

# University

## HIGHER EDUCATION OFFICE

### Guidance for Graduated Students

#### Greetings to our newly minted alumni!

Now that you have your A-level results, there will probably be questions you have about universities and courses. This guide may come in handy when you are making your decision.

#### Firstly, some words of counsel, when it comes to choices:

1. **Autonomy.** Don't pick courses because they are popular or prestigious: pick courses because you decide so. Take ownership for your choices by reading about what you are applying for.
2. **Interest and aptitude.** People who excel are those whose interests and aptitude can sustain the length and rigour of the course. It's no fun if you have to keep straining yourself academically—interest alone cannot sustain excellence.
3. **Check assumptions.** Before you select a course, it is a good idea to actually look at the modules you will be studying, particularly if you are selecting fields you have little experience in: are you drawn towards them?
4. **Balance between realism and idealism.** Ask yourself: What is realistically possible, with your achieved grades? Think positively and openly – the best choices lie at the intersection of interest with reality.
5. **Openness of mind.** Sometimes, the offers that come may not be your first choice. When facing rejection, keep an open mind, and give value to that which values you. The best thing you can do for yourself is to keep moving forward and excel in the field which chooses you!

## Local universities

- 1) All applications to local universities are done **online**, via their individual admissions portals. You will find the following links useful:
  - NUS: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/oam/apply-to-nus/application>
  - NTU: <https://admissions.ntu.edu.sg/UndergraduateAdmissions/Pages/ALevel.aspx>
  - SMU: <https://admissions.smu.edu.sg/>
  - SUTD: <https://www.sutd.edu.sg/Admissions/Undergraduate>
  - SUSS: <https://www.suss.edu.sg/full-time-undergraduate/how-to-apply>
  - SIT: <https://www.singaporetech.edu.sg/admissions/undergraduate>
- 2) There is a **deadline** for application. This would be mid to late Mar 2021. Check the respective universities' websites directly for exact details.
- 3) When listing down priority of choices, your rank order matters: admission is primarily merit-based. Two things are important here: the **Indicative Grade Profile (IGP)** and your **University Admission Score (UAS)**.

Check out the **IGP** of your courses of interest—available on the respective universities' websites—this indicates the representative grades of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles who gained entry in the previous year. What is reflected is **3 H2 + 1 H1 content subjects**.

If you take 4 H2s thus, the lowest of your H2s is converted into a H1 score. If you take 3 H2s and 1H1, all the scores are directly taken into account.

The IGP assumption is that PW and GP are C grades. E.g., a major that quotes 90<sup>th</sup> percentile as "AAB/B" means that at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of admission, students achieved H2 subject grades of A, A, B and H1 content subject B. The assumption is that PW and GP are C grades.

**To calculate actual UAS:** Take the total score of 3 H2s + 1 H1 content subject + GP + PW. This means your maximum score possible is 3x20 (H2s) + 3x10 (1H1 + GP + PW) for a total of **90**.

The following table shows the scores:

| Score | H2   | H1   |
|-------|------|------|
| A     | 20   | 10   |
| B     | 17.5 | 8.75 |
| C     | 15   | 7.5  |
| D     | 12.5 | 6.25 |
| E     | 10   | 5    |
| S     | 5    | 2.5  |
| U     | 0    | 0    |

Example: If a student scores the following: GP A, PW B, 4H2s = AABB, the score would be:

- 3H2s (A, A, B) =  $20 + 20 + 17.5 = 57.5$
- Lowest H2 converted to H1 (B) = 8.75
- GP (A) + PW (B) =  $10 + 8.75 = 18.75$
- **Total UAS =  $57.5 + 8.75 + 18.75 = 85$ .**

This is equivalent to a published UAS of AAA/A, where the assumption is that GP/PW are C grades. (IMPORTANT: there could be specific subject/grade requirements for different faculties. Check the University/Department websites for updates. The yearly profile may also change, depending on the year's applications).

**Our counsel:** When choosing your course options, you will want to be realistic, by ensuring that your UAS is at least close to, or at, the IGP of your desired courses, at the minimum 10<sup>th</sup> percentile. The best situation would be where both your UAS and grades are at/beyond the published IGP.

4) **Personal statements:** reflect on the best sides of yourself, and highlight how and why you are a match for the course of study. Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself: focus on your strengths and who you are, not what you are not. Talk about academic as well as soft skills, which are relevant to the field of choice. Use your activities (both within and without school) wisely: do not just list achievements; reflect on what you learnt in the process. Keep it concise.

Given the events of 2020, where relevant, some of you may find it appropriate to reflect on the positive ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way you do things, or given you a different, more mature perspective in life.

For those of you applying to Medicine, you can refer to our other guide, *Approaching the Personal Statement for Medicine*, for more details.

**Interviews:** Apart from traditional preparations of knowing yourself, why you are interested in the course and suited for it, given health and safety measures, it's highly likely that most, if not all interviews, will be conducted online. You will want to prepare yourself beforehand. Ensure a secure connection, a conducive place for interviews, and have pen/paper/your portfolio on hand (if not a tablet), so that you are able to demonstrate solutions as needed. Be familiar with the platforms used: it's a good idea to test out *before* the interview, to ensure you know how to handle the platform, as well as address sound quality, volume, and other presentation aspects.

#### 5) Yale-NUS.

Apply directly via the Yale-NUS portal (**not** Common App!): <https://apply.yale-nus.edu.sg/apply/>

Note that the deadline is **20 Mar 2021**. You require **two** subject teacher recommendations. You should approach your teachers **early and personally, before** triggering them a ping on the Yale-NUS portal. Do **not** leave things to the last minute—you should give your tutors **at least 2-3 weeks' advanced notice**, so that they have time to write properly for you.

**Important:** Ping your **Civics Tutor** for the Counselor Recommendation and Secondary School Report.

#### **Five tips on approaching the prompts**

- I. **Be holistic.** Use the prompts fruitfully to reflect on your entire range of activities, academic, co-curricular and beyond, such that different skills, abilities, and sides of you are shown.
- II. **Reflect on the whys, not just the whats.** Avoid laundry-listing achievements without reflection. It's good to give the college an idea of the person you are: *why* did you pursue the things you did, to what end? Why do you value the things you value? How did you grow as a person, from all your experiences?
- III. **Think beyond.** Growth is not just about the self: what impact have you had on the community and people around? How have you positively changed the lives of others?
- IV. **On Covid-19.** If reflecting on your experiences due to Covid-19, avoid being negative. It's good to *really* think of how experiences have made you better and stronger as a person. What useful skills did you learn in this past year, despite disruptions? Did you do anything for others in this time of common difficulty?
- V. **Be confident.** Finally, be confident in advocating for yourself! Tell *your* story, *your* way.

6) **For more FAQs**, you may find the following links to the respective universities' detailed responses useful:

- NUS: <https://www.askadmissions.nus.edu.sg/>
- NTU: <https://admissions.ntu.edu.sg/UndergraduateAdmissions/Pages/ALevel.aspx>
- SMU: <https://admissions.smu.edu.sg/faqs/general>
- SUTD: <https://www.sutd.edu.sg/Admissions/Undergraduate/FAQs>
- SIT: <https://www.singaporetech.edu.sg/admissions/faq>
- SUSS: <https://www.suss.edu.sg/about-suss/resources/faqs#/path/>

7) **Discretionary/apptitude-based admissions.** Discretionary admissions are applied for on the basis of exceptional talent/ability. Some examples which the universities cite: winning an international Olympiad medal, National Representative in arts/sports, having key leadership positions in organisations outside of school. Refer to the relevant FAQs in the links above for more details. You do not need to apply under discretionary admissions if your UAS qualifies you for the course.

When applying under discretionary admissions, choose what to reflect wisely. Avoid spamming: the universities limit you to a range of 3-10 activities. Thus, highlight your most exceptional achievements. I.e., activities for which you have won awards, show sustained involvement in, and where you may hold key positions/be a key contributor.

When it comes to supporting documents, give only what is required: Advocate for yourself: your certificates, awards and personal statement should speak for your exceptionalism. You should only ask for a reference if it is a stated requirement.

## **Overseas Universities (especially for NS boys)**

- 1) You are required to **follow all our INTERNAL timelines and procedures for application.** You apply as a student of RI. Keep in touch with us at: <http://www.ri.edu.sg/school-life/higher-education-office>.
- 2) There is no rush for application currently, as the previous cycle has not ended. We will update the timelines for the 2021/2022 cycle by end May, once the new dates are out. Keep a lookout then.
- 3) You should not be creating any UK/US accounts at the moment. It will not be valid for the new cycle.
- 4) As the current situation stands, we are unable to conduct F2F appointments for alumni. In light of this, we are making guides available for alumni on our open RI web. You may also email us if you would like counsel. Continue to keep a lookout on our RI webpage, as this is where we will publicise necessary application information in a timely manner.

5) **Approaching your tutors for overseas recommendations: Keep alert on timelines from July onwards.** A proper application takes months of effort to build, and also requires the aid of your teachers and our office. Everyone needs time to help you, so be considerate when you approach your tutors. **Do so early (i.e., between mid-Jul to early-Oct).** When exactly depends on what you are applying for. You can refer to our updated timeline by end May 2021. Do **not** leave things to the last minute.

**All the best in your applications!**

**Your teacher-counsellors,**

**Higher Education Office, Raffles Institution**

**February 2021**