



# PARK IS

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UNIVERSITIES AND CAREERS  
PROGRAMME HANDBOOK

**PARK** INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL

# Universities and Careers Programme Handbook 2025 | 2026



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## Important Contacts

### 1. Important Contacts

#### a. Head of Key Stage 3

Thomas Wiltshire | [thomas.wiltshire@park-is.com](mailto:thomas.wiltshire@park-is.com)

Mr Wilshire is a well-known and easily recognised member of the PaRK IS team. Having previously held the post of Head of English, Mr Wilshire is now Head of Key Stage 3, overseeing the curriculum for Grades 6, 7, and 8. Working closely with Heads of Department and other members of the Senior Leadership Team, Mr Wilshire focuses on ensuring the highest quality academic provision is available for every student in Grades 6 to 8 at PaRK IS.

#### b. Head of Cambridge Curriculum and Portuguese Universities Advisor

Luis Martins | [luisfilipe.martins@park-is.com](mailto:luisfilipe.martins@park-is.com)

Mr Martins is PaRK IS's primary contact with the Portuguese Ministry of Education. His broad, detailed, and unwavering understanding of how the International Baccalaureate Diploma translates into the Portuguese education system is vital for all students applying to universities in Portugal. As such, he provides essential guidance on IB subject choices in relation to long-term university and career aspirations within the national system. His expertise in this area is invaluable.

In addition, Mr Martins serves as Head of Cambridge at PaRK IS, overseeing the curriculum for all IGCSE and A-Level subjects. Working closely with Heads of Department and the Examinations Officer, Mr Davis, he draws on his extensive experience to guide students towards appropriate course selections, ensuring they keep as many future pathways open as possible as they progress through key academic stages at PaRK IS.

#### c. IB Diploma Coordinator

Ian McHugh | [ian.mchugh@park-is.com](mailto:ian.mchugh@park-is.com)

Mr McHugh oversees the Careers and University Programme at PaRK IS. He also serves as the school's liaison with the International Baccalaureate Organisation and is responsible for the delivery of the IB Diploma Programme at PaRK IS. With extensive experience across the academic, core, administrative, and pastoral dimensions of the IB, Mr McHugh is well placed to advise students and families on the most appropriate combinations of IB subjects to support their university and career aspirations.

Mr McHugh introduces students and families to the IB Programme during Grade 10 and monitors the progress of all students on the Diploma, always considering their attainment and long-term goals. He leads both academic and pastoral interventions when needed, ensuring students and their families are able to make informed decisions at key points in their educational journey. He also provides guidance on the broader aspects of university pathways and subject choices.

#### d. Head of Wellbeing

Inês Appleton | [ines.appleton@park-is.com](mailto:ines.appleton@park-is.com)

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Ms Appleton counts among her many responsibilities the oversight of the Social Skills Programme at PaRK IS. She ensures the delivery of engaging and informative Careers Education lessons and workshops at key points in students' journeys through the Senior School.

Well known to students through her role as Head of Wellbeing, Ms Appleton brings both long-standing experience at the school and a deep understanding of young people. This gives her valuable insight into students' individual personalities, character, and strengths, placing her in an excellent position to empower them to make thoughtful, robust, sustainable, and realistic choices. She also plays a key role in advising students on the personal changes and decisions that arise as they mature.

Together with her team, Ms Appleton oversees the Unifrog testing and reports in Grade 10, as well as the sessions delivered during Social Skills lessons.

#### **e. Senior Deputy Head Curriculum, Assessment and Tracking**

Hamish Auld | [hamish.auld@park-is.com](mailto:hamish.auld@park-is.com)

Mr Auld has an overview of the students' academic progress within the school. He meets regularly with students, parents, and Heads of Department to provide guidance on the next steps required for academic success. Alongside Mr McHugh and Mr Martins, Mr Auld oversees the transition from Grade 10 into the IB Diploma Programme and serves as a key advisor on how attainment in Grade 10 translates into the IB Programme.

#### **f. Deputy Head - Pastoral**

Patrycja Pawłowska | [patrycja.pawlowska@park-is.com](mailto:patrycja.pawlowska@park-is.com)

Having joined PaRK in 2023, Ms Pawlowska's role has grown alongside the school. With an excellent understanding of high-level pastoral support, she works closely with all her Heads of Year and alongside Ms Appleton to ensure that all students at PaRK IS feel happy, safe, and heard.

#### **g. International Universities Advisor**

Susie Wiltshire | [susie.wiltshire@park-is.com](mailto:susie.wiltshire@park-is.com)

With many years of experience supporting students in gaining places at the world's most prestigious universities, Ms Wiltshire (no relation to Thomas Wiltshire) joins us in 2025 as our International Universities Advisor. She comes to PaRK IS having worked in a range of international schools, where she built up extensive knowledge of European, North American, and Asian universities.

#### **h. Head of Mathematics**

Alexandra Norberto | [ainorberto@park-is.com](mailto:ainorberto@park-is.com)

In her position as Head of Mathematics, Ms Norberto is uniquely informed about students' strengths and weaknesses in Mathematics throughout their school careers. She oversees students' transition from IGCSE Mathematics to the most appropriate IBDP Maths course for their abilities and ambitions. Ms Norberto can be consulted for advice on the differences between the two Mathematics courses available at IB level.

## Careers Awareness Through Social Skills at PaRK IS

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### a. Careers Awareness Through Social Skills at PaRK IS

#### Grade 1

When we start the Social Skills Programme, we embark on an important journey with the students, one that focuses on self-awareness, self-knowledge, and their future life path. One of the sessions is entitled "I Decide to Be..."

#### Grade 2

This year, the students' Social Studies project focuses on the various professions that exist within our society. They explore different services and professional roles, and begin to reflect on their own aspirations by considering the question: "What would I like to be one day?"

As part of the project, some parents are invited to speak to the students about their professions, offering insight and inspiration.

#### Grade 3

Students discuss the importance of cooperation and how working in a group supports their learning journey. They also take part in a session entitled "I Know How to Make My Decisions."

#### Grade 4

This is the year of the first Fellowship Project, carried out by the students with our support. They are required to research an NGO and its work in different areas of society, make contact with the organisation, and then propose and deliver a project.

#### Grade 5

We explore the role and impact of different careers in society, investigating what a career is, why and how we choose one, and the importance of having a career. As part of this process, students are asked to interview two adults who work in careers that interest them.

#### Grade 6

There is a session on making choices and how to support our decisions at different stages of life. We also provide a brief overview of the various curricula that students will encounter throughout their time at PaRK IS. At the end of the session, they are asked to reflect on the question: "What is your journey going to be like?"

#### Grade 7

**Introduction to Unifrog:** Students explore the website and are asked to complete the personality test to better understand how their personality might influence their subject and career choices. Following the Unifrog session, students begin an individual project called *Dream Job*, where they research and reflect on their path to success and their chosen career. This project spans three sessions and concludes with a presentation to the whole class.

#### Grade 8

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We undertake a Unifrog subject treasure hunt, inviting students to explore what is taught in each IGCSE subject. There is a session on IGCSE options, as well as one where students learn what makes a great team player and reflect on their role within groups. Students also learn about volunteering and the importance of contributing to society. Parents are invited once again to visit the school and talk about their careers.

### **Grade 9**

Students continue their exploration of Unifrog and the careers library, researching potential career paths and the steps required to achieve their goals.

They take part in sessions on self-awareness, where they identify their strengths and areas for development.

There is also a session focused on recognising personal interests and linking them to possible career options.

Students learn about the value of volunteering and how it can enhance their CVs.

Finally, they attend an introductory session on universities with the school counsellor, exploring what to look for when researching university options.

### **Grade 10**

In groups, students take the Unifrog vocational guidance tests, followed by individual interviews and group sessions.

They attend a fair for Portuguese and international universities.

Sessions cover IB subject choices, procrastination, metacognitive skills, and volunteering.

### **Grade 11**

Students continue exploring Unifrog, participate in sessions on university systems worldwide, writing personal statements and CVs, university research and application deadlines, as well as the university fair.

### **Grade 12**

Students explore budgeting and living abroad, different cultures and customs, and how to prepare for interviews.

#### **b. UniFrog - [www.unifrog.org](http://www.unifrog.org)**

In 2019-20 PaRK IS started a partnership with Unifrog. PaRK IS offers access to all our Senior School Students and teachers.

“Helping students find their future. Unifrog brings all the available information into one comprehensive, user-friendly platform that helps students make the best choices, and submit the strongest applications. They empower teachers and counselors to manage progression effectively. They partner with universities and employers to further support students to be successful.” in Unifrog

#### **c. The Unifrog Way of Working**

“Our mission is to level the playing field when it comes to young people finding the best opportunities for them; we put having a positive social impact before anything else.

Within the company we try to foster a culture of innovation, and a happy working environment, both because this is the right thing to do, and because we think this results in the most effective team. To this end we believe in open communication, celebrating successes, supporting each other, not being afraid to be wrong or to fail, and promoting good ideas wherever they come from. We also believe in the power of diversity in all its forms,

including in terms of culture, religion, age, socio-economic background, race, gender, sexual orientation, personality, life experiences and disability.

We are dedicated to continually improving our platform and how we deliver our services. We hugely value our customers, and respond to their input. When you interact with us, you will find us to be prompt, polite, straightforward and positive. Anything less would not be the Unifrog way of working!"

## University and Careers Timeline at PaRK IS: key moments in a student's time with us

### 3. University and Careers Timeline at PaRK IS: key moments in a student's time with us

#### a. Grade 8 IGCSE Subject Choices

This is a two-year course leading to an international qualification at the end of Grade 10. Students select their IGCSE subjects in Grade 8.

The students are introduced to these choices and their implications in a presentation and families in Term 1 of Grade 8, and have until the second term to explore and finalise their choices.

While some IB DP and A-Level choices do not have learning prerequisites, students are advised to choose their sciences and languages with some forethought as to whether they will lead smoothly into their post pathway in two years' time. Students and families are also advised to note that PaRK IS upholds certain entry requirements into the DP and A-Level programmes. These are detailed in the PaRK IS IB Diploma and A-Level Handbooks.

#### b. Grade 10 Parent-Student Conferences (Term 1)

Before the Conferences begin, parents and families are introduced to the Head of Cambridge for A-Level, the IB Diploma Coordinator and the University Advisors. The structure of the IB and A-Levels are presented and the PaRK IS A-Level and IB Diploma Handbooks are formally shared with families.

#### c. Grade 10: IB Subject Choices Evening (Term 1)

The Head of Cambridge for A-Levels, the IB Diploma Coordinator and the Senior School Head lead this important evening. The implications of the different combinations of subjects are presented to parents and timetable blocking is explained. Students and families then spend the evening discussing the subjects in person with subject experts: the teachers. Students then have several weeks in which to consider their subject choices. They confer with the tutors, Head of Year, University Advisors, Head of Cambridge and IB Diploma Coordinator. The final choice is made through a Form and requires students to state their university course preferences. Students and families are contacted if their subject choices and university aspirations are incompatible.

#### d. Grade 10: IGCSE Trial Exam Results (Term 1)

The IGCSE Trial exams are held in November of Term 1, and are a key moment in which students are asked to consider changes to their subject choices, long-term aspirations or approach to their studies so that their long term plans remain both aspirational and realistic.

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The Grade 10 Trial exam results and feedback are released in time to be considered in the final subject choices for Grade 11.

**e. Grade 10: Summer Packs (Term 3 and Summer)**

Following the conclusion of the IGCSE exams, the school may decide to set up workshops to facilitate transition between IGCSE and Grade 11. Although we rightly acknowledge that all students will need a break after completing their IGCSE examinations, it is also important to acknowledge that those choosing the most rigorous courses should engage with summer preparatory work to be best prepared to manage the significant leap from IGCSE to A-Level or IB DP. for the same reasons.

**f. Exam Results (Term 3 and Summer)**

IGCSE Exam results will determine whether students pass the year and are able to take up their courses of choice.

**g. Grade 11: Progress Check Grades: (Term 1)**

After 4-6 weeks on their IBDP courses, the students are offered a "Progress Grade", which gives them a sense of attainment. There is a final opportunity to change IB courses, as informed by this grade and conversations with all relevant parties.

**h. Grade 11 Careers and Universities Information Evening (Term 1)**

This essential presentation is led by the Portuguese and Overseas University Advisors. The evening ends with a Question and Answer session.

**i. University Advisor Meetings (throughout Grade 11 and Grade 12)**

Overseas applicants in particular should begin to set up meetings with the Overseas Universities advisor. This is because some applications have extra examinations, documentation or experience attached, preparation for which must begin in Grade 11 (see section 5 in this document, "Key Points to consider if Applying to an Overseas University").

**j. Grade 11 End-of-Year Exams and Forecast Grades (Term 3)**

The end-of-year exam in Grade 11 is an important factor in determining where students are at at the end of year 1. These grades are often required as part of students' transcripts and applications to overseas universities. The end-of-year exams also determine whether a student passes the year. It is important to note that students not meeting the required grades at the end of Grade 11 to pass the year will be required to complete 'recuperação'. Alongside this, these students will also be expected to complete compulsory summer learning. Students should understand this is not a punishment, it is in place to support them so they do not fall further behind and impact the learning of their peers.

**k. Forecast Grades round 1 and 2 in Grade 12 (Terms 1 and 2)**

Based on historical data and projected improvements in year 2, teachers assign most likely forecast grades and second most likely forecast grades, creating a range of possibilities for each student. These numbers are helpful in determining what universities might be a good fit for students.

#### **I. Grade 12 IB Trial Exam Grades (Term 1) and A-Level Trial Exams (Term 2)**

The IB and A-Level Trial exams are a key moment in which students are asked to consider long-term plans and approach to their studies so that their long-term plans remain both aspirational and realistic. These exams will be the final opportunity for students to hone their revision skills before they undertake the final assessments in May and June.

#### **m. Grade 12 IB Results Day**

Students receive their results on July 6th. The IB Diploma Coordinator and University Counselors are available to discuss re-marks, exam results, and university plans moving forward. Applications are submitted to the Portuguese Universities by the end of July. Counselors remain on-call in the year following Graduation for further support, if required.

#### **n. Grade 12 A-Level Results Day**

Students receive their marks on August 12th, as with the IB results day, University Counselors, alongside the Head of Cambridge and other members of staff will be available to discuss next steps for all A-Level students.

#### **o. Grade 10 IGCSE Results Days**

Grade 10 students receive their IGCSE results on August 19th (Cambridge) and 20th (Pearson Edexcel). The PaRK IS Senior Leadership Team will be available to discuss pathways and changes to previously chosen choices with students and parents.

### **Key points to consider if applying to a Portuguese University**

#### **4. Key points to consider if applying to a Portuguese University**

Full details on how to convert IB attainment to Portuguese equivalence can be found in our Student Handbook for Applications to Portuguese Universities. Anyone applying to Portuguese universities should familiarise themselves with this document.

#### **a. Equivalence to Grade 12**

Portuguese universities, both public and private, only accept students who have completed the IB Diploma, both A-Levels, or the AICE Diploma. IB 'Courses' are not recognised, as they do not have equivalence to Grade 12 in the Portuguese education system.

#### **b. Specific subject requirements**

All bachelor's degrees will require one or more specific subjects. For example:

For Medicine at Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade de Lisboa (only in Portuguese)

- Mathematics: AA SL/HL or AI HL + Biology + Physics + Chemistry
- A-Level Mathematics, + Biology + Chemistry + AS Physics

For Economics at Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portuguese or English) or Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics (Portuguese or English)

- Mathematics: AA SL/HL or AI HL
- Mathematics A-Level is essential for these courses

Please note that as of the application 2025/26, a minimum of two exams will be required by all Universities in Portugal.

Students need to verify if they have the specific subject requirements. They can do so by accessing the web page <http://www.dges.gov.pt/guias/indmain.asp>

Each course requires different subject requirements and has different weights for Grade 12 mean grade and subject requirements, therefore it's essential to check the DGES website <https://www.dges.gov.pt/guias/>.

Other requirements may change with time, so it is important to check the latest requirements and to confer with the Portuguese Universities Advisor.

## Key points to consider if applying to an Overseas University

### 5. Key points to consider if applying to an Overseas University

#### a. English Language Certification

Any non-native English speaker studying in the UK, US, or indeed anywhere where English is the language of instruction, is advised to check whether they need to take the IELTS, and if so, to complete it. The result is valid for two years, so students are advised to sit it in **Grade 11**. There is a fee associated with the test.

British and European schools tend to favour the IELTS over the TOEFL (another well-known English proficiency test) because IELTS supports visa applications to the UK, whereas universities in the United States often prefer the TOEFL.

In many cases, English proficiency can be demonstrated by achieving a grade C or above in IGCSE English, or a score of 5 or higher in IB English. Since universities often do not specify these requirements clearly, if in doubt, do not hesitate to contact the university you are interested in, or reach out to Ms Wiltshire for clarification.

#### b. Specific Course Requirements

Many courses require specific A-Level or IB subjects at particular levels. For instance, to study Engineering in the UK, students will need to take Physics HL or Mathematics AA HL. Similarly, A-Level students must achieve strong passes in A-Level Mathematics and Physics to be eligible for Engineering courses. To study Medicine in the UK, Chemistry and Biology HL, or A-Level Biology and Chemistry, are generally required. Some European Business courses may require an AS or A-Level in Mathematics, or a Higher Level Maths course.

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It is essential to seek the most up-to-date information by checking university websites and consulting the Overseas Universities Advisor.

### c. Applying to the UK

The application system in the United Kingdom is called UCAS, and students interested in applying should register in Grade 11. Families can use **Search - UCAS** or **Unifrog** at any time to explore universities in the UK.

Applicants select up to five courses and submit the same Personal Statement to all of them. UK universities require Predicted Grades. Application deadlines are early:

- 15 October for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and Oxbridge courses
- 31 January for all other courses

### d. Extra requirements for application

As part of an application, universities outside Portugal will generally require some or all of the following:

- A motivational letter or personal statement
- A reference letter
- A CV, portfolio, or evidence of relevant experience

### e. Extra academic tests: US & Canada

- **SATs** – US and Canadian universities may require SAT scores. These are important, and students should not sit the exams without adequate preparation. If they are considering applying to the US, they should begin preparing for the SAT in Grades 10 and 11.

Popular career paths such as Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and Law are structured differently in the United States. Prospective students must first complete a full undergraduate bachelor's degree in a related field, for example, Biochemistry for Medicine. After successfully completing their degree, they apply to medical or law schools as graduate entrants.

In Italy, Bocconi University in Milan requires either the SAT, ACT, or their own admission test.

Some UK universities require additional tests, particularly for competitive subjects:

- Law degrees: LNAT
- Medicine degrees: BMAT
- Mathematics courses: MAT

Oxford and Cambridge Universities have their own admissions tests for various subjects. Other UK universities, such as LSE and Warwick, may also require the same tests.

It is essential to consider more than just a university's academic reputation and entry requirements; other factors can significantly influence a student's experience while studying. A more recent measure of a university's quality is its ability to offer internships and job placements. Climate conditions and the accommodation provided by the university are also important. Housing shortages have adversely affected several prestigious institutions in recent years and have impacted their willingness to admit international students, regardless of how strong their applications may be.

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All of these tests require thorough preparation.

Last reviewed : July 2025

Next review: July 2026

Reviewers: Head of Senior School | Head of School



An **inspired** school

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Embracing **Individuality**. Preparing **Leaders**.