

HEO's Guide to NUS Holistic Admissions



Headsup!

NUS is adopting a holistic approach when assessing applicants for admissions into their chosen degree programmes. This means that besides academic grades, other factors, such as the applicant's interest, aptitude, and prior preparation, will be used to admit the applicant. All applicants for **all degree programmes** will now be required to list up to four achievements, co-curricular activities, or non-academic activities (e.g. volunteering work, competitive sports) and answer short response questions.

In addition, each faculty may have its own, or added requirements. Refer to the [NUS Office of Admissions](#) and your desired faculties for more information. (Medicine applicants: you may refer to our Medicine guide for more specific details).



You may also wish to refer to our general *Guide for Alumni*, available likewise on our [open web](#).

On first choice bonus points

NUS will award bonus points to all **first choice** degree programmes for A-Level applicants, with the exception of programmes that require interviews/additional selection. This means the bonus points **exclude** the eight majors of:

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Law
- PPE
- Architecture
- Landscape Architecture
- Industrial Design
- Nursing

Refer [here](#) for more information.

HEO's counsel: While you will want to put your top aspiration as your first choice, give yourself a decent margin of safety. Be pragmatic. Ensure that by your 2nd or 3rd choice in **at least one or two universities**, you have option(s) where your 3H2 grades are comfortably above the 10th percentile of the 3H2 grades in the university's [Indicative Grade Profile \(IGP\)](#).



Writing your NUS application (1): Tips for the short response questions

In brief:

There are five mandatory short questions which all NUS applicants must answer in the application form. It gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your interest and suitability for your desired course(s). Given the short character limit, be succinct. Refer to [NUS' sample form here](#) for more details. Note that the use of any external aid, such as AI or ghostwriting, is prohibited by the university.



Q1. Tell us something you have done outside your school curriculum to prepare yourself for your chosen degree programme(s). (600 characters)

This focuses on academic interest and related skills, that **link** to your desired degree programme(s). In writing this thus, focus on what you have learnt beyond your H1/H2 curriculum that leads you to wanting the specific programme. Avoid spamming. For instance, if raising about an online course you took, or a competition, what are the specific topics you learnt, that made you interested in your desired programmes? Any particular areas? Avoid laundry-listing merely.

For those with diverse choices--identify **commonalities** you can write about. OR: focus Q1 on your top choice(s), and use Q5 as an opportunity to demonstrate capacity for other majors. You may also want to reflect on why your choices of majors are so different, if this is the case.



Q2. Describe an instance when you did not succeed in accomplishing something on your first attempt but succeeded on subsequent attempts. How and what did you learn from your initial failure, and what changes did you make to your approach to eventually succeed? (600 characters)

This question focuses on the **traits and behaviours required for success**. That is to say, skills like capacity to learn from feedback, resilience, determination, creativity etc, and above all: the capacity to never give up. What keeps you going?

The focus isn't so much on the specific activity, nor on the failure itself, than it is on what you do and how you recover from failure. Most characters should therefore be spent on the learning and not the description of what failed.



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Q3. Share something that is meaningful to you and explain how it has impacted you in a concrete way. (600 characters)

This question invites you to shed light on yourself: your values, your principles, or even the people or events that have shaped you into who you are today. Note the key word here: concrete. Avoid being too generalised or descriptive thus. This is a good opportunity to demonstrate something about yourself, in your selection of what is meaningful to you, and why. Be authentically you!



Q4. What is your proudest achievement and how did you accomplish it with the help or inspiration from others? Please also explain how it exemplifies some of the five NUS values of Innovation, Resilience, Excellence, Respect and Integrity. (1100 characters)

There are two parts to this question, so it is wise to focus on answering **both** parts of the question. Do note that it is not just about your proudest achievement, but your recognition about the help and/or inspiration from others. What you are really doing, is recognising that people go further in teams than alone.

Consider how you have learnt from those around you thus. What others have given you, and even what you have given others. Then: make the relevant link to NUS' values --it is not necessary to link to all five: what is most resonant should be what aligns between you and the university.



Q5. Is there anything else about yourself which you want us to know? (600 characters)

The openness of this question provides a useful opportunity for you to write about anything else that you may value, which you would like the university to know about yourself. For instance, if you have not written about your leadership, or sports or arts experiences, or about particular skills you have learnt beyond school, this is a good place to write about them to **demonstrate fit** with the university. It could also be something lighthearted. What about you is a fit for the university, that you have not demonstrated elsewhere?

Alternatively: if your course choices were very different and you had utilised Q1 to write about your top choice(s), you may wish to use this space to write about your other interests in other majors, and explain your experiences in these.



Writing your NUS application (2): the list of achievements

In brief

All applicants are invited to list up to four achievements, which can come from academia and beyond. This is to allow the university to better evaluate your application. Refer to the [sample form](#) from NUS directly for more specific detail on what constitutes an achievement.



To do

You should list at least one, and up to four achievements. As per NUS' guidance, these need not just be academic achievements, but can also come from your co-curricular and non-academic activities that you have participated in, such as volunteering and community-oriented work, sports or arts, leadership roles and even efforts such as creation of apps that are used by many.

Tips: When writing, give the formal title of your achievement. Avoid abbreviations or acronyms that will not make sense to a non-RI or non-school audience.

Where possible, it can be useful to contextualise your achievements. For instance, how many competitors were there? What was the age group? Any positive impact on the wider community?



In closing

It is only possible to answer the five questions, especially Q1, after you're certain of your choice of programme and related majors. Hence, prepare ahead, explore your options, and make a decision before drafting your responses. Lastly, give yourself sufficient time to edit and refine your responses to meet the character limits. If you require teacher references, **please ping them early**. If references are not required, do not request for them -avoid spamming a university: instead, advocate for yourself!



All the best!