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MSVU MINH PHUONG, president of NUS Peace, which organises animal-assisted, stress-relief therapy sessions for students

Dog therapy to relieve exam stress

When final examinations approach at the National University of Singapore (NUS), the dogs come out.

To comfort and have fun with the students, of course, thanks to animal-assisted, stress-relief therapy sessions organised by NUS Peace, short for People Ending Animal Cruelty and Exploitation.

The animal welfare interest group organises these sessions for students, in collaboration with Therapy Dogs Singapore, a non-profit voluntary welfare group.

In April this year, it organised two sessions, where about 50 students had the chance to interact with about eight dogs a session – pet-

ting, cuddling and feeding them treats as well as playing with them.

The group's president, Ms Vu Minh Phuong, 23, a fourth-year project and facilities management student, says: "After each two-hour session, many participants said they enjoyed playing with the dogs and that dogs were very cute.

"The experience also helped them take their minds off the stressful preparation for the examinations, at least for a moment."

NUS Peace was established in 2006 by a group of animal-loving students. There are more than 50 members.

The group has started several ini-

tiatives to improve the interests and welfare of animals – be they stray, domestic or farmed.

For example, in 2009, it proposed a "trap-neuter-release-manage" scheme to better control the cat population on campus.

The scheme has now been adopted across the campus, involving both students and staff in the active management and care of resident cats.

In 2015, members also started a regular volunteering programme at local animal shelters, where volunteers clean the shelters, prepare food for the animals as well as walk the dogs.

A therapy dog session (above) organised by NUS Peace, where students get to spend time with dogs and de-stress before the start of their final examinations.
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