course Level: N/A, as none of the options are applicable
- Course schedule: Full Year
- Honors: Refer to our US writing guide on IVY (current students) or WWW (alumni).



# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “TESTING”

Self-report SAT/ACT/TOEFL scores, if you have them.

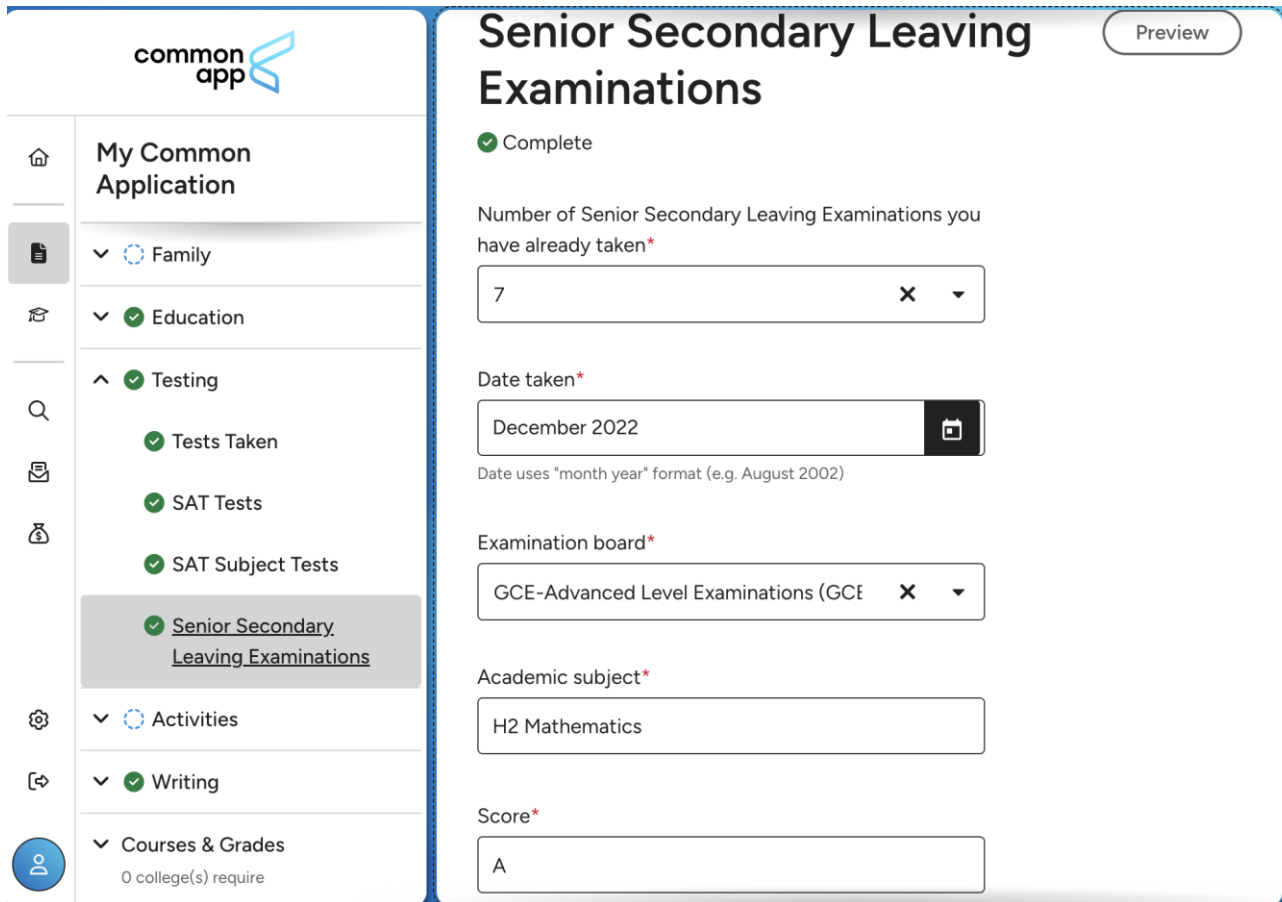
**#HEOprotip:** For colleges which are test-optional this year, it is not necessary to send in your official report at point of application—you can self-report them for now in Common App. *Then only* if you are offered a place *and decide to enrol*, will you need to request for the official test scores from Collegeboard to be sent over to your university for verification. This will help save some \$ on your end. :)

For “Is promotion within your educational system based on standard leaving examinations given at the end of lower and/or senior secondary school by a state or national leaving examinations board?”, select “**Yes**”.

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “TESTING” (Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations)

Key in the same number of courses as in your transcript, which should be consistent with the Education section later.



The screenshot shows the Common App interface. On the left is a navigation menu with icons and labels: 'My Common Application', 'Family', 'Education', 'Testing' (expanded), 'Tests Taken', 'SAT Tests', 'SAT Subject Tests', 'Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations' (highlighted), 'Activities', 'Writing', and 'Courses & Grades'. The main content area is titled 'Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations' with a 'Preview' button. It contains several input fields: 'Number of Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations you have already taken\*' with a value of 7; 'Date taken\*' with a date picker set to December 2022; 'Examination board\*' with a dropdown set to 'GCE-Advanced Level Examinations (GCE)'; 'Academic subject\*' with a text input set to 'H2 Mathematics'; and 'Score\*' with a text input set to 'A'. A green checkmark and the word 'Complete' are at the top of the form.

Additionally: Some universities require a full set of self-reported grades, from Grade 9 (Sec 3) onwards. If they do, **fill this in.** Report all exams and grades accurately as in your transcript: do **NOT** leave out anything.

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT

## “ACTIVITIES” AND “WRITING”

Refer to our US writing guides on IVY (current students) or [WWW](#) (alumni).

#HEOprotip: spend proper time and effort on the 10 Activities. They are the links to your essays, such that consistency in the whole is kept.

# COMMON APP ACCOUNT - FERPA WAIVER

Under “My Colleges” section in CA, add at least one college you are applying to in order to be able to match your CA account with Cialfo.

You also need to complete the ‘Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School’ question in the Education section of your Common App.

You can add colleges via “college search”.

# FERPA WAIVER

Once you have added a school, under the “My Colleges” tab, under ‘Recommenders and FERPA’, you need to **sign the FERPA waiver and authorization to release transcripts.**

The screenshot displays the Common App interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with icons for home, documents, education, search, messages, money, settings, and a profile. The main content area is titled 'My colleges' and shows 'Carnegie Mellon University' selected. Under 'College information', the 'APPLICATION' section lists several categories: General, Academics (marked with a green check), Contacts, Family, 'Recommenders and FERPA' (highlighted with a grey background), 'Review and Submit - Common App', and 'Writing Questions' (under the 'WRITING SUPPLEMENT' heading). The right-hand panel is titled 'Recommenders and FERPA' and indicates the status is 'In progress'. It contains a paragraph explaining that recommenders submit forms on behalf of the student and that each college has different requirements. Below this is a section for 'FERPA Release Authorization' with an exclamation mark icon, stating that users must complete the FERPA release authorization process before inviting counselors, teachers, recommenders, parents, or advisors. A link 'Learn more about FERPA' is provided. At the bottom of this panel are two blue buttons: 'Complete Release Authorization' and 'Continue'.

common app

My colleges

^ Carnegie Mellon University

College information

APPLICATION

- General
- ✓ Academics
- Contacts
- Family
- Recommenders and FERPA**
- Review and Submit - Common App

WRITING SUPPLEMENT

- Writing Questions

My colleges | Carnegie Mellon University | Application

## Recommenders and FERPA

In progress

Recommenders are people who will submit forms to colleges on your behalf. This page shows which recommender types this college needs. Each college will have different requirements.

**FERPA Release Authorization**

Before you can invite your counselor, teachers, recommenders, parents, or advisors, you must complete the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release authorization process.

[Learn more about FERPA](#)

[Complete Release Authorization](#)

[Continue](#)

# FERPA WAIVER

Your teachers will only be able to complete the recs after you have waived FERPA. Tick the boxes carefully as you will not be able to change the FERPA status once it is submitted.

× Release authorization

2. In a moment, you'll be asked if you want to waive the right to review these confidential letters of recommendation. What should you know about this waiver?

- Waiving your right lets colleges know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful.
- Some recommenders may decline to write a letter for you if you do not waive your rights. Check with your counselor or teachers to see if any of them follow such a policy.

3. Still unsure how to respond?

- That's OK. Many students are. Before you move on, take a moment to discuss your decision with your counselor, another school official, or your parent/legal guardian. For more information about FERPA, visit the [Help Center](#).

☒ I have read and understood the FERPA Release Authorization explanation above.\*

Continue

× Release authorization

☒ I acknowledge that every school that I have attended may release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also understand that employees at these colleges may confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.\*

Please select one: \*

☒ I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents.

☐ I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents.

☒ I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my selections on this page cannot be changed once I sign and click Save below.\*

Signature \*

Raffles

Date \*

August 11, 2025


Date uses "month day, year" format (e.g. August 1, 2002)

Back

Save and Close

# FERPA WAIVER & RECOMMENDERS

**Do not fill in this section.** We submit all our teacher recommendations on Cialfo, not Common App.



**My colleges**

Overview

^ Carnegie Mellon University

College information

APPLICATION

☐ General

☒ Academics

☐ Contacts

☐ Family

☒ Recommenders and FERPA

☐ Review and Submit - Common App

WRITING SUPPLEMENT

My colleges | Carnegie Mellon University | Application

## Recommenders and FERPA

☒ Complete

Recommenders are people who will submit forms to colleges on your behalf. This page shows which recommender types this college needs. Each college will have different requirements.

☒ FERPA Release Authorization

[View Details](#) ▾

☒ Invite recommenders

Use this section to invite and then [assign recommenders](#) to this college. You'll need to assign recommenders for each college on your list.

Invite Recommenders

☒ Counselor

Your school is using Cialfo for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. If your counselor wishes to submit forms via mail, you can download forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.



# CIALFO ACCOUNT



# CIALFO ACCOUNT

It is a college guidance platform which we use to send off your teacher recommendations and transcripts to the colleges you are applying to.

Note that Cialfo and CA are **separate entities**.

Syncing the two accounts allows us to send off your transcripts correctly.

When adding/deleting specific colleges, you will need to do it on Common App. The school list on Cialfo will be updated naturally via the Common App-Cialfo sync.



# REACTIVATING CIALFO ACCOUNT

Re-activate your Cialfo account by filling up the following form. **Please wait a week for your request to be processed.**

**ALL ALUMNI:**

<https://forms.moe.edu.sg/forms/vrYbz1>

Thereafter, log into your Cialfo account without having to wait for new sign-in details.  
You can use the 'forget password' feature if you have forgotten your password.

# CIALFO ACCOUNT

## IMPORTANT

Once you login, you should first go to your profile, and under application details, edit the Application Year to 2025 as shown below.

### Application details

Application details are incomplete

01 Add Enrollment Year

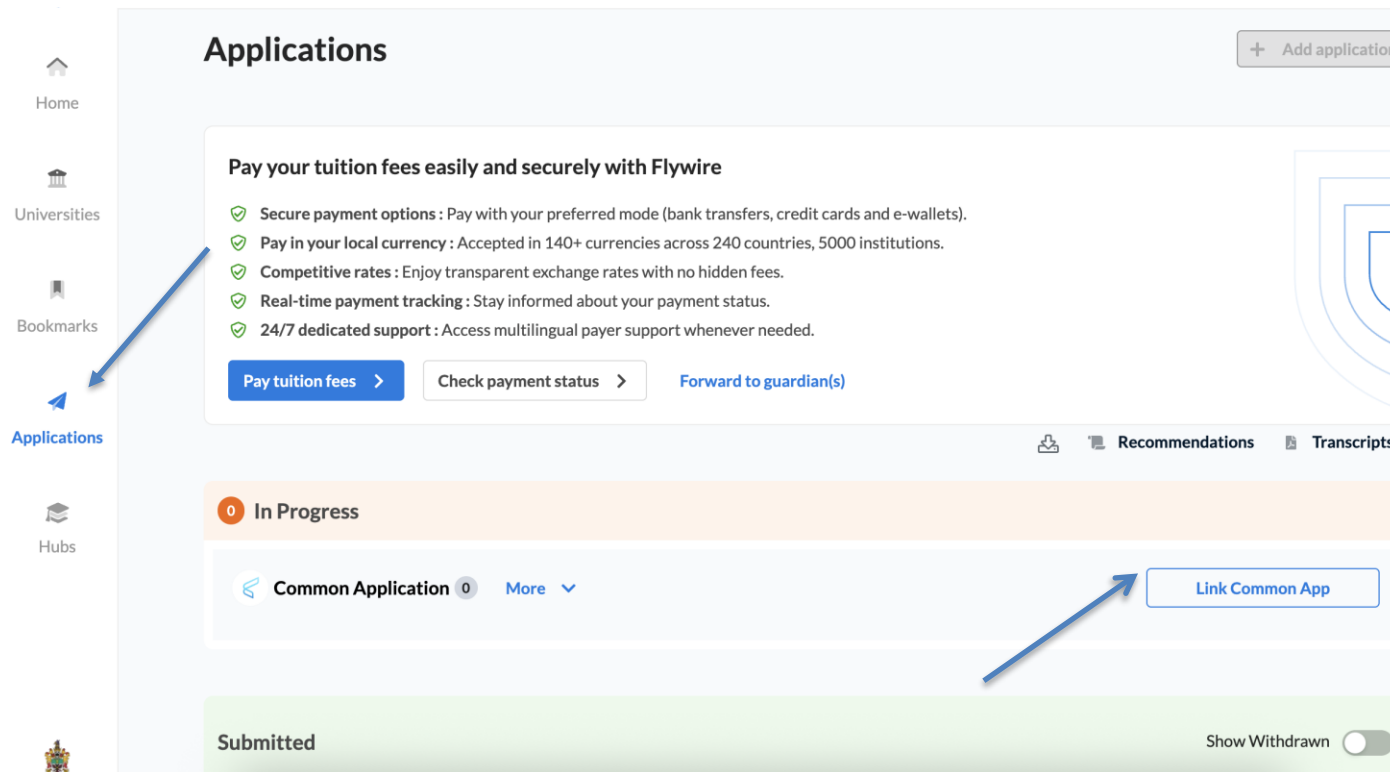
Update now

Degree type	Undergraduate	Application Year	2025
Enrollment Year	No enrollment year yet	Hook/Flags	No hook/flags yet

# LINKING CA AND CIALFO

The next thing you need to do is to **relink** your Common App and Cialfo accounts. Only by doing so, can your transcripts be sent to the colleges you are applying for.

To link, first go to **'Applications'** on the left tab:



Click on “Link Common App”. You will be brought to CA.

# LINKING CA AND CIALFO

Then click on 'Link Account':



< Back



Search for universities, content, careers and more..



Home



Universities



Bookmarks



Applications

## Request letters of recommendations and track their status here

Required Optional

N/A

N/A

**Note:** You currently don't have any recommenders. When you do, they will appear here.

**Note:** Your school has disabled the recommendation request feature for students.

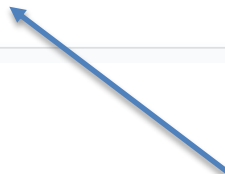
Common App account

✖ Account Not Linked

✖ FERPA Unknown


If you have a Common App account, enter the email address and password when selecting "Link Account". Click "Link Account" to create a Common App account if you don't already have one.

Link account



# LINKING CA AND CIALFO

You will be prompted to login to your CA account, and finally, click on 'Connect and continue' to link CA and Cialfo, and you will be brought back to Cialfo.



## Connect your Common App

First year student? Great! Enter your email and password below to sign in, or [create an account](#) to get started.

\* Indicates required fields.

Email \*

Password \*

  
  
☐ Show password [Forgot password?](#)

Sign in

Need help?  
[Visit the Applicant Solutions Center.](#)

## Connect your account

By checking the box below you will enable Cialfo to access certain information from your Common App account that is necessary for integration and processing.

If you authorize this connection, you will be granting permission to Cialfo to:

- See the status of your applications and recommendations
- View additional Common App data in order to support submitting recommendations on your behalf

☒ I agree \*

Cancel

Connect and continue



# LINKING CA AND CIALFO

To successfully match CA and Cialfo, you must ensure:

## On CA side:

- 1) Your CA account is created (make sure DOB is correct)
- 2) Completed the Education section in CA
- 3) Included at least one college you are applying to in CA
- 4) Signed the CA FERPA

The screenshot shows the Cialfo web interface. On the left is a sidebar with a 'Caf' logo and navigation links: Home, Universities, Bookmarks, and Applications. The main content area has a 'Back' button and a search bar. Below these, a section titled 'Request letters of recommendations and track their status here' contains a table with 'Required' and 'Optional' columns, both showing 'N/A'. Two yellow note boxes follow: 'Note: You currently don't have any recommenders. When you do, they will appear here.' and 'Note: Your school has disabled the recommendation request feature for students.' Below the notes, the 'Common App account' section shows two green status boxes: '✓ Account Linked' and '✓ FERPA Waived'. At the bottom, a box displays 'Common App ID: 47269461' and 'Email: riheo2026@gmail.com', followed by a confirmation message: 'Your Common Application account has been successfully linked to Cialfo. If the displayed information is incorrect, please contact the Common Application to resolve it.'

Required	Optional
N/A	N/A

**Note:** You currently don't have any recommenders. When you do, they will appear here.

**Note:** Your school has disabled the recommendation request feature for students.

**Common App account**    ✓ Account Linked    ✓ FERPA Waived

**Common App ID:** 47269461    **Email:** riheo2026@gmail.com

Your Common Application account has been successfully linked to Cialfo. If the displayed information is incorrect, please contact the Common Application to resolve it.

**SUCCESS!**  
(It may take  
time  
for FERPA  
Waived  
to be  
reflected)

# SCHOOL LIST

When you click on Applications, the school list should be updated from Common App. For colleges not on CA like the UCs, Georgetown and MIT, please add them using the 'Add Application' as shown.

See **Slides 51-55** for important information about applying to non-CA schools.

The screenshot shows the 'Add application' modal in the Common App interface. The modal is titled 'Add application' and has a close button (X) in the top right corner. It contains the following fields and options:

- Select university:** A dropdown menu with 'Georgetown University' selected.
- Select portal:** A section with a blue button labeled 'Other portals'.
- Add course/major:** A dropdown menu with 'Add course/major' selected.
- Mark as submitted:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.

At the bottom right of the modal is a blue button labeled 'Add application'. In the background, the main interface shows a sidebar with 'Applications' selected, a search bar, and a '+ Add application' button in the top right corner. A blue arrow points from the '+ Add application' button in the background to the 'Add application' button in the modal. Another blue arrow points from the 'Add application' button in the modal to the 'Submit on Common App' button in the background.

# SCHOOL LIST



























Your apps from previous cycles will still be visible, but with past deadlines. Ignore them.

You just need to ensure that the colleges you are applying to this cycle are reflected correctly with the correct deadlines.

6 In Progress

Ignore this number

Past cycle applications.  
Ignore

Common Application  4 <a href="#">More</a> 				<a href="#">Submit on Common App</a>	
	<b>New York University</b> No course/major set	Round Not set 	Deadline  Nov 1, 2024 	<a href="#">Mark as submitted</a>	 
	<b>Harvey Mudd College</b> No course/major set	Round Not set 	Deadline  Jan 5, 2025 	<a href="#">Mark as submitted</a>	 
	<b>Carnegie Mellon University</b> No course/major set	Round ED - Fall (Verified) 	Deadline  Nov 3, 2025 		 
	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign</b> No course/major set	Round Not set 	Deadline  Select date 		 

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

## (LORs: Letter of Recommendations)

Important: If you have already requested from 3 teachers previously, the Request LOR button will not be available (greyed out). If you intend to stay with the same three tutors, that's fine! Simply let your tutors know personally, so that they know to do the necessary for you on CIALFO for this cycle.

If you wish to request for references from different tutors this cycle, simply drop us an email at [collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg](mailto:collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg)

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

For US schools, you will generally need

**1) Counselor Recommendation** from your Civics Tutor

- Classes with 2 CTs, your CTs will tell you who to list. Note that your CT is your ‘counsellor’ on Cialfo for US applications.

**2) 2 Subject Teacher Recommendations** from 2 subject tutors

- Read colleges’ admissions websites thoroughly. Some colleges like MIT require contrasting (arts and science) recommendations, while other colleges only require 1 recommendation.
- In general, you should approach STs who know you better (not necessarily the subject you do better at)

Only Y56 teachers can write your teacher recommendations: this is to meet the **requirement** for **latest academic** references.

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The counselor recommendation is required by almost all schools, even if schools do not mention it in their application requirements. i.e., when schools state that they require 2 academic references, it's a given that they are asking for 1 counselor recommendation and 2 subject tutor recommendations.

Note that your CT's counselor recommendation does not count as a subject tutor recommendation. You generally require 3 unique teachers to write for you, including your CT. Some colleges only require 2 (1 counselor and 1 subject tutor).

If a school only requires 1 subject tutor recommendation, we will send off the ST 1 recommendation (based on the RI form submissions in **Slide 25**).

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

By default, teacher recommendations are meant for all colleges.  
**Do not invite individual recommendations for each school you are applying to.**

**We send all our teacher recommendations via CIALFO. Do not fill in the 'Invite Recommenders' section on your Common Application.**

The image shows a screenshot of the Common App interface for a student applying to Carnegie Mellon University. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: 'My colleges', 'Overview', 'Carnegie Mellon University' (expanded), 'College information', 'APPLICATION' (with sub-items: General, Academics, Contacts, Family, **Recommenders and FERPA**, Review and Submit - Common App), and 'WRITING SUPPLEMENT'. The main content area is titled 'Recommenders and FERPA' and shows a progress bar with 'Complete' status. Below this, there are sections for 'FERPA Release Authorization' (with a 'View Details' link) and 'Invite recommenders' (with a description and an 'Invite Recommenders' button). A large black 'X' is drawn over the 'Invite recommenders' section. At the bottom, there is a section for 'Counselor' with instructions about using Cialfo for transcripts and teacher recommendations.

common app

My colleges

Overview

^ Carnegie Mellon University

College information

APPLICATION

- General
- Academics
- Contacts
- Family
- Recommenders and FERPA**
- Review and Submit - Common App

WRITING SUPPLEMENT

My colleges | Carnegie Mellon University | Application

## Recommenders and FERPA

✓ Complete

Recommenders are people who will submit forms to colleges on your behalf. This page shows which recommender types this college needs. Each college will have different requirements.

✓ FERPA Release Authorization

[View Details](#) ▾

### Invite recommenders

Use this section to invite and then [assign recommenders](#) to this college. You'll need to assign recommenders for each college on your list.

[Invite Recommenders](#)

✓ Counselor

Your school is using Cialfo for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. If your counselor wishes to submit forms via mail, you can download forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.



# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Once you have approached your tutors personally, go to Cialfo. Under the left tab, click on “Applications” and you should see the following screen.

Click on Recommendations as shown:

The screenshot displays the Cialfo 'Applications' page. On the left sidebar, the 'Applications' tab is selected. The main content area is titled 'Applications' and includes a '+ Add application' button. Below this, there is a section for 'Pay your tuition fees easily and securely with Flywire' with several bullet points and three buttons: 'Pay tuition fees', 'Check payment status', and 'Forward to guardian(s)'. At the bottom of the main content area, there is a navigation bar with icons for 'Recommendations' and 'Transcripts'. A blue arrow points to the 'Recommendations' icon. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled '1 In Progress' which contains a 'Common Application' entry with a 'Submit on Common App' button. Below this, there is a table with columns for 'Carnegie Mellon University', 'Round', and 'Deadline'.

Carnegie Mellon University	Round	Deadline
No course/major set	RD - Fall (Verified)	Jan 5, 2026

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Request letters of recommendations and track their status here

Required    Optional

1

2

Request LOR

**STEP 1**

**Note:** You currently don't have any recommenders. When you do, they will appear here.

Common App account

✓ Account Linked

✓ FERPA Waived

Common App ID: 47269461    Email: riheo2026@gmail.com

Your Common Application account has been successfully linked to Cialfo. If the displayed information is incorrect, please contact the Common Application to resolve it.

1) Click on Request LOR

2) Then click on  
'Add Recommenders'

You can only add up to 3 (CT + 2 STs)

3) Send Request when you are done **(You can't edit the list once you send the request)!**

Request Recommendation

Recommenders 2/3 + Add Recommender

Albus Dumbledore ✕

Teacher Demo ✕

**You should see your CT and STs' names here**

Survey

**Note:** Survey questions have not been provided by your counselor.

**B** *I* S [Link](#)

**☰** **☷** **☰**

Dear teachers,

This is Stamford. Thanks so much for agreeing to write references for my university applications for regular decision. You can contact me should you need more information.

**STEP 3**

Upload

File

Google Drive

Send Request

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

Request letters of recommendations and track their status here

Request LOR

Required    Optional

2

3

Common App Account

✓ Account Linked

✓ FERPA Waived

Common App ID: 34016411

Email: rafflesheo2022@gmail.com

Your Common Application account has been successfully linked to Cialfo. If the displayed information is incorrect, please contact the Common Application to resolve it.

Once you have added 3 tutors, the Request LOR button will no longer be available

Name	Survey	Uploaded : Recommendations & Forms
<a href="#">Albus Dumbledore</a>	✓	None
<a href="#">Teacher Demo</a>	✓	None

If you have already requested from 3 teachers, the Request LOR button will not be available.

Email any supporting documents to your teachers directly, instead of uploading them here.

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

You should only approach your Y5-6 civics/subject tutors. This is to help you fulfil the requirement for latest academic references.

You **SHOULD NOT** be approaching your Y1-4 teachers, CCA teachers, coaches, external/research mentors, lab staff, etc. This is to help you ensure you meet the requirements for valid recommendations: specification of the GCE A-level subject taught and attestation as to your attitude and aptitude in a formal classroom context.

External H2 teachers (MOELC) can write for you.

1. Approach your external teacher directly to request for a recommendation. Ask for his/her official email address.
2. Email [collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg](mailto:collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg) with your teacher's official email address and we will connect directly.

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Adhere to our internal timeline to give your teachers time to prepare for your recs:

For early admission programs:	<b>Request before 5 Oct</b>
For regular decision:	<b>Request before 21 Nov</b>

Approach them **PERSONALLY** before sending the requests via Cialfo.

Remember not to request via Common App!

EARLY APPLICATION  
VS  
REGULAR APPLICATION

# EARLY APPLICATION VS REGULAR APPLICATION

A college can offer many application programs.

REA: Restrictive Early Action

EA: Early Action

ED1/2: Early Decision

RD: Regular Decision

Early programs means early deadlines (typically 1 Nov, but some schools are 15 Oct). All standardized testing, where necessary, and applications must be completed by then.

Check the individual colleges' websites on deadlines for their early programs as well as standardized testing policy.

# EARLY APPLICATIONS

## BINDING (EARLY DECISION)

ED1/2 (Early Decision 1, 2): These are **binding applications** which include the clause that if you are accepted, you will attend that particular school. **You must withdraw applications to all other schools (incl. ALL UK Schools and Singapore) once accepted and cannot apply to any other school, in any part of the world.**

You receive admissions decisions and commit to attend the school in December, before RD applications kick in. If you require financial aid, it makes sense to apply during RD in order for you to compare aid packages from various schools.

**An ED application cannot be made lightly.** You should only apply via ED if a school is your **one school of choice**, and you will be able to attend if offered. If unsure, do **not** apply ED.



# EARLY APPLICATIONS

## BINDING (EARLY DECISION)

**You can only apply to one ED school.**

You and your parents will have to acknowledge, sign and send the ED Agreement on Common App before your application can be processed. There are consequences from the US schools if you break the ED Agreement, as specified by the universities.

By our internal timeline, all ED applicants (current and former students) are to indicate your ED school in Cialfo by **Fri 17 Oct 2025, 1700hrs.**

# EARLY APPLICATIONS

## NON-BINDING

EA (Early Action) : Offers early outcomes to your apps, but you do not need to commit until May.

SCEA (Single Choice Early Action)/REA (Restrictive Early Action):  
**You cannot apply to any other EA/ED programs.** REA is less restrictive, and allows you to apply to some other state school EAs. Check with college websites: you are to adhere to all you sign on to.

Similar to EA, you get early indications of outcomes, but you do not need to commit to enrolling. This enables students to compare aid packages before committing.

# EARLY VS REGULAR (IMPORTANT)!

Go to Applications on the left tab.

**Please make sure the 'Round' in your apps are reflected correctly (EA/REA/ED/RD). This information is synced from Common App.**

**This is to ensure your apps are sent off correctly!**

**2 In Progress**

Common Application **2** [More](#)

<b>New York University</b> No course/major set	Round ED - Fall (Verified) ▼	Deadline Nov 1, 2025 ▼
<b>Carnegie Mellon University</b> No course/major set	Round RD - Fall (Verified) ▼	Deadline Jan 5, 2026 ▼

**Do check the round you are applying for is correctly reflected**

**This is automatically synced from Common App.**

**There is no syncing between 17 Oct 1700h and 3 Nov, and after 15 Dec 1700 hrs (see subsequent slides).**

# EARLY VS REGULAR: CIALFO DEADLINES

Early Apps	SUN, 5 OCT	<b>Last day</b> for Early applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u> .
Early Apps	FRI, 17 OCT 1700hrs	<b>Last day and time</b> for Early applicants to confirm Early school list and application plan <u>on CIALFO</u> . This deadline is <b>non-negotiable. NO change to Early choices possible thereafter.</b> HEO needs a confirmed list to prepare and send through all the documents, for all of you, on time. You will be able to make edits to your Regular choices from 3 Nov.
Regular Apps	FRI, 21 NOV	<b>Last day</b> for Regular applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u> .
Regular Apps	MON, 15 DEC 1700hrs	<b>Last day and time</b> for Regular applicants to confirm Regular school list <u>on CIALFO</u> . <b>This deadline is non-negotiable. NO additions possible thereafter.</b> HEO needs a confirmed Cialfo list to send through all the documents for all your schools, for the entire applicant pool then. #HEOprotip: if you are unsure of schools prior to 15 Dec, just leave them in CIALFO. You can opt not to submit CA later, that's fine. You will however <b>not</b> be able to add schools post-15 Dec 1700h.

# EARLY & REGULAR: WHAT CONFIRMING YOUR CHOICE(S) MEAN

When we say 'confirm your choice(s)', this means your choice (Early, Regular, etc) is reflected rightly in Cialfo. This will naturally occur via the Common App-Cialfo sync. As such, **ensure you check that your choices are reflected rightly in both Common App and Cialfo, ahead of the deadlines.**

**Once the deadline (FRI 17 Oct or MON 15 Dec) hits, your list of schools are locked in CIALFO.** These are where HEO will send all your documents to, on time. Thus, these deadlines are **non-negotiable**. Not to worry: You can still work on your application materials on CA. On your part, simply submit your CA portion to the colleges directly by their stated application deadlines.

NON COMMON APP SCHOOLS

# NON-CA SCHOOLS

Some schools have their separate systems. If you are applying, follow their instructions on **applying and requesting for recommendations via their school portals directly.**


**Also add these schools onto your Cialfo school list so that we can support your applications, at the later stage of offers & acceptances.**


For instance, here are some schools with their own application portals:





- University of California schools (Note that teacher recommendations are not necessary.)
- MIT
- Georgetown

# NON CA SCHOOLS

When you click on 'Applications' on the left tab, you should see a list of the non CA schools you are applying to under Other portals.



 **Other portals** 2

	<b>Georgetown University</b> BA in Art ▼	Round Not set ▼	Deadline  Select date ▼	<a href="#">Mark as submitted</a>	⋮
	<b>University of California, Berkeley</b> BA in Biochemistry ▼	Round Not set ▼	Deadline  Select date ▼	<a href="#">Mark as submitted</a>	⋮



# NON CA SCHOOLS

Where transcripts & recs are necessary, HEO and your tutors will send through your documents for you, in the manner required by the university.

- **Hard copy mailing:** email [collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg](mailto:collegeadmissions@ri.edu.sg) at **least 3 weeks in advance or prior to 28 Nov** for us to do the necessary. HEO closes on 28 Nov for the year.
- **Electronic submission** (e.g., MIT, Georgetown), ensure you ping your tutors by the respective RI deadline for request of references in CIALFO. This would be **5 Oct (Early) and 21 Nov (Regular)**.

If you are unsure, drop us an email.

Note that Cialfo is **only** used for US apps. Do **not** include your UK or other countries' apps in Cialfo.

# NON CA SCHOOLS: MIT

Students apply directly on the MIT portal.

You request for your counsellor recommendation (which includes the school report and transcript) and 2 subject tutor recommendations directly from the MIT portal. After you have approached your teachers personally, key in your CT and 2 STs' email addresses on the portal. Your teachers will receive notifications directly from MIT and take care of the rest.

Note that MIT requires subject recommendations from contrasting tutors. You need 1 Humanities Tutor and 1 Science/Maths Tutor as your subject recommenders.

Should you be in the situation where your only Humanities/Science and Maths tutor is also your CT, email us at collegeadmissions for instructions on how to proceed. Otherwise, adhere to the same list of CT + 2 subject tutors as in your CIALFO recommenders list.

# NON CA SCHOOLS

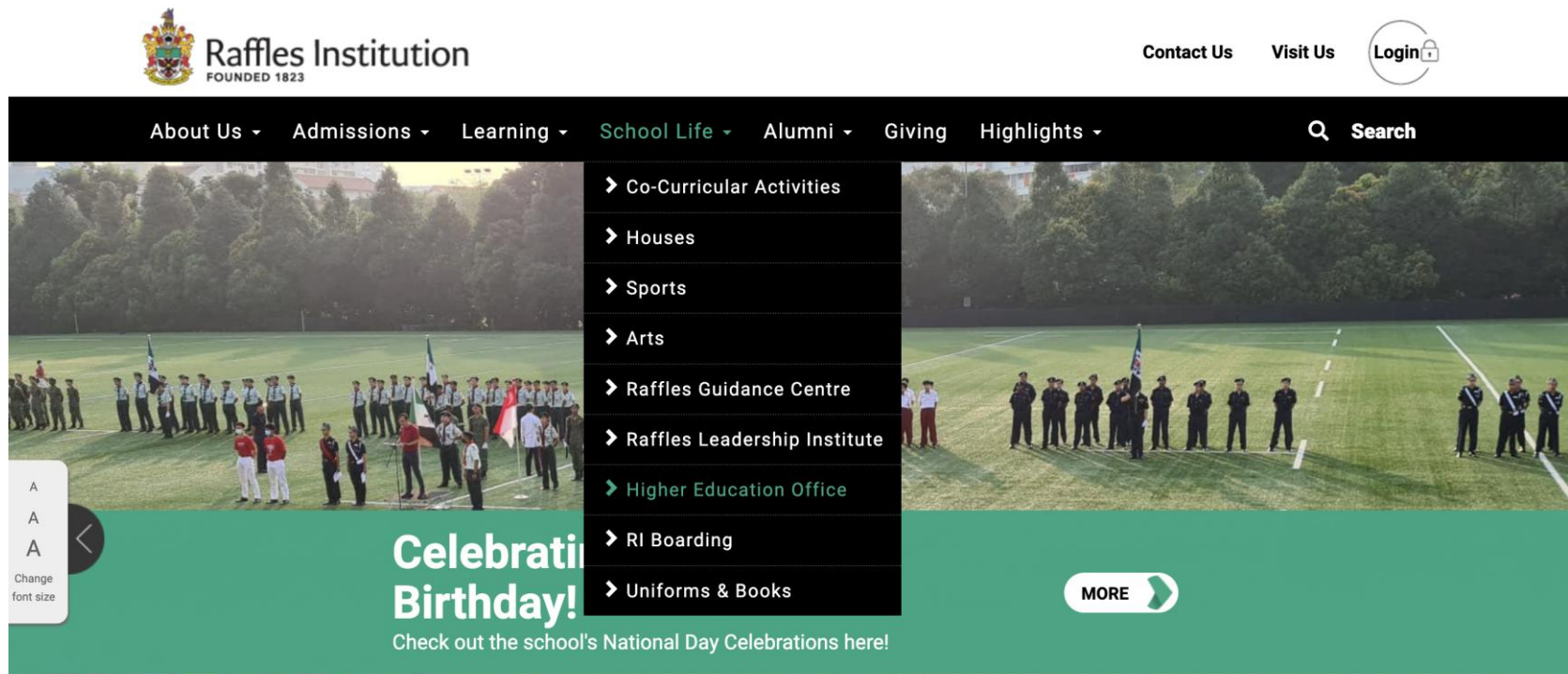
The Higher Education Office is happy to assist you with your university applications. However, to put in a strong application and to ensure that recommendations and transcripts are sent on time, it is **your responsibility to contact us and your teachers/recommenders well in advance about your applications and to keep track of all internal deadlines.**

If the university you are applying to has an earlier deadline, you will need to inform us earlier as necessary.

# FURTHER GUIDANCE

All timelines, guidance and materials on how to fill up CA is posted on IVY (current students) as well as the WWW (former students).

(Goto [www.ri.edu.sg](http://www.ri.edu.sg), on the top tab, select School Life > Higher Education Office)



The screenshot displays the Raffles Institution website. At the top left is the Raffles Institution logo, featuring a crest and the text "Raffles Institution FOUNDED 1823". To the right are links for "Contact Us", "Visit Us", and a "Login" button with a lock icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with tabs: "About Us", "Admissions", "Learning", "School Life", "Alumni", "Giving", and "Highlights". A search icon and the word "Search" are on the right. The "School Life" tab is active, showing a dropdown menu with the following options: "Co-Curricular Activities", "Houses", "Sports", "Arts", "Raffles Guidance Centre", "Raffles Leadership Institute", "Higher Education Office" (highlighted in green), "RI Boarding", and "Uniforms & Books". The main content area features a large banner for "Celebrating National Day!" with the text "Check out the school's National Day Celebrations here!". The banner includes two images of students in uniform on a field and a "MORE" button with a green arrow. On the left side of the banner, there is a "Change font size" control with three "A" icons and a left arrow.

# Reminders

- US applications are **not** a necessity. Thoughtful applications that can yield take **months** of work: they should **not** be initiated on an impulse, please.
- Given your NS commitments, do take on what you can manage, in a timely manner. For apps to be meaningful, HEO's recommendation is 5-8 schools: refer to our US writing guide for advice.
- **Be on time with all deadlines:** Avoid being last minute, especially considering there are months, from Aug now to Dec, to do this. Be aware that apps require not just work from you, but your teachers. It is good manners to give others time to help *you* with *your* dreams.
- **Those with NS:** you should **only be applying for what, if offered, you would definitely accept**. This is as acceptance equates enrolment for the US. Be aware that US schools often have binding regulations thus, so you will mostly not be allowed to hold a place to reapply elsewhere the following year. As such, avoid the temptation of wanting to hold onto multiple places. **It's not cool.**

**Do all things in a measured, proper and healthful way.**

*All the best!*

Higher Education Office,  
Raffles Institution 2025