

# NUS scores with bonus admission points

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## 9% more A-level applicants gain entry into first-choice course this year; intake also up

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The National University of Singapore's (NUS) bold move to award bonus admission points for first-choice courses has paid off for its incoming students as well as the university.

Figures from NUS show that this year, 9 per cent more A-level applicants – about 1,000 – landed a place in a course they listed as their top choice.

As a result, 3.2 per cent more A-level applicants accepted NUS' offer of a place in the university. This, coupled with the increased intake into computer science, means that NUS' intake for the new academic year starting next month is set to exceed 7,700. Last year, it was 7,100.

NUS announced its decision to award 1.25 bonus points for an applicant's first choice just before the admission exercise began in March.

This is equivalent to going from C to B or B to A in an A-level H1 subject.

The bonus points applied only to

courses where entry is based purely on converting a student's grades into points, and not to courses such as medicine and law where students are assessed on their aptitude and interests through interviews.

In announcing the move, NUS officials said their analysis of admission data showed bonus points can make a difference. It means, for example, that a student with 81 points who applies for communications as his first choice has an edge over another with 82 points who lists the same course as his second choice.

NUS' initiative is in line with the Ministry of Education's move to expand aptitude-based admission into post-secondary institutions and universities. Since last year, NUS and

the Nanyang Technological University were able to admit up to 15 per cent of students based on their unique strengths and talents. Previously, they set aside only 10 per cent of places for the scheme, called the discretionary admission scheme.

NUS senior deputy president and provost Ho Teck Hua said the university will do a fuller analysis of the admission data for this year, but that preliminary analysis shows the bonus points made a difference for many students seeking to enrol in courses that were their first choice.

He said: "We wanted to tell students that if they had done well and are passionate about a career in business or computing, then we want to support their interest and

help them pursue their passion."

He added that students passionate about what they study tend to perform better. "More of them got a place in their first-choice course, so that means more will be pursuing their dream course, their passion."

"It's a win for the university, because we expect these students will be a lot more energetic, a lot more motivated."

He said NUS will track students to see if those who got in based on their bonus points go on to do well.

Mr Jared Chua, 19, who was offered a place to study pharmacy, a competitive course, said he initially thought of applying for arts and social sciences as he was short of points. "But I really wanted to do

pharmacy and thought, since NUS was offering an additional 1.25 points, I may just make it. And I did. So I am very grateful for the scheme," he said.

Similarly, Ms Catherine Tan, 19, said she was going to apply for data science and analytics as it was easier to get into although in her "heart of hearts", her first choice was information security. After finding out about the bonus points, she tried for information security and landed a place.

"No doubt, I am really thankful for the scheme," she said, adding that getting her first choice has got her all excited about starting on her degree course next month.

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