

Admissions Policy

1. Purpose

The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy offers a uniquely challenging and advanced education of secondary and post-secondary work for students talented in mathematics and science who reside in the State of Illinois. Admission practices of the Academy promote a diverse student population in order to enhance the learning of all students.

2. Geographic, Gender and Ethnic Representation

In accordance with its statutory mandate, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy shall provide the opportunity for students residing in the State of Illinois to apply for admission to the Academy by distributing materials to all schools within the state of Illinois, by distributing materials directly to students or their parents or legal guardians upon request, and by distributing materials to students through other channels identified by the Administration.

The Academy shall ensure adequate geographic, gender, and ethnic representation in admission decisions by approximating the diversity of the applicant pool from among eligible applicants. Admission decisions will not be controlled by quotas nor will admission standards be compromised. Recruitment strategies will include targeted programs for historically underrepresented groups relative to state demographics.

3. Eligible Applicant

Eligible applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Illinois resident;
- Illinois residency must be established by the first day of semester 2 or the first day of trimester 2 and documented no later than July 1 of the year of admission.(Policy JECAA – Student Residency)
- Completed the academic equivalent of nine years of education, excluding preschool and kindergarten;
 - Students who have not yet enrolled in the ninth grade must submit documentation of having completed an academic program comparable to ninth grade level work in mathematics and science. This must include a minimum of one year of algebra and one year of high school level science. On-line algebra and science courses can be used to meet the algebra and science requirement.
 - Select summer courses, high school, virtual high school, or college credits earned at another institution prior to application for admission to IMSA may demonstrate eligibility for admission to IMSA but will not earn graduation credit at IMSA.
- Not enrolled beyond the ninth grade;
 - Current tenth – twelfth grade students are not eligible for admission.
- Have a complete application file
 - Application
 - SAT Score
 - Official Grade Report
 - Teacher Evaluations

4. Selection Criteria

The following information must be submitted by each eligible applicant to be considered for admission.

A. SAT Scores (SAT-M,SAT-R+W)

SAT scores are used by the Academy to provide information about what an applicant has learned both in and out of school. Because SAT scores are intended to supplement other information about an applicant in assessing readiness for post-secondary level work, and because restricted opportunities for learning will have a negative effect on some applicants' scores, the Academy will consider "opportunity to learn" in interpreting scores, as well as other information about each applicant's motivation, educational resources, and other special circumstances. SAT scores will not be interpreted as a precise measure of an applicant's ability, interest or motivation. *During the 2021-2022 school year, due to COVID, students can submit an SAT score anytime during the admissions process or prior to enrollment.*

B. Grade Point Average(GPA) (Range is 0.00-4.00)

School Grade Reports for the 2½ years preceding application should be submitted by all applicants for admission. However, because feeder programs vary, grades will not be interpreted as a precise measure of an applicant's ability, interest or motivation. Grade point averages will be re-computed by Academy staff into a commonly defined GPA, using English, mathematics, and science grades for the previous five semesters. Extra weight to honors or accelerated course work will not be granted because of the district-to-district differences in honors course opportunities.

Applicants coming from schools that provide narrative evaluations of academic work without letter or number grades will be evaluated individually by the Selection Committee.

C. Review Committee Evaluation (RCE).

The Review Committee is composed of invited volunteers drawn from throughout the State of Illinois including, but not limited to scientists, entrepreneurs, IMSA mentors, IMSA alumni, math and science teachers, guidance counselors, educators of gifted adolescents, as well as IMSA faculty and staff. Committee members work in teams to evaluate applicant files. The following information is reviewed to determine the applicant's RCE score.

1. Evaluations
2. Application

The RCE score is contextually based, recognizing the differences in opportunities available to students from different districts and regions of the state. The RCE score will reflect the committee's evaluation of the applicant's demonstrated evidence of strong interest and talent in mathematics and/or science, a desire to pursue a Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) career, and qualifications for the IMSA environment.

5. HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENTS

Students who have been home-schooled (taught at home) are eligible to apply and be considered for admission to the Academy. These applicants must submit:

- SAT Scores;
- Application;
- Graded reports OR evidence of their academic preparation and performance;
- Evaluations by adult teachers, mentors, counselors or supervisors with whom they have worked, excluding parents, legal guardians and other relatives.

Home-schooled students whose evidence of academic preparation and performance does not include letter or number grades will be evaluated individually by the Selection Committee.

6. Student Selection

A. Selection Committee

A Student Selection Committee is appointed and chaired each year by the Director of Admissions. The committee is composed of IMSA staff representing the faculty, student services, and admission staff. The Chair may invite external experts to serve as advisors and non-voting members. Decisions of the committee are made by consensus based on professional judgment. If consensus is not possible, the final decision will be made by the Director of Admissions.

Eligible applicants are ranked numerically in accordance with SAT-Math in descending order from 800, recalculated GPA, RCE, and SAT-R+W, respectively. The selection process continues until the class and wait list are established as described in Section VI(B), below.

B. Admitted and Waitpool Admissions

The eligible applicant pool will be reviewed to determine those who are admitted, placed on the waitlist, and denied. Applicants who are admitted and placed on the waitlist will meet the following criteria:

- History of consistently high academic achievement in STEM as indicated by grades and evaluations from teachers in the student's local school (deviations of this pattern must be due to extraordinary circumstances that are not expected to interfere with future performance);
- Demonstrated interest and talent in mathematics and/or science as indicated by grades, evaluations from teachers in the student's local school and other information in the student's application;
- Expectation for success within the IMSA academic and residential environment as indicated by evaluations from teachers and in the student's local school and other information in the student's application;
- Demonstrated potential for significant contributions in the fields of math and science.

Particular attention is paid to the applicant's integrity, maturity and genuine interest and talent in math and/or science. To ensure adequate geographic, gender, and ethnic representation, the Selection Committee considers the demographics of: the selected class thus far, the eligible applicant pool, and high achieving students overall and by sub-groups on one or more competitive examinations administered by the State or local educational systems; as well as the strengths of the individual applicants. Factors such as demonstration of exceptional talent or potential for exceptional talent in the areas of mathematics and/or science, coursework completed, demonstration of potential for leadership, demonstration of a pattern of ethical decision making, behaviors consistent with research on gifted students in math and science, expectations for success within the IMSA environment, relative academic standing in home school, first language, course availability in home school, potential to contribute to diverse discourse among students and staff and other special circumstances are considered as a single qualitative judgment when selecting from among the eligible applicants. Relative importance of these factors will be determined by the professional judgment of the Selection Committee members.

Eligible ninth grade applicants will be given priority over eighth grade eligible applicants. Eligible eighth grade applicants may be extended a deferred offer of admission for the following year at the discretion of the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee will develop a list of applicants to accept and a wait list. Demographics and course placement will also be considerations. Offers will be extended as spaces become available by the Director of Admissions. Applicants on the wait list may or may not be selected for admission, depending upon institutional capacity.

7. Appeals Process

Students placed on the waitlist or denied admission may appeal the decision. The request for an appeal must be received in writing no later than seven (7) business days of receipt of the decision. The decision will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee. The composition of the Appeals Committee includes three representatives from the IMSA professional staff who did not participate on the Selection Committee the same year. The Committee is facilitated by the Director of Admissions, who serves in a non-voting capacity, and decisions are made by a majority vote of the Appeals Committee. The task of the Appeals Committee is to determine if the student has been given fair consideration in the selection process. If it is determined that the Student Selection Committee did not fairly or accurately review all relevant information, the decision of the Appeals Committee may be to uphold or modify the Selection Committee's decision.