

# Eight common mistakes to avoid when applying to university

By Jacqueline Barclay

The university application process can initially seem complicated and confusing. Graduating high school students might feel a slight sense of panic when faced with a multitude of school and program options, leading to impulsive decisions that may be regretted later on. With a little advance planning and research, however, students will face a far easier time when completing their applications, whatever their destination. Throughout my years of practice as a university and college placement counsellor, I've witnessed a pattern of errors that students are apt to make if they rush into the application process unprepared. Eight of these most common mistakes are listed below, and most importantly, how to avoid making them.

## 1. MISSED DEADLINES

Pay attention to the deadlines! You may encounter various application deadlines depending on the schools and programs you wish to apply to.

For example, in Ontario, the fall 2008 semester deadlines for the OUAC (Ontario Universities Application Centre) and the OCAS (Ontario College Application Service) are different—January 9, 2008, and February 1, 2008, respectively.

Colleges and universities across Canada will also have different deadlines.

## 2. LACK OF RESEARCH BEFORE APPLYING

Be sure to research your options before you begin completing the application. What do you want to study? Where is the program offered? Is it a college or university course?

Make sure you attend the college and university presentations when the representatives visit your high school.

## 3. RUSHING THE APPLICATIONS

Don't rush; take your time when filling in the applications. Pay attention to details. Make sure you answer all of the questions completely. You don't want to make a mistake on a college or university application since it is a direct reflection of you!

## 4. NOT FOLLOWING THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Follow the instructions step by step. Do not leave any blanks. If you are filling in a written application form as opposed to the online version, don't forget to sign it.

## 5. DISHONEST OR MISLEADING STATEMENTS

Be honest and disclose everything! You do not want to be caught submitting false information on a college or university application. Inconsistencies or falsifications in your academic records can surface years later. Start out on the right path.

## 6. CLUSTERING YOUR APPLICATIONS

There is a tendency to apply to numerous schools all requiring similar graduating averages. Remember to apply to a variety of schools. You need to select some schools whose requirements you are currently meeting, and others whose requirements you have already surpassed (just in case). Take a look at schools in different parts of the country. There are great colleges and universities throughout Canada that may be able to meet your educational needs.

## 7. NOT CHECKING THE BASIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Make sure you meet the basic program requirements; these usually include a minimum graduating average and a listing of mandatory credits that must be earned by graduation.

## 8. NOT CHECKING THE ADDITIONAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Do you need to create a portfolio or academic resumé? Is there a written admissions test? Are you expected to attend an interview? If you don't complete the additional requirements, your application may be considered incomplete.

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