

How the Admissions Process Works in a Nutshell

No two schools have the same exact process for making admissions decisions, but for those of you who are curious about how it works, these seven steps represent how one Tier I liberal arts school handles its decisions.

1. **The Application:** A student sends in his/her application.
2. **The Organizing:** The admissions staff organizes each application into categories and puts them into envelopes, labeling the outside of each envelope with vital information, such as the range SAT scores fall into, whether the student is a member of a minority group and whether the student is the child of an alumnus.
3. **The Review:** Two or three admissions officers read the application independently and render a decision on whether they would like to offer the student admission, reject the application or place the student on the waiting list.
4. **The Decision:** If the admissions officers who reviewed the application all agree, then the application goes to a supervisor or director who will likely affirm the decision. If the officers do not agree, the application is flagged for committee review.
5. **The Committee:** If an application is “too close to call”, it goes through a committee review. The committee is generally comprised of seven or more admissions officers (at some schools, the committee is the entire admissions department) who discuss each applicant and vote by a show of hands whether or not to offer admission. The committee meets regularly throughout the admissions process.
6. **The Final Decision:** Admission, denial and wait list letters are sent home in the mail.
7. **The Wait List:** As students who were accepted make their decisions about where they will matriculate, some students may be taken off of the waiting list to fill empty slots in the class.

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