

NUS to take in more students based on aptitude

✔ SANDRA DAVIE,
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To win a place in the increasingly popular computer science course at the National University of Singapore (NUS), students need at least two As for their A levels.

Next year though, students eyeing the degree can take up a computer programming course at NUS and, if they do well, gain fast-track admission into the degree course even though their grades may fall short.

NUS provost Tan Eng Chye, who was yesterday named its president-designate, said the university is looking at admitting more students by assessing their aptitude for a field of study.

Currently, only about 12 per cent of the 7,000 freshmen – in courses such as medicine, law and architecture – are assessed on their aptitude for a course, through interviews, portfolios and entrance tests. Most are admitted based on their A-level, International Baccalaureate or polytechnic diploma exam results.

Prof Tan is known for introducing bold changes, including allowing students to write off their grades for up to eight modules in the first year.

The aim is to reduce academic stress and encourage students to explore subjects outside their specialisation.

The scheme has proven to be popular with its first-year students, with over 80 per cent choosing to drop their grade for at least one module.

Prof Tan said NUS is also looking at allowing flexibility to students to take a gap year during their studies.

“Students may want to break up their undergraduate degree into two parts – he or she may study for two years, perhaps go out to work for two years and come back after that to complete their degree,” he said.

As part of efforts to promote lifelong learning, Prof Tan also announced that the university will be opening up 5,000 places a year for the next five years to NUS alumni and all Singaporeans to take up courses at NUS.

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