

# NUS law faculty to shortlist more JC, MI students

It is also seeking out strong candidates from polytechnics as part of bid to cast net wider

**Amelia Teng**  
Education Correspondent

The National University of Singapore's (NUS) law faculty, which offers one of the most popular degree courses here, is expanding efforts to broaden the pool of undergraduates it admits.

It is also seeking out strong students from polytechnics who have an aptitude for law, as part of its bid to cast its net wider.

From this year, students from the top 10 per cent of the cohort at any of the junior colleges or Millennia Institute (MI) who apply to NUS Law will be automatically shortlisted for the faculty's admission test and interview.

This is up from 5 per cent for the intake last year, as part of a pilot initiative to draw students from schools that are not as well represented in law school.

In response to queries from *The Straits Times*, NUS law dean Simon Chesterman said last year's admission exercise saw a "modest increase" in applications.

"We continue to have very strong interest among applicants to NUS Law," he said.

While the precise number of applicants varies yearly, the law school's initiative to broaden student diversity contributed to an increase in the number of students shortlisted for interviews and written tests, he added.

The figure grew from 811 in 2020 to 862 last year. The number is 849 this year.

"We were able to shortlist more students from diverse backgrounds for interviews and written tests," he said, adding that once they were shortlisted, all candidates compete on a level playing field.

"Those students were in addition to those shortlisted under our traditional procedures and did not exclude anyone from consideration," he said. In fact, based on the faculty's existing aptitude-based admission criteria, many of these candidates were already included, he added.

The decision to expand last year's pilot came after a review.

"Our projections determined

that we had the capacity to shortlist, interview and test applicants who were in the top 10 per cent. In parallel, we have also sought to identify strong candidates from Singapore's polytechnics," said Prof Chesterman.

Their performance at the written test and interview, together with academic qualifications and other achievements, will determine their admission to NUS Law.

"This will enable us to meet a wider pool of candidates, selecting the strongest and most deserving from among them – including those who demonstrate a deep passion for the law," said Prof Chesterman.

It was previously reported that about 2,000 students apply to the Bachelor of Laws programme each year. Its annual intake remains unchanged at 240.

The law faculty has in the past decade made some efforts in attracting more diverse applicants by considering more students through the discretionary admission process that looks beyond grades.

Said Prof Chesterman: "Diversity is important not only because it increases opportunities for candidates from a wider range of backgrounds to pursue a law degree, but also because it enhances the experience of everyone who does (pursue law)."

Law Society of Singapore president Adrian Tan said it is important that law undergraduates represent a cross section of Singapore, so that they can begin to understand society even before they become lawyers.

Lawyers serve the entire population of Singapore, and they should be able to empathise and connect with every level of society, he added.

Ultimately, being a lawyer requires more than just "book smarts", he said. "A lawyer must be resilient, brave and honest, and you could say that students from humbler backgrounds, in less popular schools, would have led different lives and experienced different challenges. They would have something different to contribute to the legal profession."

ateng@sph.com.sg