

NUS medical school sees more diverse student mix

Entrants drawn from polytechnics and wider range of JCs with revised admission system

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A revamp in admissions has resulted in a better student mix at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Since a new admission system which uses a series of interviews came into effect in 2013, the faculty has drawn more polytechnic graduates and students from a wider range of junior colleges.

A spokesman for the faculty said it now has 22 polytechnic graduates enrolled across five years. It takes in 300 students a year.

She did not give figures for previous years, but media reports show that only one to three polytechnic graduates were admitted a year.

Among A-level holders, it used to draw most of its students from the top five junior colleges, with only one in six from the other junior colleges. Now, one in four are from institutions such as Serangoon and Meridian junior colleges.

The faculty draws more than 2,000 applicants a year: most have a string of As, or in the case of polytechnic graduates, near perfect or perfect grade point averages of 4.

Under the new admission system, applicants no longer take an essay test or go through a panel inter-

view. Instead, they undergo a series of interviews to evaluate their thinking and skills such as empathy and teamwork. They are also assessed on how they make judgments in real-life scenarios.

The new tests are conducted in a day and make up half of a student's admissions score. The other half still depends on academic performance – as was the case before.

NUS medical dean Yeoh Khay Guan said he welcomes the more diverse intake as future doctors should not come from just one segment of society.

Noting that the faculty marked its 110th anniversary this year, he said: "Selecting students for the medical school should not be just about grades, but about whether they have the right skills and values to be good doctors," he said.

Doctors should have integrity, be able to communicate and connect with people, and work in teams with other healthcare professionals, he added.

He said the new system was fair because the shortlisted students go through the same six stations.

"It is the same people interviewing them and scoring them."

He noted that the students from the polytechnics and lesser-ranked junior colleges are being tracked.

They keep up with their peers in terms of grades. Some have even made it to the dean's list for top



Former Nanyang Junior College student Muhammad Mirza Syafiq Rahmad, 22, says few from his JC make it to medicine. He was admitted on his third try. The revamped admission system came into effect in 2013. PHOTO: NUS

10 per cent performing students.

A-level holder Bharath Vedavyas Kamanat from Anderson Junior College liked the new admissions system as it allowed him to show why he is suited for the profession.

Said the 18-year-old, who is a fluent Mandarin speaker: "We were given hypothetical scenarios and asked how we would respond. I liked the fact that the admissions process looked beyond grades."

Former Nanyang Junior College student Muhammad Mirza Syafiq Rahmad, 22, was admitted on his third try. "I am very thankful that I managed to get in as my parents could not have afforded to send me overseas," he said.

His father is a real estate agent and his mother works as a service support employee at Changi General Hospital. He said few from Nanyang JC make it to medicine, but felt

that his experience as a medic during his national service and as a youth leader in two grassroots organisations helped him score better in the last admissions test.

"I feel that over the last two years I have developed some qualities that will help me to be a better doctor. I am glad that it is recognised through the new system."

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