

US Application WRiting Guide for Alumni 2023



The limited **RI200**
alumni coloring
book edition.
(just 'cos we can!)



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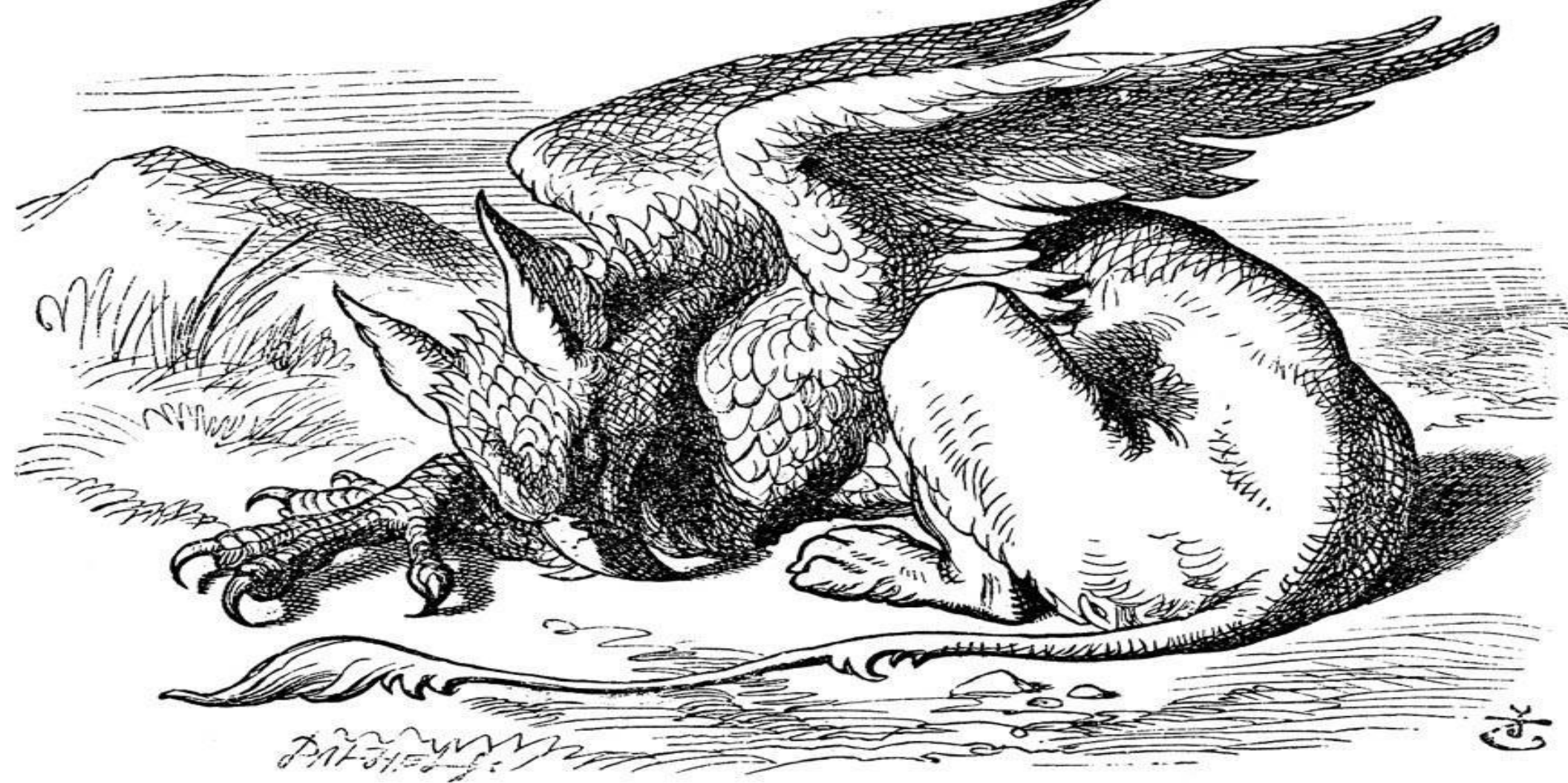
Higher Education Office,
Raffles Institution, 2023

Instructions:

Print. Color. **Think.** Write.

Why:

A US application is all about
you. Make it so unique, only
you could have colored it
with your lived experiences.



The Common App sections that matter

- The 5 Academic Honours
- The 10 Activities
- The Essays (Common App & Supplementals for every school)

The 5 Academic Honours

- Academic Honours refer to prizes & accolades won in a specific **academic** discipline, or for all-rounded excellence in **academia**.
- **#HEOprotip:** Before writing this section, have a list of all your academic achievements ready, so that you can choose what and how to present.
- Don't stop at school experience. If you pursued learning while in NS or your gap year, you may want to reflect on these.
- Ensure that what you present is a legit academic honour—sports, organizational scholarships, character awards are not academic honours.
- While the character count is short, avoid acronyms that make no sense to your readers.
- Contextualise your achievement, so your reader gets a sense of your level of exceptionalism.



The 10 Activities

- In the 10 Activities, what you are really doing, is giving your readers a pen-pic of what is most important to you as a person.
- **#HEOprotip:** Activities are not necessarily synonymous with achievements merely.
- What you are really capturing is your passions and interests, that make you stand out as an authentic, interesting and interested person.
- Include activities—within and without school—from Sec 3 to now. Do not limit yourself to just JC life, given you are one-two years out already.
- At the end, your 10 Activities should be so unique, **no one else could have written it except you.**



The 10 Activities

To know what to include, consider the following:

- Which activities were you most involved in, in a sustained manner?
- Why did you take part in these?
- What were you proudest of, why?
- What did you learn from your experiences; why was it meaningful to you?
- What impact did you leave behind? Why are you a valuable contributor to the community?

As you have just 150 characters, be succinct in your description. Avoid merely listing medals, awards or achievements. Highlight what is most important to you **as a person**.



The essays

- There is a compulsory Common App essay, which goes to all your schools. As well, supplementary essays for every school you choose.
- Refer to <https://www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts> for the prompts of 2023-2024.
- **HEO's recommendation: 5-8 schools is optimal. Less is fine.** Take on the number of schools you can manage writing for, based on your NS and/or other commitments.
- For those in the first year of NS: there is no need to apply to very many schools. Select wisely for schools you would definitely attend if accepted, given you have one more year to apply. **Be aware that once you accept a place, you commit to enrolling in that one place.**

Quality, not quantity.



Tips on the essays

- It pays to do your research on the universities you are interested in. Each school is different. Why are you a fit? Address this. This means that essays that work for one school, do not necessarily do so for others.
- Avoid repetition and unnecessary detail. Be clear about your purpose so that your writing is likewise clear.
- Authenticity: personal voice is highly important. While you may look for feedback from peers and seniors, avoid letting them determine **your** story.

In line with universities, HEO does not approve of the use of private consultancy firms or agents. Be aware that for-profit agencies are not necessarily advising you in your best interests.



In summary

- If you are applying, **start early**.
- The *Timelines* guide will be published by end-May, refer to this for relevant deadlines. **Students adhere to all internal deadlines for applications.** This is to give your tutors time to write for all of you.
- Do **not** create any accounts prior to the publication of the CIALFO-Common App guide. This will be available by mid-Aug, once the current cycle ends.
- HEO will also provide written feedback guidance for alumni, on one school of choice. Watch out for instructions on this come Aug.

Write without fear, edit without mercy.
All the best!



The End

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