We looked at self assessment from an internal perspective. Questions like who you are, and what do you want? Now, let's look at self assessment from a practical perspective, through the eyes of an admissions officer. Admission officers are trained in the educational systems of countries around the world. They visited many of those countries, and often high schools within each country. They know the strengths, the weaknesses, and the reputations of the educational systems, and they're familiar with the students who come out of those educational systems. From the visits as well as from previous applications. We know from the NACAC State of College Admissions report, that the top four factors that influence an admission decision are academic. As a reminder, these factors are grades in college prep courses Strength of curriculum, admission test scores, meaning SAT and ACT, and grades in all courses. Because these factors are more reflective of US applicants, we're going to make two additions. First, English language test scores. Primarily TOEFL or IELTS, and second, national examination results. Now, through the power of Que Sera, you are no longer an applicant, you are now an admissions officer. As an admissions officer, let's evaluate your application using these factors. Although we are going to change the order a bit. Let's start with strength of curriculum. Curriculum is kind of a funny word. The easy way to understand curriculum is the courses that you are required to take. The classes that you will complete to get your high school diploma. This evaluation criteria is about how much you were challenged academically in those required courses. At many schools around the world Students can choose some of their classes. If you had the option to choose some of your classes, the question is, did you challenge yourself by taking the harder classes? Which we'll talk about in a minute, or did you take the more average or easy classes? Now this always sparks the question. Is it better to get a low grade in a harder class, or a high grade in an easy grade? Admissions officers generally answer this question in the same way, which is It's better to get a high grade in a harder class. Now, that is somewhat sarcastic, but it's true, especially at highly selective schools. Strength of curriculum is also a question of opportunities. Did you have the opportunity to choose your classes? Or is your curriculum set? If you did not choose your classes, if you have a set curriculum, is it set nationally or is it set within your school? If it's set nationally, what is the reputation of your country's educational system. If it is set by your school, How strong is your school? Many of you might be nervous, because you might feel there's no way to measure the strength of your curriculum. It's okay. Understand that not everyone is able to be measured. In this category. And that, is the important thing to consider. Remember, you're an admission officer now. So when you look at your application, what can you see about the strength of your curriculum? If there's nothing. Then realize that you must work harder in other evaluation areas, to make yourself stand out. The second evaluation criteria is grades in college prep courses. All right. College prep courses, prep is a shortened version of preparatory, right? It's directly related to strength of curriculum. And college prep courses are those harder classes that we mentioned. Certain classes are identified as being more difficult for a number of reasons. There may be a bigger workload. The material may be harder. The expectations might be higher. These classes are intended to prepare students for university studies. Common examples that you'll see referred to, are advanced placement or international baccalaureate classes, which actually require a standardized exam at the end of the course. The last criteria, strength of curriculum, is about how much you were challenged. In this evaluation criteria, grades and college prep courses, is about how well you did in handling that challenge. Again, look at your documents. What
do you see? Don’t just think about courses named, college prep. Think about any of your harder classes. How did you do in your academic classes, meaning your math classes, your science classes, your literature classes? In some countries, grades for non-academic classes are factored in, to the overall grade point average. What I mean by non-academic are classes like, gym, or physical education. Even attendance, or conduct, what are your grades, in your hardest classes? Did you rise to meet the challenge? Or did the challenge prove too hard for you? What do your grades show an admission officer. The third evaluation criteria is grades in all courses. Forget about harder or easier. What are your grades? Are there any individual grades that stand out? Now, individual grades that stand out could be because they’re very high, or because they’re very low. Or because they’re higher or lower than other classes in the same subject area. Perhaps you were always an A student in your Mathematics courses. But one year, you received a C. That’s going to stand out. What are your grades in the classes that relate to your major? There’s something called STEM majors. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math. If you’re applying to a major in those fields, what are your math or science grades? In the US, we always talk about GPA, which stands for grade point average. The combination of all of your grades and marks. What is your overall GPA and what does that GPA show? Here in the U.S., we use A, B, C, D, F. A is the highest, and F is for failure. If a student has a B average, what does that mean? Did the student receive B’s throughout high school? That would give you a B average. Or, did the student receive a lot of A’s and a lot of C’s? Which would also give you a B average. Or, did the student receive grades all over the scale that still averaged out to a B? Each one of those students is very different even though they have the same GPA. When you look at your grades, are there trends? Do you have stronger grades in certain subject areas, and weaker grades in other subject areas? Have your grades increased over the years? Did you maybe have a rough start when you started high school? But then, you got better and better and better. What does that say to an admission officer? Or maybe you started great in high school, and you kind of went down, down, down. What does that say to an admission officer? Again, what do your grades show an admission officer? Finally, national examination results. Many of you live in countries where you must take a national examination at the end of high school in order to graduate. Wait. Remember, these exams are required to graduate from high school. They are not university entrance exams. Examples of national examinations would be the French BAC, the CAPE exams in the Caribbean, or the ICSE or CBSE in India. Among many others. In many cases, these exams may be even more important that your grades. Why? Because they allow university, to understand your performance compared to many, many other students. They also make up for anything unknown about your high school. So just like an admission officer would, look at your national exam results. How were your scores? Do your exam scores, and your grades from high school match. What do low exam scores, and high grades say about you? What do high exam scores and low grades say about you? What do your exams scores say about your academic preparation? Now many of you, haven't taken exams yet, and I'm not trying to put even more pressure on you. But it's important that you understand how your national exam results will be used in admission to US universities. Remember. An admission officer only has what you give him or her. When it comes to your academics, what are you giving an admission officer? Academically, what are your strengths. And what are your weaknesses?