

COMMON APP AND CIALFO GUIDE

FOR FIRST TIME APPLICANTS

**HIGHER EDUCATION OFFICE
RAFFLES INSTITUTION
AUGUST 2025**



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#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)**: so that you can ping your tutors for recommendations too. This means slides #11-#23, #25- #36. 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 Y6s, consider well what you can cope with during the A-levels. **HEO's recommendation is 5-8 schools**, so that quality of writing, your personal wellbeing and your A-levels are not compromised. Alumni: take on what is sensible and realistic, given your own NS commitments.
- 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	Last day for Early applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u>
FRI 17 OCT 1700hrs	Last day 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	Last day 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	Last day 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).

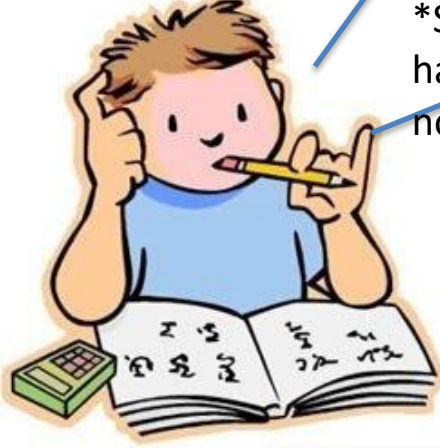
COMMON APP AND CIALFO

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 28th 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 55-59). 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 if unsure. Do not apply out of FOMO!

COMMON APPLICATION ACCOUNT (CA)

COMMON APP ACCOUNT

Creating an account:

Goto www.commonapp.org

Do note that you will need to be very clear about the following two terms:

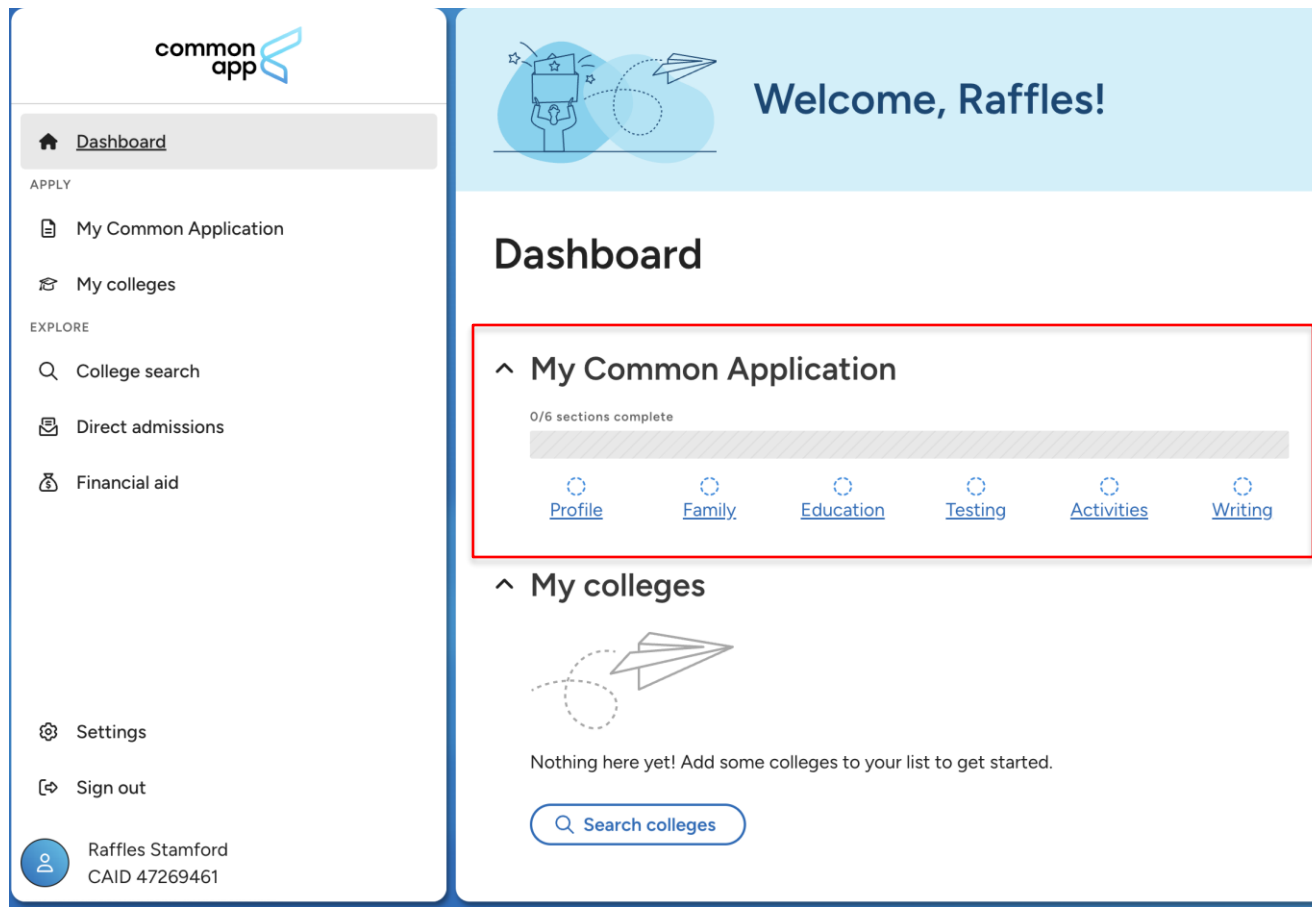
- **First Name** (what people call you by, follow your IC/passport please)
- **Last Name** (this is your surname)

Use First and Last Names as in official records, as they should match those on your official school transcripts which are sent to the colleges.

Also use your PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS for both Common App and Cialfo. This ensures that colleges can reach you via email after your graduation from RI.

COMMON APP ACCOUNT

Once you have created your account and you have logged in, you will need to fill up some personal information under the “Common App” tab, or beneath the Dashboard.



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' interface. On the left is a sidebar with a navigation menu containing icons for Home, Profile, Search, Messages, and a user profile icon. 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. The 'Geography and Nationality' section is expanded, showing a 'List countries of citizenship' field with 'Singapore' selected, a question 'Do you currently hold a valid U.S. Visa?' with 'No' selected, another question 'Do you intend to apply for a new or different U.S. Visa?' with 'Yes' selected, and a 'Visa type' field with 'F-1 Student' selected. A 'Continue' button is at the bottom right of the form.

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 2024 (RGS/JAE Class of 2025), Jan 2020 (RI Class of 2025). Amend accordingly if different.
- Graduation Date: Dec 2025.
- 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.

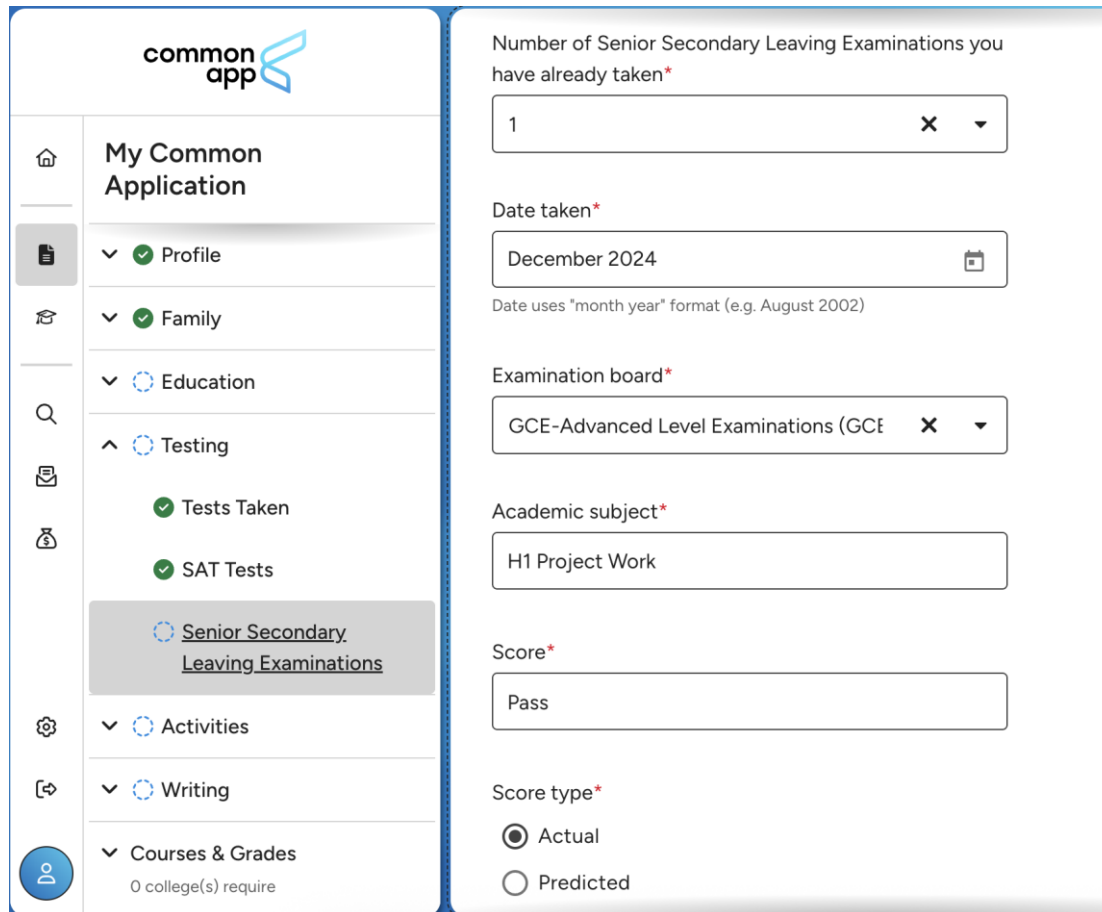
#HEOprotip: For colleges which are test-optional this year, it is not necessary to send in your official report at point of application—you can self-report them for now in Common App. *Then only* if you are offered a place *and decide to enrol*, will you need to request for the official test scores from 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: **Y6S ONLY**

“TESTING” (Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations)

Key in “1” and report H1 PW here. If you have taken H1 MT in Y5, key in “2”.



The screenshot shows the Common App interface. On the left is a navigation menu with icons and labels: Home, My Common Application, Profile, Family, Education, Testing (expanded), Tests Taken, SAT Tests, Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations (highlighted), Activities, Writing, and Courses & Grades. The main content area is titled 'Number of Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations you have already taken*' with a dropdown menu set to '1'. Below this is 'Date taken*' with a date picker set to 'December 2024' and a note 'Date uses "month year" format (e.g. August 2002)'. The 'Examination board*' dropdown is set to 'GCE-Advanced Level Examinations (GCE)'. The 'Academic subject*' text box contains 'H1 Project Work'. The 'Score*' dropdown is set to 'Pass'. The 'Score type*' section has two radio buttons: 'Actual' (selected) and 'Predicted'.

common app

My Common Application

- Profile
- Family
- Education
- Testing
 - Tests Taken
 - SAT Tests
 - Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations**
- Activities
- Writing
- Courses & Grades
 - 0 college(s) require

Number of Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations you have already taken*

1

Date taken*

December 2024

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

Examination board*

GCE-Advanced Level Examinations (GCE)

Academic subject*

H1 Project Work

Score*

Pass

Score type*

☒ Actual

☐ Predicted

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: **ALUMNI ONLY**

“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' (selected), 'Activities', 'Writing', and 'Courses & Grades'. The main content area is titled 'Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations' with a 'Preview' button. It contains the following 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 ‘Recommendors and FERPA’, you need to **sign the FERPA waiver and authorization to release transcripts.**

The screenshot displays the Common App interface. On the left, a sidebar contains navigation icons and labels: 'My colleges', 'Carnegie Mellon University', 'College information', 'APPLICATION', 'General', 'Academics', 'Contacts', 'Family', 'Recommendors and FERPA' (highlighted), 'Review and Submit - Common App', 'WRITING SUPPLEMENT', and 'Writing Questions'. The main content area is titled 'Recommendors and FERPA' and includes a sub-header 'In progress'. Below this, a paragraph explains that recommenders submit forms on behalf of the student and that the page shows required recommender types. A section titled 'FERPA Release Authorization' with a warning icon states 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 the main content area are two blue buttons: 'Complete Release Authorization' and 'Continue'.

common app

My colleges

^ Carnegie Mellon University

College information

APPLICATION

- General
- Academics
- Contacts
- Family
- Recommendors and FERPA
- Review and Submit - Common App

WRITING SUPPLEMENT

- Writing Questions

My colleges | Carnegie Mellon University | Application

Recommendors and FERPA

In progress

Recommendors 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)

BackSave 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.



CIALFO ACCOUNT

Activate your Cialfo account by filling up the following form.

Please wait a week for your request to be processed. You will receive an email with sign-in details:

Current Year 6 students:

<https://forms.moe.edu.sg/forms/enWY9Y>

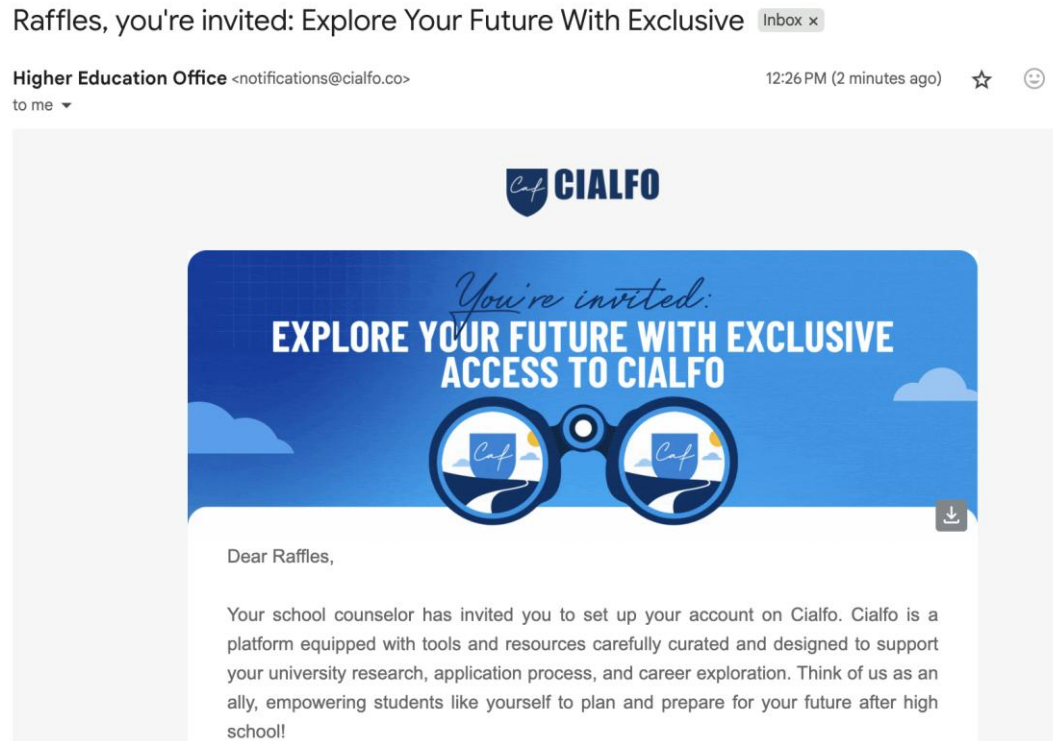
ALL ALUMNI:

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

CIALFO ACCOUNT ACTIVATION

1. Activate your account

Look for your onboarding email, **please note this may be in your Spam/Junk folder.**



Should you not receive your sign-in credentials within a week, please email Mr Lu at shangyi.lu@ri.edu.sg

CIALFO ACCOUNT

2. Create your account Password

Click on the **'Register Now'** button in your email. This will take you to a webpage to create your account (see screenshot on the right). Choose your password and then proceed by clicking on **'Create my account'**.

Dear Raffles,

Your school counselor has invited you to set up your account on Cialfo. Cialfo is a platform equipped with tools and resources carefully curated and designed to support your university research, application process, and career exploration. Think of us as an ally, empowering students like yourself to plan and prepare for your future after high school!



Register now



Create Account

First name

Stamford

Last name

Raffles

Gender

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Non-binary

☐ Other

Email address

@gmail.com

Phone number

+65

Provide your mobile number

Password

Password

Confirm password

Password

☒ I agree to Cialfo's [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

Create my account

CIALFO ACCOUNT

3. Navigating Cialfo

Once you log into Cialfo, there is an onboarding questionnaire. Complete it and you will be greeted with the Dashboard which contains information regarding your application process. The tabs which are of interest to you are circled as shown.

The screenshot shows the Cialfo dashboard interface. On the left, a vertical sidebar contains navigation icons: Home, Universities (circled), Bookmarks, Applications (circled), and Hubs. At the top, there is a search bar with the placeholder text "Search for universities, content, careers and more..". The main content area features a "Download Cialfo mobile app" section with a button "I'm not interested". Below this is a user profile section for "Raffles Stamford" showing a "Profile strength: Fair" and a "Complete profile" button (circled). A table displays application statistics: Applying (0), Shortlist (0), Longlist (0), and Applied (0). To the right, a "My University Quest" section includes buttons for "Install mobile app" and "Complete basic personal info". On the far right, a user menu for "Raffles Stamford" lists options: Profile (circled), My Settings, Help Center, Chat with Cialfo, Cialfo Guides, and Log Out. At the bottom right, there is a character card for "Level 3: Exploring Elephant".

Navigation Sidebar (Left):

- Home
- Universities
- Bookmarks
- Applications
- Hubs

Search Bar (Top):

Search for universities, content, careers and more..

Main Content Area:

- Download Cialfo mobile app**
Download the Cialfo mobile app for access to resources and application management with real-time updates.
✓ I'm not interested
- Raffles Stamford**
Profile strength: Fair
[Complete profile](#)
- | Applying | Shortlist | Longlist | Applied |
|----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
- My University Quest** [View progress](#)
[Install mobile app](#)
[Complete basic personal info](#)

User Menu (Right):

- Raffles Stamford
- [Profile](#)
- [My Settings](#)
- [Help Center](#)
- [Chat with Cialfo](#)
- [Cialfo Guides](#)
- [Log Out](#)

Character Card (Bottom Right):

Level 3: Exploring Elephant

CIALFO ACCOUNT

3. Navigating Cialfo

Profile

- Where you can edit your personal information

IMPORTANT

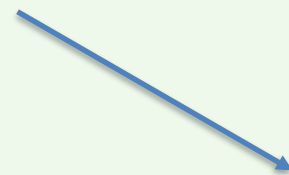
You need to go to your profile, and under application details, edit the **Application Year** to **2025** as shown below.

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

CIALFO ACCOUNT

3. Navigating Cialfo

Universities

- Where you can search for colleges, read up on their profiles and courses offered

Applications

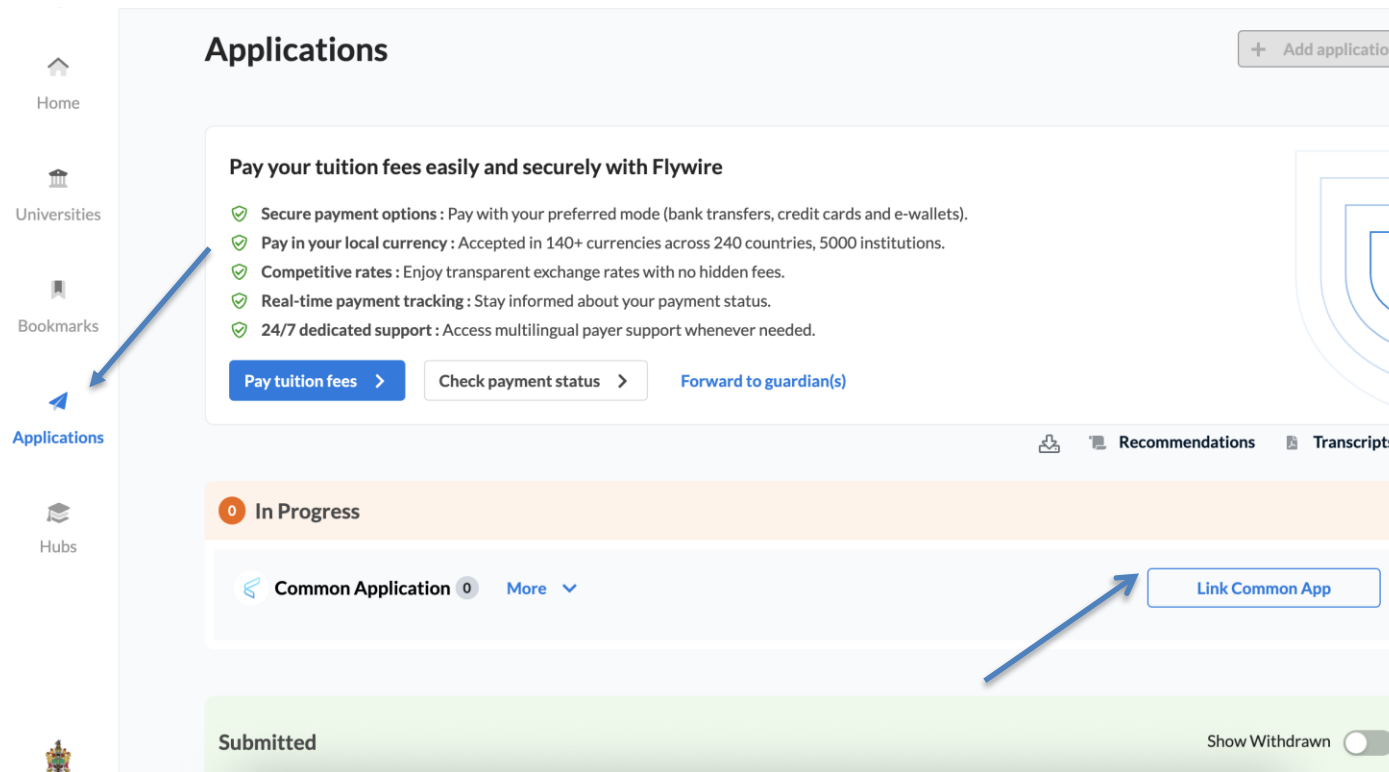
- Anything and everything related to your application list, including requesting for recommendations, etc

In the top right hand corner, click the blue user icon to open the ‘Chat with Cialfo/Help Center’ menu – where you can look for FAQs and guides as well as video tutorials for other technical features of Cialfo

LINKING CA AND CIALFO

The next thing you need to do is to link 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.

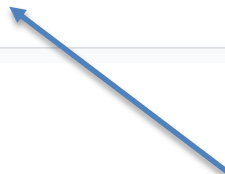
Common App account

✖ 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 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, there's a section titled 'Request letters of recommendations and track their status here' with tabs for 'Required' and 'Optional', 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 these, the 'Common App account' section shows two green status boxes: '✓ Account Linked' and '✓ FERPA Waived'. Blue arrows point from these boxes to the red text on the right. At the bottom, a box displays 'Common App ID: 47269461' and 'Email: riheo2026@gmail.com', with a message stating the account has been successfully linked to Cialfo.

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 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 55-59** 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 at the top, and a '+ Add application' button in the top right corner. A blue arrow points from this button to the modal. Another blue arrow points from the 'Add application' button at the bottom of the modal to the 'Submit on Common App' button in the background.

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

(LORs: Letter of Recommendations)

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 and Caltech 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 AllEars form submission, see **Slide 26**).

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 the 'Recommendations and FERPA' section. The page is titled 'Recommendations and FERPA' and has a status of 'Complete'. It includes sections for 'FERPA Release Authorization' (also complete) and 'Invite recommenders'. The 'Invite recommenders' section contains instructions and a blue button labeled 'Invite Recommenders'. The page is crossed out with a large black 'X'.

common app

My colleges

Overview

^ Carnegie Mellon University

College information

APPLICATION

- General
- Academics
- Contacts
- Family
- Recommendations and FERPA
- Review and Submit - Common App

My colleges | Carnegie Mellon University | Application

Recommendations and FERPA

✓ Complete

Recommendations 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.

WRITING SUPPLEMENT

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 Recommender'

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
Albus Dumbledore	✓	None
Teacher Demo	✓	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 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:	Request before 5 Oct
For regular decision:	Request before 21 Nov

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 is 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 		
	New York University	
	No course/major set	
	Carnegie Mellon University	
	No course/major set	
	Round	Deadline
	ED - Fall (Verified) ▼	 Nov 1, 2025 ▼
	Round	Deadline
	RD - Fall (Verified) ▼	 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	Last day for Early applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u> .
Early Apps	FRI, 17 OCT 1700hrs	Last day and time for Early applicants to confirm Early school list and application plan <u>on CIALFO</u> . This deadline is non-negotiable. NO change to Early choices possible thereafter. 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	Last day for Regular applicants to request for recommendations from teachers <u>on CIALFO</u> .
Regular Apps	MON, 15 DEC 1700hrs	Last day and time for Regular applicants to confirm Regular school list <u>on CIALFO</u> . This deadline is non-negotiable. NO additions possible thereafter. 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 not 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 is 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

	Georgetown University BA in Art ▼	Round Not set ▼	Deadline  Select date ▼	Mark as submitted	⋮
	University of California, Berkeley BA in Biochemistry ▼	Round Not set ▼	Deadline  Select date ▼	Mark as submitted	⋮

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 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

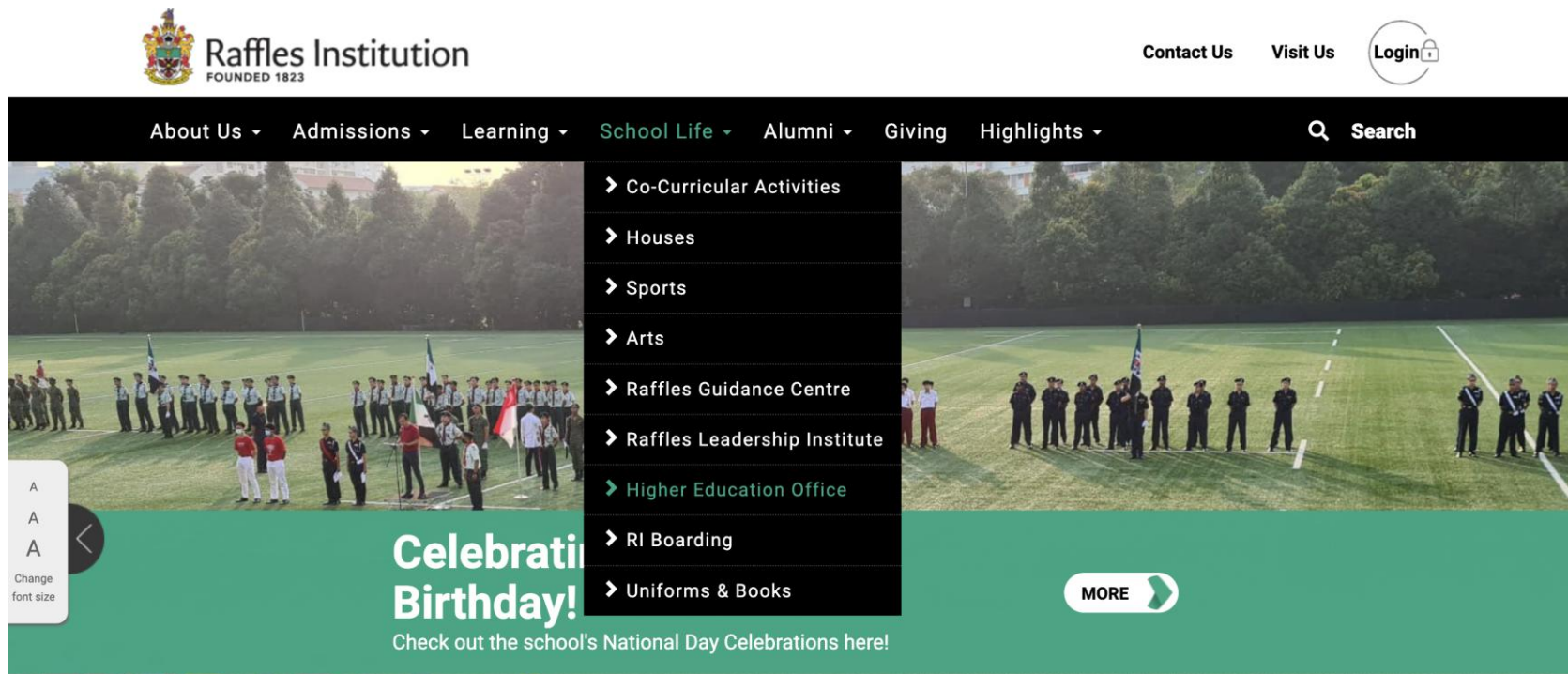
The Higher Education Office is happy to assist you with your university applications. However, to put in a strong application and to ensure that recommendations and transcripts are sent on time, it is **your responsibility to contact us and your teachers/recommenders well in advance about your applications 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, 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.
- Y6 students: your priority is the A-levels, do take on what you can manage, in a timely manner. For those applying, HEO's recommendation is 5-8 schools, in order for there to be quality of thought in writing: 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 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