UNIVERSITY ADMISSION

No squeeze for Dragon Year cohort

I REFER to the report, “Average grades? Getting into uni is a squeeze” (ST, May 30), and Mr See Chee Wee’s letter, “A, B, E but no place in local universities” (ST, May 29).

The report stated that the effect of the Dragon Year cohort, in conjunction with a rise in quality of applicants, has made it more difficult for average students to gain admission to the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU). This is not the case. It is also not what the universities had said in response to queries.

We have significantly increased the number of university places over the years. The proportion of each cohort entering university will increase to an estimated 23.5 per cent this year, compared to 20.8 per cent in 2000 and about 15 per cent in 1990. Through the continued expansion of places we are moving towards a target of providing subsidised university opportunities for 25 per cent of the cohort.

The increase in cohort size this year as a result of the Dragon Year effect has in fact been accommodated for by increased places.

Students’ performance in the 2006 A-level exams has been broadly similar to that in previous years. There was in fact little change in the average A-level performance of students over the past three years.

However, certain faculties and departments in the universities have seen more applicants this year. The universities are seeking to meet increased demand in these specific areas where possible.

In his letter, Mr See stated that his daughter has “met all the criteria for entry to a local university”. Admission to NUS, NTU and SMU is based on merit and open competition among all applicants in the courses concerned. For Mr See’s daughter, her chances of securing a place would depend on the competition in the specific courses she had applied for.

We understand the anxiety of students and parents during this period. The university admission process is on-going, with offers being made by universities and considered by applicants. The universities will be making further offers as applicants with multiple offers make their decisions.

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