
BOSTON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING HANDBOOK



Boston International School
波士顿国际学校

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THE ROAD TO YOUR FUTURE

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The goal of the Counseling Office is to support, inform and encourage students and their families as they navigate the exciting, complex and ever-changing process of student-life, wellbeing, purposeful planning, and college admissions.

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COLLEGE COUNSELING

Boston International School's college counseling program is designed to be an extension of the overall education taking place in the classroom, in the Houses, on the athletic fields, and in each venue on-campus where active learning takes place.

The College Counseling Office believes that the college search and application process is, at its core, an educational one. Because of the wide range of interests, strengths, priorities, and family circumstances, BIS students apply to and enroll in a variety of colleges and universities. Through a multi-dimensional curriculum, we aim to help students clarify their thinking about college options; make intelligent and informed choices; present themselves and their credentials as accurately and clearly as possible; and deal with difficulties or confusion that might arise along the way.

Self-understanding, careful planning, realistic thinking, and a willingness to adjust, if necessary, previously held goals are essential in finding an environment that fits the needs of the student. The College Counseling Office stands ready to help by educating both students and their parents and supporting the students' efforts.

PHILOSOPHY BY GRADE-LEVEL

GRADE 6-9

Students predominantly work with their school counselor to focus on academic preparation, become more actively involved in clubs and organizations on campus, and begin a path toward career readiness. Additionally, college counselors are available to provide support in scheduled meetings. In the spring of Grades 8/9, students take the PSAT 8/9, and meet with their counselor to choose schedules. Students should strive for a schedule that is challenging but not overwhelming. Faculty advisors, department coordinators, and the Academic Principal are all available to assist in crafting schedules.

GRADE 10

Students continue to work toward maturing academically. 10th graders take the PSAT/NMSQT in October which serves as practice for taking the SATs as a DP candidate. The PSAT is not reported to colleges. The scores are discussed between counselor and student and provide an indicator of the student's potential strengths and weaknesses. At this stage, students and their parents will be introduced to BridgeU, and will begin exploring the various tools that the platform has to offer. These include interest inventory tests designed to help students learn more about themselves as well as the most comprehensive up-to-date list of colleges and universities around the world.

In the spring, students will again work with their counselor to pick courses for the following year, and to determine which system is most suitable for them and with the help of the college counsellor work on an individual studying and testing plan.

Parents are invited to attend the parent meetings, workshops, learn about the university counselling timeline and ask questions.

GRADE 11

Students begin taking the College Advisory Class, which will help them navigate the college application process throughout their final years and beyond. The regular classes aim at helping students begin to prepare for applying to university in Grade 12. Curriculums will cover topics such as universities across the world comparisons, Liberal Arts education, personal statements, supplemental essays, admissions deadlines, and many other topics. Our goal is to build a strong understanding of this process in Grade 11, so students return to school in Grade 12 ready to get started on their applications right away.

In addition to the course, college counselors meet individually with students and families to create a plan of action for applying to college. This will involve building a college list, financial test preparation recommendations, interview, and essay support.

GRADE 12

Students are expected to stretch and to reach for colleges and universities that are the best fit academically, socially, and financially. As the school year begins with Senior College Advisory Classes, students regularly meet with their college counselor to discuss any questions that may arise as they are preparing and submitting applications to colleges. While this is primarily a student-driven process, they will be given plenty of guidance and assistance. Parents are welcome to reach out to counselors on the college planning process including financial aid and money matters.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the PSAT?

Offered by the College Board, the PSAT is designed to measure mathematical, verbal, and writing abilities necessary for success in colleges. The test is a practice exam for the SAT. It is also used by the NMSQT to determine candidates for the National Merit Scholarship Program, the National Achievement Program for African American Students, and the National Hispanic Scholars Program; 1% of students with the highest nationwide scores may be eligible for further scholarship consideration. Many students scoring between 95-99% are awarded Letters of Commendation in recognition of their achievement. The PSAT exam is offered to all BIS students through G8-11 each October/January. Students do not need to register in advance; registration is automatic through the College Counseling Office.

2. How should a musician, artist, or thespian, prepare for the college process?

In most cases, if you are a musician, artist, or thespian your application process will be the same as your peers. You will, though, want to submit a special resume detailing your musical, artistic, and acting accomplishments. Moreover, a portfolio, recording, or video of your work is recommended. Some colleges, especially those with conservatories, may have special requirements and audition or portfolio days. Look closely at the fine print in their applications.

3. How do I set up a college visit?

College visits can be made any time during the junior and senior years. To learn how to best maximize a visit to a college campus, visit the college's website or call the admissions office. A tour, information session and, if offered, an interview are three productive ways to spend your time while visiting a college.

4. How many schools do students typically apply to?

Over the years, BIS students have been following the international trend and have applied to an increasing number of colleges. In recent years, BIS students have applied to an average of 8 schools. We recommend that students apply to between 6 and 12 schools,

depending on the student and the types of schools he or she is applying to. We work individually with students to make sure that their final college lists are balanced.

The Counseling Department provides a comprehensive developmental preventive guidance program that focuses on academic, career and personal/social competencies promoting optimal development of all students. Counselors provide assistance and teach skills in individual, small group and classroom settings in the following areas:

- Academic Planning for Four Years
- Academic Success in the Classroom
- Post-graduate Planning
- College and Career Exploration
- Financial Aid and Scholarships
- Personal and Social Counseling
- Social Skills, Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Portfolio Monitoring and Management
- Transcript Evaluation and Credit Checks
- Parent, Student and Teacher Conferences
- Test Interpretation
- Crisis Counseling
- Alternative Program Availability

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Financial Aid and Scholarships for college are available in 5 ways

- International Students
 - Grants (Free Money)
 - Scholarships (Free Money)
 - Work-study
 - Loans (money must be paid back)
- United States citizens
 - Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)

How do BIS High School students find information about scholarships?

- The BEST way to find scholarships to apply for is to apply to universities you are interested in. Why? Universities have dedicated matching scholarship searches ONLY available to students who have been accepted. The scholarships you find in University portals are vetted (legitimate) and usually matched to your strengths, which increases your chances to earn them.
- Speak with your school counselor, HR advisor for up-to-date information.
- Attend your counseling advisory classes with BIS counselors
- Check out the following scholarship sites
 - [International Students.com](http://InternationalStudents.com)

- [College Board International Scholarships](#)
- [Scholarship Junkies](#)
- [FastWEB](#)
- [Zinch](#)
- [Scholarships.com](#)
- [Latino Scholarship Directory](#)
- [African American Scholarship Directory](#)
- [Scholarships A-Z](#)
- [Open Education Data Base](#)

There are two types of scholarships, **Merit Based** Institutional scholarships and "Private" or "External" scholarships. To get Merit Based institutional scholarships, try to get the best grades possible all through high school, keeping your G.P.A. (Grade Point Average) close to 4.0, which is the highest you can get. The great thing about Merit Based Institutional scholarships is that you don't need to apply for them as a senior. When you apply to Universities, you will be awarded them automatically based on your high school performance.

Private or External scholarships are competitive scholarships that have different types of eligibility criteria. Many websites have lists of these types of scholarships. But, you need to be sure that the scholarship is legitimate. If a scholarship ever asks you to send money, it is not a real scholarship. Please talk to your counselor if you have questions.

Student Support: Classwork, Study & Homework Planning, Test Skills

THE EIGHT-DAY STUDY PLAN

This is a brief outline and basic guideline for planning major review. Remember that everyone uses slightly different methods when preparing for exams. This is only a framework within which you should use techniques that work well for you.

DAY 8

- Find any old tests available.
- Detect what material you will be responsible for on the test.
- Divide the material into **FOUR EQUAL PARTS**: A, B, C, D.
- Allow time to plan this to the best of your ability.

DAY 7

- Thoroughly review all material in Part A.
- Write study sheets using your notes and textbook in your own words
- Identify main points within this area. Draw visual aides for clarity.
- Ask yourself questions about the material and quiz yourself
- If you have any problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 6

- Repeat instructions for Day 7, this time reviewing Part B.
- If you have any problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 5

- Repeat for Part C.
- If you have any problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 4

- Repeat for part D.
- If you have problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 3

- Review Parts A, B--fully.
- If you have problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 2

- Review **ALL** Parts C, D--fully.
- If you have problems with the material, see your instructor.

DAY 1

- Review All Parts A, B, C ,D. Pay special attention to problem areas.
- If you have problems with the material, see your instructor.

TEST DAY

Use your very best test-taking strategies during the exam



studentaffairs.arizona.edu/thinktank
Robert L. Nugent Building
1212 E. University Boulevard
(520) 626-0530



Strategic Test-Taking: Before, During & After the Exam

Getting A's on exams is rarely due to luck. Achieving good grades takes long-term planning, preparation, discipline and practice. Here are some basic strategies for better test performance. Try them out!

Before The Test

- Know what the exam will cover. Collect study materials, such as class notes, old exams, the study guide.
- Allow enough time, preferably a week, to review your study materials and to create study tools.
- In general, students perform better on exams if they prepare as if anticipating an essay exam.
- For better memory recall, get a good night's rest the night before; avoid marathon or all-night study sessions.
- Don't forget to eat! Include proteins and avoid excessive amounts of sugar and caffeine.
- Be confident in your ability to do well! Use positive self-talk.
- Practice relaxation techniques in advance (such as deep breathing or guided imagery) if you are prone to test anxiety.
- In the lines below and later in the page, write in some practices that we did not mention!

During the Test

- Ignore or avoid other test-takers; their anxiety might be contagious.
- Sit in your usual seat, if possible, but sit where you can avoid distractions, such as people leaving.
- Bring all necessary materials, i.e., pencils, pens, a watch, calculator, scratch paper, blue book, etc.
- Know *exactly* how long you have to complete the exam.
- Listen carefully to any verbal instructions.
- When you are given the test, take a deep breath, RELAX and read the directions carefully.
- Review the *entire* test before starting to answer any questions.
- Set up a schedule and budget your time. Be aware of how many points each answer is worth.
- Answer the easiest questions first.
- Change your answer only if you're *absolutely* sure that your second choice is correct.

Strategic Test-Taking: Before, During & After the Exam (cont...)

After the Test

- Review the exam and count the points. Could the TA or grader have made a calculating error?
- Identify if you missed questions because you couldn't remember it during the test, if it was something you had never studied, or if it was a careless error such as a misplaced decimal.
- Analyze the test-taking strategies you used. What worked? What did not? Did you start preparing early enough, or could you have started studying for the exam earlier?
- Use this information to decide how you'll approach your next exam.
- Be gentle with yourself and give yourself credit for what you did right!
- _____
- _____
- _____

Try it out yourself!

Read over this document from the top. Identify and *circle* 2 or 3 bullet points in each area that describes a test-taking strategy that you don't currently utilize, but you're willing to try.

Changing our practices is more successful if we are as specific as possible. Write here the class in which you will try out this new strategy, and elaborate other actions you will need to support it.

For example:

Chemistry midterm: I'll start studying earlier. I'll create a study schedule one week before the test, right after I attend a review session. I'll write out all my time obligations for the week and I'll identify blocks of daily study time. Then I'll write it down and post it above my computer so I don't forget or find excuses to put it off.

Now you try:

You may also check the following links:

- [Study Skills Library From Cal Poly](https://asc.calpoly.edu/ssl) <https://asc.calpoly.edu/ssl>
- [13 Memory Tips](#)
- [How to keep calm during tests](#)
- [Strategic Test-Taking](#)
- [Ten Tips for Reading Textbooks](#)
- [Tips for Difficult Readings](#)
- [Vary Your Reading Strategies](#)
- [Study Skills From Virginia Tech](#)
- [Study Skills From The University of Minnesota](#)

Guidance Counseling

Stress, Anxiety, Discomfort, Isolation

Always remember:

“You are brave to go forth into this season knowing what challenges lie ahead. You are strong for choosing to live and meet and conquer them anyway.” – Xander Bell

Don't underestimate how awesome you are! Boston IS believes in you. You are not alone and you are important to all of us! If you are feeling like you're in a state of emergency, call us right away at _____.

ISOLATION

It can be heartbreaking and lonesome. For some of us, that's what we're enduring to keep ourselves and others safe. We hope that you will honor your need for connection by picking up the phone to talk, text, or video chat with those who fill your heart. It may not be the holiday setting you're used to or wished for, but take comfort in their presence, even in the digital form. You are never truly alone.

ANXIETY & DISCOMFORT

Our anxieties have reached new heights this year. We get nervous about social interactions that didn't bother us before, or perhaps your anxiety around seeing people has increased. No matter what, it's valid. You are allowed to be concerned or uncomfortable. But take heart in knowing that you have every right to set boundaries that ensure your safety. And while you can't control the reactions of others, remember that you are not an inconvenience or a disappointment for needing personal space or respect.

FOOD

Maybe the meals and elaborate dishes are your favorite part of the day, but for others, they're the place where stress begins. Eating disorders impact countless people of all shapes, ages, genders, and races. Eating could be a coping mechanism or it could be a challenge to simply finish a meal. Humans need food to live, and

our hope is for you to never deny yourself something you need. We understand that it's hard to show yourself grace and love, especially in the midst of the commotion of a special gathering, so when you are faced with a moment that feels insurmountable, please find a safe space to pause, breathe, and try again.

GRIEF

To those who have lost a parent, spouse, sibling, child, or friend—your grief does not have an expiration date. The pain and loss you have felt and may continue to feel are real, and this time of year may amplify it. If there is an empty seat at the dinner table or on the couch where your loved one could once be found, we hope that space can be honored through sharing funny stories or memories, expressing your heartache, and allowing room for your grief to exist.

What is Stress?

Stress is defined as a response to a demand that is placed upon you. Stress is a normal reaction when your brain recognizes a threat. When the threat is perceived, your body releases hormones that activate your “fight or flight” response. This fight or flight response is not limited to perceiving a threat, but in less severe cases, is triggered when we encounter unexpected events. Psychologist Richard S. Lazarus best described stress as “a condition or feeling that a person experiences when they perceive that the demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” For most people, stress is a negative experience.

How does it affect you?

Stress may cause you to have physiological, behavioral or even psychological effects.

Physiological – hormone release triggers your fight or flight response. These hormones help you to either fight harder or run faster. They increase heart rate, blood pressure, and sweating. Stress has been tied to heart disease. Because of the increase in heart rate and blood pressure, prolonged stress increases the tension that is put on the arteries. It also affects your immune system which is why cold and flu illness usually show up during exams.

Behavioral – it may cause you to be jumpy, excitable, or even irritable. The effects of stress may cause some people to drink or smoke heavily, neglect exercise or proper nutrition, or overuse either the television or the computer.

Psychological – the response to stress may decrease your ability to work or

interact effectively with other people, and be less able to make good decisions. Stress has also been known to play a part in anxiety and depression.

What causes Stress?

Stressors are anything that cause or increase stress. Below are a few examples:

- Academics – by far the biggest stressor for college students: the pressure of not failing.
- Dating – relationship problems may add to the pressure/stress of academics.
- Environment – certain environments can bring about stress such as discussing/viewing heated topics, slow moving traffic, trying to find a parking spot, etc.
- Extracurricular – some students may feel pressured to make extracurricular activities a part of their daily routine to the point where every hour of the day is accounted for.
- Peers – peer pressure is a major stressor, especially pressure that is negatively influenced.
- Time Management – one of the biggest stressors is not knowing how to plan and execute daily activities such as class, work, study time, extracurricular activities, and time alone.
- Money – some student find themselves thinking more about money than they do anything else. Money is a huge stressor that families and students face.
- Parents – yes, even parents can become stressors. Pressure from parents to succeed is a great stressor.

Stress Management Strategies

Learn how to say “NO!” – know your limits and do not compromise them. Taking on more than you can handle is not a good choice. It is ok if you don't do every single activity that your friends are doing:

1. Attitude – it is human nature to want to freak out. Your mind is a powerful tool; use it in your favor. Thinking rationally can take you a long way.
2. Laugh – Do something that you enjoy, take on a hobby, hang out with friends, and learn to balance your life. If you are feeling upset, express your feelings. Don't keep them to yourself because that will only add to your stress.
3. Avoid alcohol and cigarettes – this is just a quick fix. Once the chemical leave your body, you are back to feeling stressed and you are probably worse off than when you started.
4. Healthy eating – get the proper nutrition. Eat at least one hot-home cooked meal a day.

5. Exercise – physical activities can help you in not only burning off calories, but burning off stress. Exercise helps release tension. Exercise for 30 minutes a day for at least 3 times per week.
6. Relaxing your mind and body – take deep breaths. Visualize success. Set some “alone time” where you do something you enjoy. Practice “mindfulness”, focusing your attention on the present moment.
7. Sleep – at least 7 hours of sleep are needed in order for your brain and body to function at optimum level. Avoid taking naps for more than 1 hour.
8. Healthy relationships – talk and hang out with friends. Find some you relate to and with whom you can share your problems with.
9. Time management – get a planner, create a schedule, or even a to-do list. Map out what your quarter will look like. Once you have done that, do a schedule for each week. Then create a schedule for each day. Be specific. Mark down your class meeting times, study time for a specific subject, mealtimes, fun activities, and sleep.
10. Organization – learn how to organize your notes, keep track of your assignments and note important due dates or date of exams. Establish your priorities for the day.
11. Budget – create a budget for your monthly expenses. Distribute your money according to the bills you need to pay for the quarter (i.e. rent, tuition, groceries, personal items, house bills, gasoline, etc.). Determine about how much money you will be able to spend “for fun.”
12. Spirituality – spiritually is regarded as finding meaning in your life, the ability to connect with others.
13. Determine your learning style – find out whether you are a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner.
14. Slow Down – take a deep breath and know your limits. Take your time so that you can ensure a well-done job.
15. Find a support system – whether it's your mom, sister, brother, friend or counselor, find someone you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with. Sometimes all we need is to vent off the frustration.
16. Make changes in your surroundings – if you find it difficult to study in your dorm try moving to a place where there is no loud music, and brighter lights.
17. Delegate responsibilities – when school or work becomes overwhelming, dividing up the work or responsibilities helps alleviate pressure and stress.

Source: California Polytechnic University, Student Academic Services Website

HELP! I'm stressed out!

- BIS's Counseling Office and subject teachers are here to help. See your counselors and teachers if you need additional assistance.
- 全国热线(通用)

生命教育与危机干预（希望）热线：400-161-9995

(24 小时，有语音提示：分学生专线、抑郁专线、生命专线)

Self-care tips

It's important to practice self-care and things that support emotional and mental health during stressful times. Here are some suggestions:

- Practice mindfulness using meditation apps like Calm and Headspace.
- Explore virtual or remote counseling options such as Talkspace.
- Reach out to those you love by calling or texting. Ask for and offer reassurance as best you can.
- Follow guidelines suggested by trustworthy sources. World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are both trusted and reliable.
- Schedule regular breaks from the news and social media by stepping outside and engaging in self-care activities: watch a favorite movie, read a book, listen to podcasts, etc.

- Look to the future with hope by holding on to the things that bring you joy.

Online Workshops

- Georgia Southern University has an excellent online workshop on stress management:
<http://students.georgiasouthern.edu/counseling/workshop/stress/>

Subscribe and Explore:

Subscribe to the website **“To Write Love on Her Arms” TWLOHA**. To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting hope for everyone and anyone, and for finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, anxiety, and self-injury.

TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and invest directly into treatment and recovery.

By subscribing to the Blog you’ll hear form and contribute to stories about strength, overcoming, and wellness.

Subscribing to the TWLOHA [Hope In Your Inbox](#) is a great way to receive monthly newsletters ensuring you and inspiring you to keep believing in yourself and in better days.

