Varsity applications at record high

Surge due to larger cohort, more flexible admission policy

BY SANDRA DAVIE
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APPLICATIONS to the three local universities have hit an all-time high, with more A-level students, polytechnic diploma holders and foreigners applying for places.

The schools attributed the surge to a larger cohort coming from junior colleges and the centralised institute, and a more flexible admission policy which allows polytechnic students with non-related diplomas to cross over to other disciplines.

Those with an engineering diploma, for example, can study the arts and social sciences now, or even business.

The numbers are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No. applied</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
<td>2,486</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanyang Technological University</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore Management University</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>250</td>
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The number of applicants for the three local universities' twin-degree programmes outstripped the number of available places.

The number of students applying to the three local universities' twin-degree programmes outstripped the number of available places.

These programmes are attractive because they allow undergraduates to complete two degrees concurrently.

For example, doing separate degrees in law and business would take a student up to eight years in total, but the NUS programme allows him to finish both in four or five years.

Upon graduation, a student can go on to a job in a business firm or even practise law.

Said Ms Tse Wing Man, 19, who has applied to do engineering and business at NUS after scoring 4 As and an A1 for General Paper: “When I graduate, I can take on an engineering job, and I am sure my business training will be useful. On the other hand, I can work for a technology-related business.”

Despite the overwhelming response, the three universities will not increase their intake for the twin-degree tracks.

NUS said applicants must meet strict requirements for both degree courses to qualify. This is to ensure that students can cope with the demands of studying for two degrees.

NTU – which will launch its second double-degree programme this year combining its business and computer engineering courses – expects only a fraction of applicants to be accepted, while SMU insists on students having “outstanding” results.

Explaining the increasing number of foreign applicants, NUS admissions dean Tan Thiam Soon pointed out that the university was ranked 22nd in the world last year by The Times of London newspaper.

“At $6,000 a year, an NUS education is fantastic value for money. Singaporeans and, increasingly, students from other parts of Asia, are realising that,” he said.

All three universities were quick to mention that the cap on foreign student intake remains at 20 per cent for undergraduates.

Which makes it more difficult for students like 20-year-old Indian national R. Prakash to win a place here.

Mr Prakash has a place in the renowned California Institute of Technology, but hopes to study engineering at NUS or NTU.

He said: “In the Times ranking, NUS was ninth for technology disciplines and NTU was 26th. Add to that the fact that Singapore is cheaper, safer and nearer my home in India — there’s no question where I want to go.”

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