An Introduction to the Common Application

for RU Sakura Scholars Applying to
The American University – Ritsumeikan University Joint Degree Program
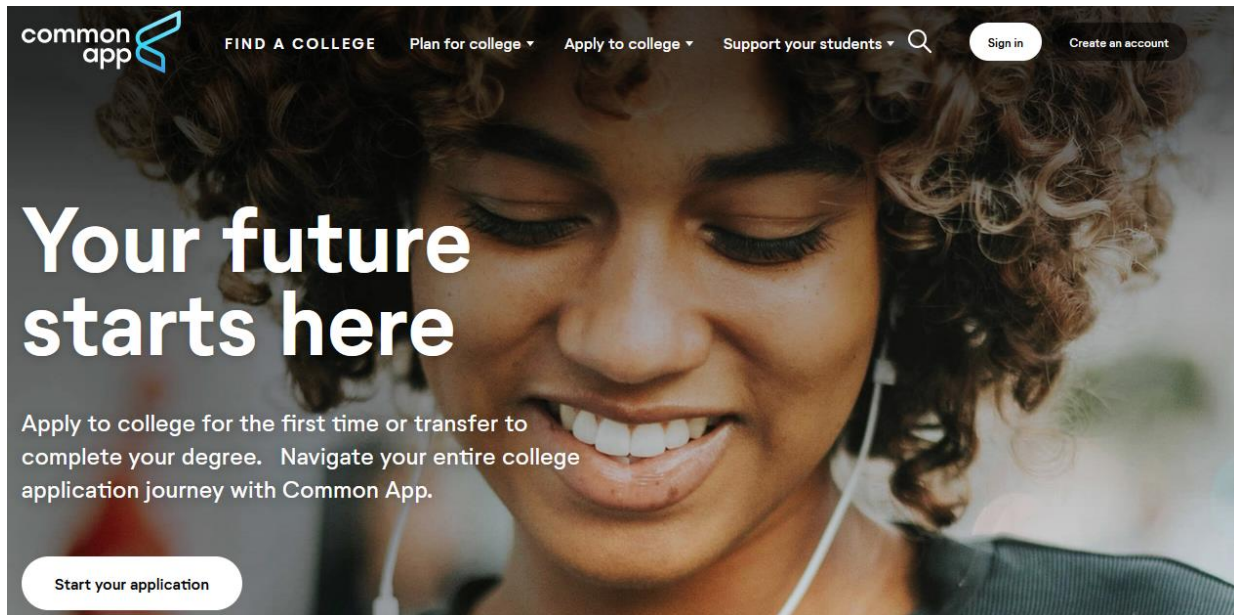BA in Global International Relations

Dear student,

Thank you for applying to the joint degree between American University (AU) in Washington, DC and Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan! Congratulations on your admission to the program!

To create your student account in the AU system, you must complete the Common Application. This tool is used by many schools, so you will first fill out general questions and then questions for AU. This guide has been created by the SIS Office of International Programs at American University. It is intended to help you navigate the Common Application, particularly those areas related to your application to the joint degree program. Please read these sections and follow the instructions provided. If you have questions, please contact our office at sisabroad@american.edu. Please be aware that this guide may be subject to revision.
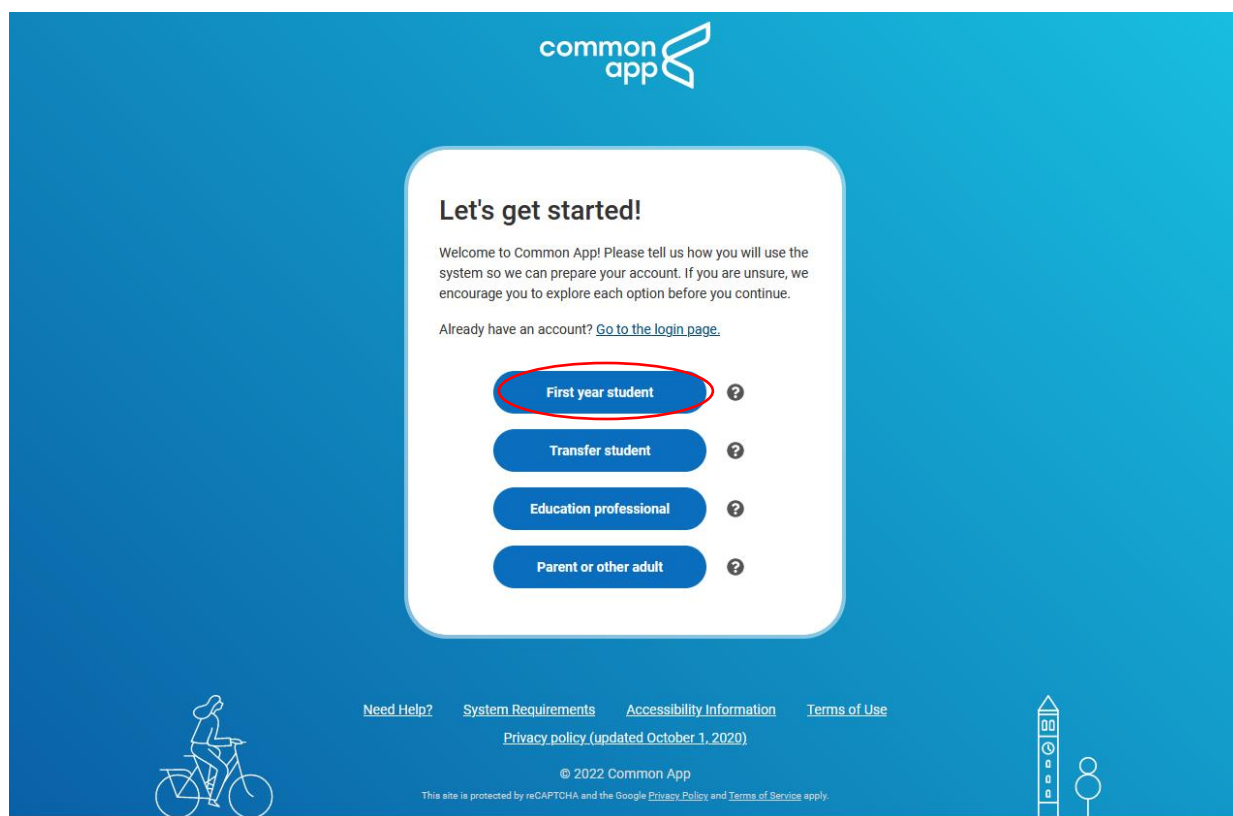
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Creating an Account in the Common Application

The Common Application is located at www.commonapp.org

To start an application, you will first need to create an account. Select the "Create an account" button from top right corner of the main page of the application.

This will take you to the account creation page. Select 'First year student.'

On this page, you will need to enter the following information:
- Email address (make sure you use one that you check regularly)
- Create a password
- Legal first/given name （名前）
- Last/family/surname（苗字）
- Phone number including country code
- Date of birth in "Month Day, year" format
- Address
- Confirm that you are applying as a first-year student in the next academic year
- Agree to Terms of Use

Select the submit button. You now have a Common Application account!

Starting the Application – the Dashboard
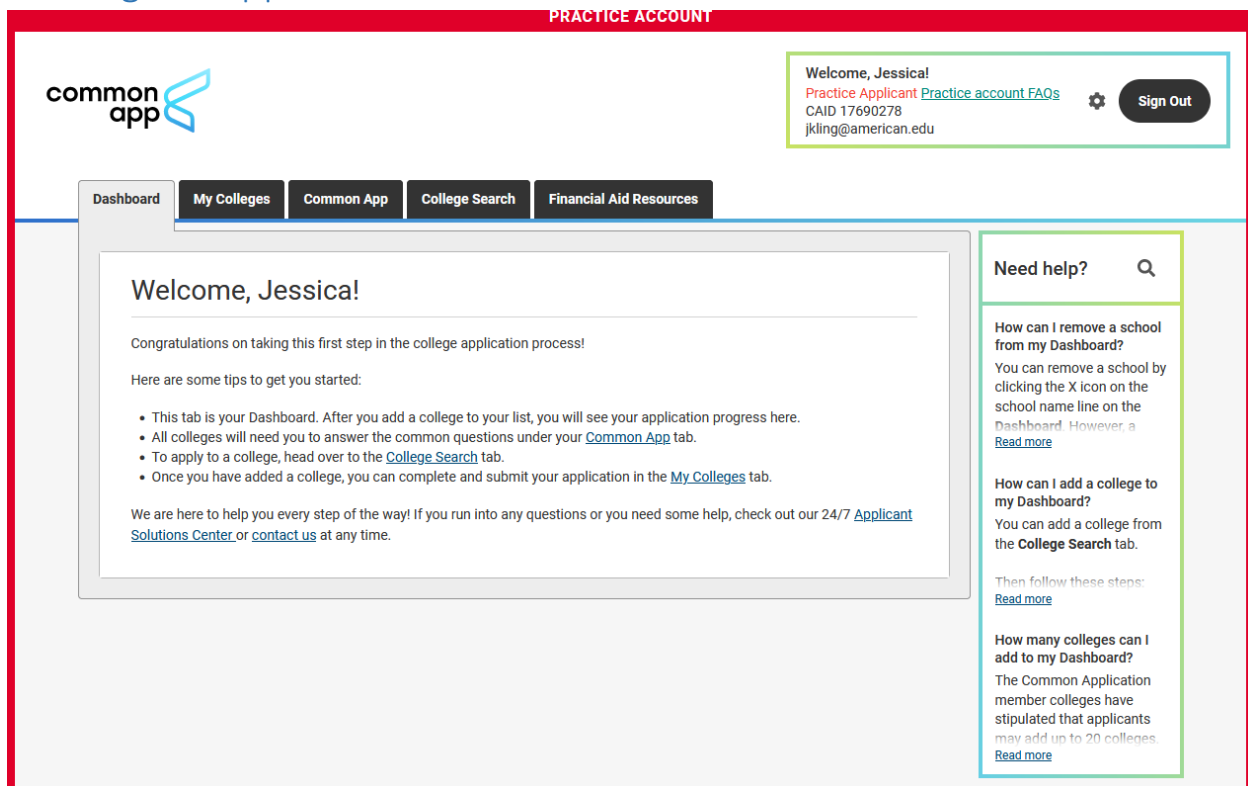
The Dashboard is the first page you will see each time you log in to the Common Application. On the right side of the page, you will see a column with Instructions and Help. This toolbar will appear on every page of the application.

You will see your first name and your Common Application ID Number (CAID) in the upper right corner of the page. The example shown above is a sample application, so your application will also say "student" instead of "practice applicant."

At the top of the page, you will also see tabs for My Colleges, Common App, College Search, and Financial Aid Resources. We will go through each of these tabs and the information you need to provide with the Common Application. Please also note that you do not have to complete the entire application at once, you can save and return to any unfinished questions. You will need to complete all required questions to be able to submit the Common Application.

The My Colleges tab will be blank until you add the name of the college to which you are applying. In order to do that, first go to the College Search tab.

Selecting the Application for American University

Go to the College Search tab. In the first line, enter "American University," and check that the university is located in Washington, DC USA. Select the + sign to add AU to your College Search.

Go to the My Colleges tab at the top of the page and confirm that American University appears in the My Colleges column on the left of the screen. If you click on American University, it will display Contact Information and deadlines. Again, make sure that the information listed is for American University in Washington DC.

Starting the Common Application General Questions

At the top of the page, select the Common App tab. This will take you to the questions that all students must answer. Any question with a red asterisk (*) is a required question. You will see that some questions are auto-filled with the information you provided when you created the account.

On the left of the page, you will see all the sections: Profile, Family, Education, Testing, Activities, and Writing. You must complete questions in all of these sections to be able to submit the Common App.

Common App Questions: Profile

Within the Profile section, you will be asked to answer questions about your Name and Date of Birth, Address, Contact Details, Demographics, Language, Geography and Nationality, and the Common App Fee Waiver.

Complete each subsection with your information and be sure to complete all questions with asterisks (*). Below are helpful hints for sections that particularly relate to your application to the joint degree program.

Geography and Nationality: Citizenship Status and Visa
Please list your country and city of birth. Under 'Select your citizenship status' it is referring to whether or not you have U.S. citizenship. For many RU Sakura Scholars, the response is 'Citizen of a non-U.S. country' and you will then be asked to list all countries in which you hold citizenship. Please answer your current visa status and plan to apply for a student visa in the future. Note that degree-seeking international students in the U.S. typically apply for an F-1 Student Visa during the time that you are at AU.

Common App Fee Waiver
RU Sakura Scholars do not pay the Common App fee. Please select 'Yes' to the Common App Fee Waiver eligibility criteria question.
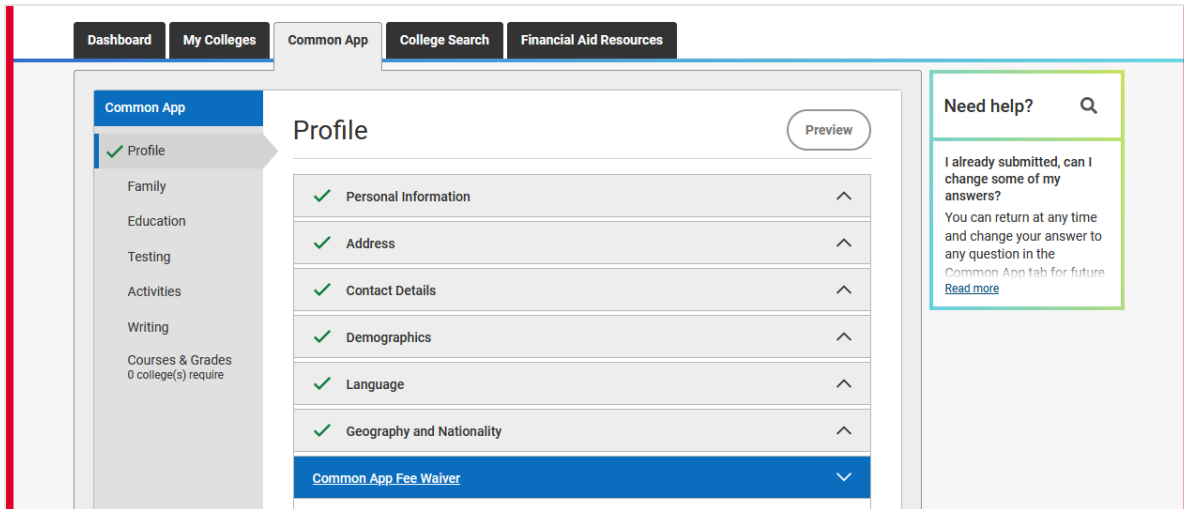
As you complete all required questions in each subsection, you will see a green check mark (✓) appear next to that section. Once all questions in the Profile section are completed, you will also see a green check mark in column on the left of the screen. This is how you can check your progress in the application.

Common App Questions: Family
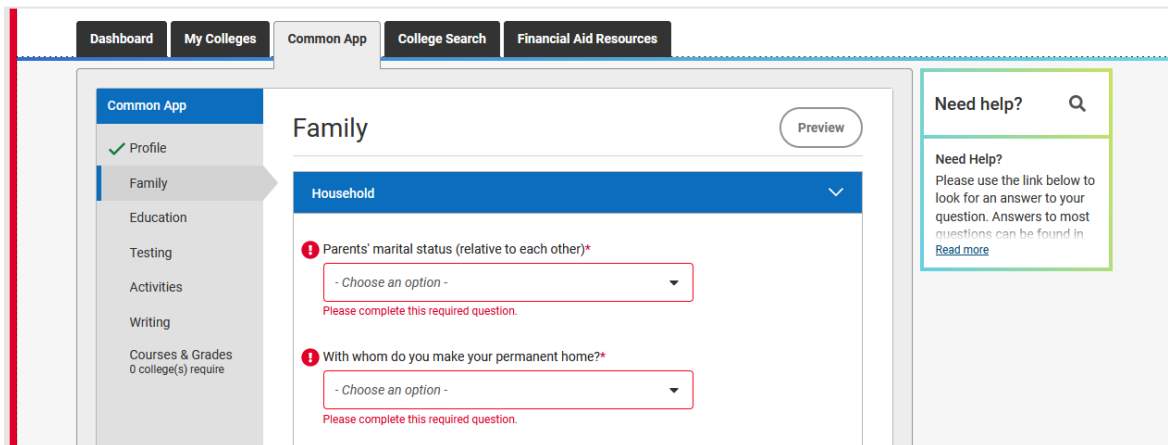
After you have completed the Profile section, go on to the Family section. This section contains questions about your family household, your parents, and siblings. This section provides background information to the school for demographic purposes.

Common App Questions: Education

Under the Education section, students will complete subsections about the Current or Most Recent Secondary/High School, Other Secondary/High Schools, Colleges & Universities, Grades, Current or Most Recent Year Courses, Honors, Community-Based Organizations, and Future Plans.

Common App Questions: Testing

For the purposes of the joint degree program, students will need to show English language proficiency through a standardized test such as the TOEFL iBT, IELTS, Peterson Test of English (PTE), SAT Reading Score, ACT English Test, Duolingo English Test, or Cambridge Assessment English. Scores older than two (2) years are not sufficient for the application process.

Common App Questions: Activities

List any activities you wish to report as part of the application. You can list up to ten (10).

Common App Questions: Writing

American University requires an essay with its application. In recognition of the effort that students are making in applying to both Ritsumeikan University and American University for this joint degree, students will be allowed to use one of the essays they have written for the Ritsumeikan application and copy-paste it into this section.

Select the last prompt: Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you have already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

In the space provided, please write "American University – Ritsumeikan University Joint Degree Program" and should copy and paste your essay from the Ritsumeikan University application. This essay must be in English and it must be at least 250 words in length and no more than 650 words in order to complete the section and continue.

Common App Questions: Additional Information

The the the writing section has a part entitled Additional Information. Questions in this section are typically optional.

The final section listed in the Common App is Courses & Grades. This section is not required by AU for the Common App section.

If you have answered all required questions, you should see green check marks (✓) for each section in the left column. In this case, you can see that there is no check mark for the Education section. This means that there is a required question which has not been answered. Click on the Education section to return to that section and make sure that you have anwered all questions.

Congratulations, you have finished the general questions for the Common Application! The application is not yet complete though. Now you will answer questions specific to American University.

My Colleges: American University

Go to the My Colleges tab at the top of the page. Earlier, you searched for and added American University. Now you will answer questions specific to American University and complete your application. On this page, you will see contact information, deadlines, and required information.

Because the joint degree program is a special partnership between American University and Ritsumeikan University, there are some special instructions for joint degree applicants to complete the AU specific questions. In the left column, under Application, you will see that the American University application has Questions, Recommenders and FERPA, and Review and Submit – Common App.

Let's begin the American University specific application questions.

American University Application: Questions

The Questions section contains five subsections: General, Academics, Activities, Contacts, Family, Disciplinary History and Writing. The helpful hints below address questions specific to joint degree applicants. You will need to answer all questions with a red asterisk (*) in order to complete the section.

General Questions Helpful Hints

Preferred Start Term
While applicants to the joint degree program will start first at Ritsumeikan University's spring semester and then come to American University in the fourth semester, you will apply simultaneously to both universities. For the start term, please select the fall term.

Preferred Testing Plan
Please select 'I attend a school outside of the United States and therefore the SAT or Act is not required for admission to AU."

Preferred Admission Plan
Select Regular Decision for your preferred admission plan.

Have you been granted a fee waiver by the American University admissions office?
Please answer 'yes.' Please input **AU2025** into the textbox that populates.

Have you been granted a fee waiver by the American University admissions office?*

Yes - I qualify for a pre-approved AU wai   ✕   ▼

Please provide your American University fee waiver code here:

[   ]

Do you intend to pursue need-based financial aid?
In principle, RU Sakura Scholars are not eligible for financial aid from AU. RU students who have dual nationality with the United States may apply for federal financial aid with the FAFSA application.

Academics Helpful Hints

Intended Major
Please select "International Studies" from the drop-down list. While participating in the joint degree program, you must complete the BA in Global International Relations, however, this is not listed as an option in the drop-down lists as it is not open to individuals not in the Sakura Scholars Program.

Secondary Academic Interest
The application requires applicants to list a secondary academic interest. You can list "International Studies" for this question as well.

Cornerstone Program
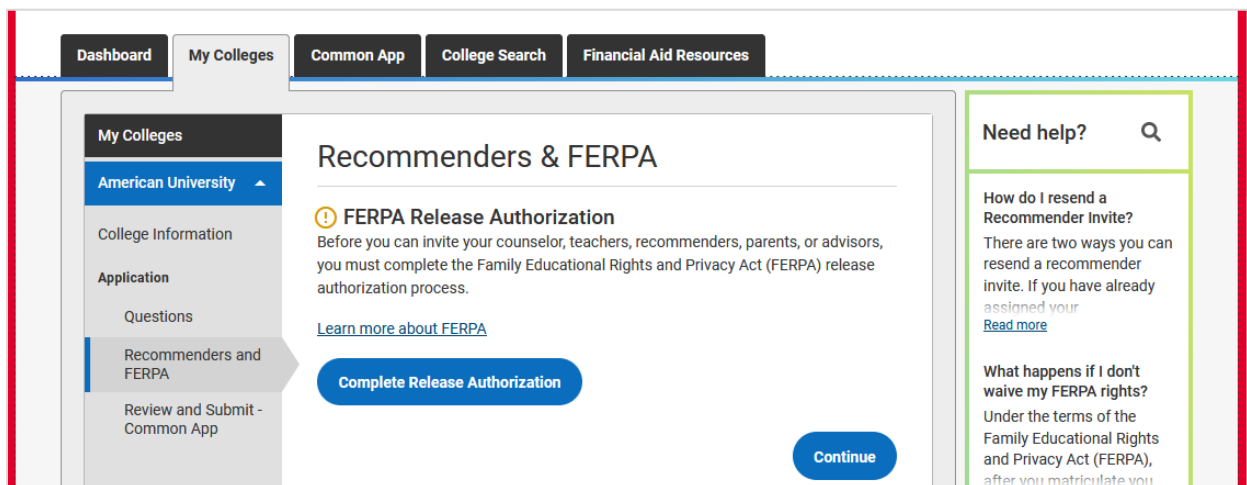In principle, Cornerstone is not compatible with the Sakura Scholars program.

Special Academic Programs

On this page you will also see that students who are interested in Special Academic Programs, including the Sakura Scholars, are directed to an additional application process. This is intended for students applying as AU Home Sakura Scholars. As an RU Home Sakura Scholar, AU will receive your name from RU, so you should <u>not</u> complete this additional application form.

Please answer questions in the Activities, Contacts, Family, and Disciplinary History section as appropriate. The Writing section is optional.

You will also need to complete required questions in the other three subsections: Activities, Contacts, and Family. Please answer these as appropriate. Once you have completed all required questions in the section, you will see a green check mark next to the American University Application Questions section in the left column and the application will advance to the Recommendations and FERPA section.

American University Application: FERPA

FERPA is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Click on the Release Authorization button. Read the information provided on this page. Click the checkbox and then the Continue button.

Check the authorization, the waiver, and the final checkbox confirmation. Type your full name as it appears in your passport on the signature line and select Save. You must complete the FERPA page to access the section on Recommendations.

American University Application: Recommendations

The Common Application includes a section for recommenders to share information on the applicant. As RU Home joint degree applicants, we recognize that you have already completed and submitted the RU application and AU will not require recommendations in order to complete the Common App. **You should not request prior recommenders to re-submit recommendations or request new recommendations**.

As of 2022, AU uses the BridgeU function in the Common App recommendation section. RU Sakura Scholars no longer need to submit information for recommenders to complete the App. (NOTE – in the past RU Sakura Scholars were asked to list the SIS Abroad office, but this step is no longer necessary).

Review and Submit – Common App

From the left column, select Review and Submit – Common App. Note that the screenshot above is from a Common App practice account created by SIS Abroad, your application will not have the yellow box.

If there are portions of the application that are not complete, it will direct you to complete these sections. You will not be able to review until all required questions are complete. In the example above, there are unanswered questions in the Education section of the Common App and the American University Questions. Once all required questions are complete, you can review the application.

This will generate a preview of the application as a PDF which is stamped with the word 'PREVIEW' across all pages. If you would like to make any edits, you can return to the Common App or AU questions. Use the Continue button to move to the next step.

Application Review, Payment, and Signature

As previously noted, RU Sakura Scholars applying for the joint degree will not pay the application fee. You should indicate in the School Specific Fee Waiver question earlier in the application that it will be waived. You will not need to make a payment to complete the Common Application. Select the Continue button.

Complete the final page and type your name into the Signature line. Once you click the Submit button, your Common Application will be complete.

Submission Confirmation

If you return to the Dashboard, you will see that the application status is Submitted and has a timestamp of the date. Please note that the date listed is in Eastern Time (ET). You can click on the PDF icon to keep a copy of your completed application.
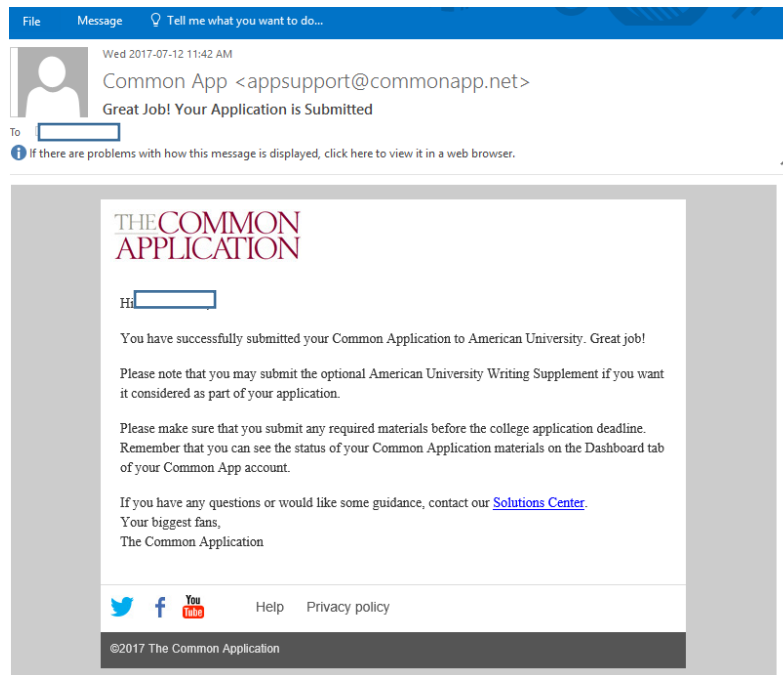
Above is an example of the confirmation email.

We hope this guide was helpful to you as you completed your Common Application for the American University – Ritsumeikan University joint degree program for the BA in Global International Relations. If you need additional assistance in completing the Common Application, please contact the SIS Office of International Programs at sisabroad@american.edu.

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Discover More. Enrich your Experience.