

# University Scholars Programme

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# 1 What is University Scholars Programme?

## What is University Scholars Programme?

The University Scholars Programme (USP) is a multidisciplinary academic programme for NUS undergraduates. USP offers students a globally distinctive university experience that goes beyond a major (by providing core intellectual skills which cut across disciplines), encourages growth and fosters leadership attributes (in a residential college setting), and provides opportunities to learn about and impact upon global issues (from a Singapore perspective). Each year, around 200 incoming NUS students are admitted to USP. Together, we form a close-knit, vibrant and diverse USP community that is curious, critical and engaged.

USP makes the above happen by:

- Offering modules meant to **complement and enhance** students' home majors (e.g., by cultivating general analytical skills that are applicable in a variety of disciplines).
- Bringing together **students with a diverse range of interests and specialist training** from a variety of home disciplines; they take modules together, interact with and learn from each other, etc.
- Offering a range of **out of classroom opportunities** and **international opportunities**.

## My Major + USP

Students admitted to USP are concurrently enrolled in one of seven faculties or schools in NUS – Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Computing, Design and Environment, Engineering, Law, and Science. They do 30% of their academic work in USP and 70% in their home faculty or school. The total workload is the same as that of any other NUS undergraduate's under an honours programme.

## USP Curriculum

The USP curriculum is designed to develop students in their analytical, reasoning and thinking skills. Students take modules in three structured tiers—Foundation, Inquiry and Reflection. Foundation modules focus on writing and critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning, and also help students situate their knowledge within the larger history of ideas. Inquiry modules provide opportunities to practise these skills—through multidisciplinary inquiry, independent research, overseas academic exchange and other out-of-the-classroom learning—and in so doing, inflect and refine them. The single Reflection module offers the space for synthesis and encourages students to look back on their learning and ahead to post-university life. Many USP modules are inter- or multidisciplinary, while the curriculum as a whole (covering humanities, social sciences, sciences and technologies) has a multidisciplinary structure. The USP classroom, in bringing together students from seven NUS faculties and numerous majors, has a multidisciplinary composition, thereby better preparing students for the modern workplace. All modules are conducted as small seminars and rely on strong interpersonal interaction and vigorous discussion. Having class sizes of 10 to 30 students facilitate a learning experience that is at once targeted and

collaborative, and brings about meaningful interactions with professors and among students.

### **Overseas Experiences**

USP encourages and provides support for numerous overseas initiatives. These include exchange programmes and joint/double degree programmes at universities such as Delhi, Waseda, Sciences Po, Beida, Amsterdam, Bogazici and the Australian National University; and study trips and expeditions to places such as the United States, Iran, Cambodia, India and Turkey.

### **USP Residential College**

Multidisciplinary learning is richly integrated with residential living at the USP residential college. Located at NUS University Town, USP comprises a residential block (Cinnamon College), two learn lobes with offices and classrooms, a multi-purpose hall, dining hall, reading room, multimedia laboratory and student lounges. Students take USP modules within these premises. Facilities and programmes at the residential college are designed to cultivate an open and supportive environment that meets and develops students' needs and interests. Through organising and participating in the wide array of events and activities hosted at the residential college, interacting with diverse groups of people, and enjoying moments of solitude and reflection, USP students have the opportunity to create and develop close bonds of community and belonging.

All USP students will stay at the USP residential college in year one and a second year of their choice. Some will stay on thereafter.

## 2 Key Contact Information

For up-to-date information, please visit <http://usp.nus.edu.sg/about/people>.

## **3 Undergraduate Education**

3.1 [Admission](#)

3.2 [Academic Structure and Requirements](#)

### 3.1 Admission

Students apply to join USP. Application is by academic and co-curricular transcripts, an essay, and an interview. Students are admitted based on their academic potential and co-curricular achievements, together with their passion, motivation, and curiosity.

Prospective students complete and submit their USP application at the same time as their NUS application for admissions to any of USP's partner faculties or schools, namely, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), NUS Business School (BIZ), School of Computing (SOC), School of Design and Environment (SDE), Faculty of Engineering (FOE), Faculty of Law (LAW) and Faculty of Science (FOS). Each application will be processed separately. They can apply online through the USP admissions portal ([usp.sg](http://usp.sg)) by the closing date, which is typically 1 day after the closing date for NUS application each year. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for an interview.

NUS students in their first semester may also apply to join USP during USP's 2nd admissions exercise from 1 to 31 October each year.

USP is an academic programme and not a scholarship disbursement programme. USP students may however apply for NUS scholarships, or can be recipients of other scholarships. For details, please visit <http://www.nus.edu.sg/oam/scholarships>.

Students who are interested to pursue one of the double degree programmes available in NUS may also apply to USP, provided the two degrees are offered by our partner faculties or schools, with the exception of NUS Law. In most cases, students who are admitted to both programmes will need to extend their candidature in NUS in order to complete all the necessary requirements.

USP students can apply to change their course of study up to the end of their second year. The application will be subject to the review and approval of the Admissions Selection Committee in NUS, and the relevant faculties or schools involved.

USP students also live in a residential college - Cinnamon College (USP) in the University Town - in year one and a second year of their choice, a key feature of USP since 2011. Only upon acceptance to USP, students will proceed to apply to live in the residential college (Cinnamon College) via the University Hostel Management System, administered by the NUS Office of Student Affairs.

USP is an academic programme and not a scholarship disbursement programme. USP students may however apply for NUS scholarships, or can be recipients of other scholarships. For details, please visit <http://www.nus.edu.sg/oam/scholarships> or <http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg/financial-aid-and-scholarships>.



### **3.1.2.1 Admission Requirements**

#### **Admission Requirements**

##### A. Masters

In general, the University requires:

- Normally an NUS Honours degree (Merit/Second Class and above) or equivalent (e.g., a four-year Bachelors degree with at least an average grade of 'B') in a relevant discipline;
- In exceptional cases, a Bachelors degree in a relevant discipline with at least two years of relevant work experience, subject to approval by the Faculty and Board of Graduate Studies, on a case-by-case basis; and
- TOEFL/IELTS, where applicable.

All applicants should consult the website of relevant Departments/Programmes for specific departmental requirements.

##### B. Ph.D.

In general, the University requires:

- Normally a good Masters degree in a relevant discipline; or
- An NUS Honours degree (at least Distinction/Second Class Upper Division) or equivalent (e.g., a four-year Bachelors degree with an average grade above 'B') in a relevant discipline, subject to approval by the Faculty, on a case-by-case basis; and
- TOEFL/IELTS, where applicable.

All applicants should consult the website of relevant Departments/Programmes for specific departmental requirements.

## **3.2 Academic Structure and Requirements**

USP offers a broad-based curriculum that balances both breadth and depth to give students an interdisciplinary education. An undergraduate in the University Scholars Programme takes 30% of his or her modules in USP and the remaining modules (70%) in his or her home faculty or school as well as from other faculties or schools. While in USP, the student is exempted from certain requirements that apply to students not in USP, such that all students, regardless of whether they are in USP or not, graduating with an honours degree, will have roughly the same overall requirements in terms of number of Modular Credits (MCs). In the event that the fit of the USP requirements with the home faculty or school is not perfect, it is possible that students may graduate with slightly more MCs compared to their non-USP peers.

3.2.1 [For students matriculated in 2012 and after](#)

3.2.2 [S/U Options](#)

### 3.2.2 For students matriculated in 2012 and after

USP offers a three-tier structure which builds upon each other in an intuitive manner, so that each prepares students for the interdisciplinary work they encounter in the subsequent tiers.

A USP student must read and pass (48MCs):

- 3 compulsory foundation modules worth 12 MCs
- Writing and Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning Foundation
- University Scholars Seminar
  
- 8 inquiry modules worth 32 MCs
- Four modules in the Humanities and Social Sciences (H&SS) domains
- Four modules in the Sciences and Technologies (S&T) domains
- One Independent Study Module (ISM) but no more than three
  
- 1 reflection module worth 4 MCs

Students must also fulfill one Singapore Studies requirement.

**Foundation Tier** – consists of three modules. The first tier hopes to nurture a solid series of skills that will equip students for the interdisciplinary work they will encounter in the subsequent tiers.

The foundation modules comprise of Writing and Critical Thinking (WCT), Quantitative Reasoning Foundation (QRF) and University Scholars Seminar (USS), and these three modules are compulsory. The WCT module must be read in their first or second semester of enrollment in USP while the QRF module must be completed by the third semester. USS is a year-long module which spans over two semesters.

**Inquiry Tier** – consists of eight modules balanced equally between the two domains. Students take interdisciplinary modules in two domains, Humanities & Social Sciences (H&SS) and Sciences & Technologies (S&T). The overall goal of the second tier is to promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary inquiry, so that students can make intellectual connections outside of their majors. The curriculum is thus designed to encourage students in broad intellectual inquiry beyond their chosen majors, and incorporates the requirement to take at least one independent study modules (ISMs) on topics of their choice.

All USP students will take four modules in the H&SS and four modules in the S&T domains, including one ISM but no more than three.

We encourage students to have international experience, and indeed we aim to have all of our students undergo some form of study, whether formal or informal, outside Singapore. We thus allow the

substitution of modules in a number of cases. Students going on USP and their faculties' Student Exchange Programmes, subject to approval, can substitute two modules per semester. Those on a Double Degree Programme (between USP partner faculties), USP Cultural Immersion Programmes in China and India, and on NUS Overseas College (NOC), can gain exemptions up to four modules in total. In each case, we consider that the intellectual experiences the students undergo, whether broadening across disciplines, cultural facility in a new academic environment entrepreneurship, partially fulfill the goals of the Inquiry tier modules in stimulating broad-based inquiry. In order to preserve the sense of USP as a learning community, however, we impose an overall requirement of **eight** USP modules across the three tiers (i.e, at least eight (of the total 12) USP modules must be USP taught modules.)

**Reflection Tier** - consists of one module, the senior seminar. In this module, the issues of a particular topic are developed through seminar discussions, readings and paper assignments in such a way as to allow students to reflect on the conditions of their own disciplinary knowledge and the assumptions fostered in disciplinary training, and to develop their own theoretical framework the nature of intellectual discourse in general rather than just within their own disciplines. The third tier thus builds both on the broadening of inquiry in the second tier, and upon the disciplinary knowledge that students have gained within their major.

Please refer to <http://usp.nus.edu.sg/curriculum/academic-requirements> for details and updates of academic requirements for the different cohorts.

### **3.2.3 S/U Options**

USP modules at level 2000, with the exception of WCT and QRF modules will be eligible for S/U for USP students matriculated in AY2014/15 and onwards. All WCT and QRF modules are not eligible for S/U.

As a general guideline for those matriculated in AY2014/2015 and onwards, in order to graduate with a USP certificate, USP students must ensure that they have at least six USP modules which are letter-graded.

Please refer to

<http://usp.nus.edu.sg/curriculum/academic-structure/satisfactory-unsatisfactory-s-u-options> for details and updates of S/U options.

## **3.3 International Programmes**

3.3.1 [Student Exchange Programmes](#)

3.3.2 [Joint/Double Degree Programmes](#)

3.3.3 [Other International Programmes](#)

### 3.3.1 Student Exchange Programmes

USP has student exchange tie-ups with the following partner universities:

- Arizona State University - Barrett, the Honors College
- Carleton College
- Pennsylvania State University - Schreyer Honors College
- University of Arizona - Honors College
- University of Connecticut - Honors College
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - Honors Program
- University of Oregon - Clark Honors College
- Peking University - Yuanpei College
- University of Delhi - Lady Shri Ram College for Women
- University of Delhi - Hindu College
- Chinese University of Hong Kong - Morningside College
- Sichuan University - Wu Yuzhang Honors College
- Bilkent University
- Bogazici University
- SciencesPo - Le Havre Campus
- University of Amsterdam - Amsterdam University College
- Utrecht University - University College Utrecht
- Jagiellonian University
- Freie Universitat Berlin
- University of Birmingham - Liberal Arts and Natural Science

The approach to education of these partner universities or their relevant colleges is similar to USP: to inspire students to a lifetime of broad intellectual curiosity, self-sustained inquiry and personal growth through carefully-designed small classes, close advising, and a collegial environment. Students will be notified via email when applications for the USP Student Exchange Programme open.

### **3.3.2 Joint/Double Degree Programmes**

USP offers two joint degree programmes with the Australian National University (ANU).

The first is a four-year Joint Degree Programme (JDP) leading to a Bachelor of Science (Honours) from NUS and Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) from ANU, which can be taken in three fields of study: Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. It is only offered to Faculty of Science (FOS) students in USP.

The second is a four-year Joint Degree Programme (JDP) leading to a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from NUS and Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) from ANU, which can be taken in four fields of study: English Literature, History, Philosophy, and Political Science. It is only offered to Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) students in USP.

USP also offers a five-year Double Degree Programme (DDP). NUS students who complete the DDP obtain a Bachelor of Arts (Honours)/Bachelor of Science (Honours) from NUS and a Bachelor of Arts from Waseda University. It is only offered to Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Faculty of Science students in USP.

USP also offers a four-year Double Degree Programme (DDP) with Sciences Po. Students who complete the DDP obtain a Bachelor of Arts/Social Sciences (Honours) from NUS and a Bachelor of Arts from Sciences Po.

Please refer to the Section S on “Other Multidisciplinary / Special Programmes” in Part II of the NUS Bulletin for further details on the above-mentioned JDPs and DDPs.

### 3.3.3 Other International Programmes

Besides the Student Exchange Programme, Joint Degree Programmes and Double Degree Programmes, USP also offers a range of opportunities, which help students become sensitive to, and familiar with, the modern world by initiating, leading and joining international academic and community programmes and projects.

Examples:

Overseas Study Programmes (may include summer programmes, module study trips, seminars, forums, symposia or conferences)

- Buddhism-in-Asia Study Programme (Thailand, India, Taiwan, Japan, Laos, Vietnam, China)
- Builders Connect Learning Programme (The Philippines)
- 'Desert Nights, Rising Stars' Writers Conference (United States)
- Internship Exchange Programme with SP Jain Institute of Management and Research (India)
- Lee Shiu Summer Programme (China, Hong Kong)
- Participatory Social Development in Southeast Asia Module Study Trip (Thailand)
- Princeton Interactive Crisis Simulation Conference (United States)
- Study Programme on Civilisation of Iran (Iran)
- Study Programme on Inter-Civilisational Dialogue (Turkey)
- Study Programme on Forgotten Communities (Malaysia)
- Theatre and the World Module Study Trip (Indonesia)
- Tufts University Education for Public Inquiry and International Citizenship Symposium (United States)
- Pan -Asian Student Forum (China, Korea, Hong Kong, Japan)
- Comparative Cultural Rhetoric Academy (France)

Students are encouraged to propose and organise International Programmes, as well as take up leadership roles in the process. The aim is to create an environment in which students are exposed to a wide range of dynamic and interesting opportunities and are self-motivated to make the best of them.

### **3.4 USP Student Grant**

Funding is provided to enable students to:

- Present a paper in an academic conference
- Participate in a conference or programme that has clear leadership or research components
- Participate in an academic competition representing NUS USP or home faculty
- Participate in internship or attachment
- Pursue research opportunity

For more information on application, please refer to the [USP website](#).

### **3.5 USP Career Services**

The USP Career Services is committed to support students to be career-ready, from when they first enter USP as freshmen to their transition to USP alumni. In recognising the value of early career exploration, the USP Career Services adopts an open and personalised approach with a focus on active engagement with students, industry partners and alumni. This involves initiating discovery of students' self-awareness and career inclination, partnering with USP alumni mentors to guide students in career exploration, equipping students with career competencies and understanding the industry partners' talent acquisition needs to explore internship and career opportunities for the students.

We seek to help students make informed decisions about their future - be it pursuing a career in the private sector, public sector, social services sector, non-governmental or non-profit organisations, becoming an entrepreneur or pursuing graduate studies - by providing them with personalised career coaching and guidance to support their career aspirations.

Among the recent graduates of the USP, more than one-third go on to pursue postgraduate studies at both local and overseas universities, including top universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, Imperial, Harvard, Berkeley, Stanford, London School of Economics, Tsinghua, Karolinska Institute in Sweden, and Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School. USP alumni have been recipients of the Fulbright scholarships and awards. Others find employment in major organisations in the private and public sectors, with many holding prestigious management associate appointments.

### **3.6 Certificate and Testimonial**

The USP Certificate is awarded to the student at the Commencement ceremony upon:

1. Completing all USP academic requirements;
2. Completing the honours requirement of the home faculty or school; and
3. Receiving at least an Honours (Merit) degree

Outstanding graduates may be recommended for placement on the NUS President's Honour Roll and/or be awarded the Joanna Wong Gold Medal or NUSS Medal for Outstanding Achievement.

Each student is eligible to receive a testimonial, which documents his or her accomplishments - both academic and co-curricular - while at USP. The purpose of the testimonial is to help students highlight their participation in USP as they move within and beyond NUS in further academic or professional capacities. A student may request for a testimonial from USP when he or she graduates, having completed the USP requirements, or when he or she leaves USP for some other reasons.

### **3.7 Academic Advising**

Each student in USP is assigned a faculty advisor and a peer mentor who will help guide the student's academic planning and personal development, especially within the USP. The faculty advisor is teaching or has taught in the USP and can help students understand the USP curriculum, though he or she cannot provide detailed information about the home faculty or department's curriculum structure. A peer mentor is a senior USP student who has been trained to help first-year students with their academic and curriculum matters. This peer mentor is usually from the same home faculty, and is therefore able to provide advice about the interface between USP and home faculty requirements.

The goals of the Academic Advising system and Peer Mentorship programme are:

- To help students understand the University and USP structure
- To guide students in choosing the USP modules that will challenge them intellectually while offering them a chance to expand their interests
- To help students think through and work towards their career and personal goals
- To help students with any problems that they may experience within the USP
- To put students in touch with others who may be of assistance concerning questions and problems outside the USP

Apart from approaching the Academic Advisors for advice, students can also seek assistance from administrative advisors at the USP office.

### **3.8 Academic Expectations**

To graduate as a University Scholar with USP certification, students must complete the USP requirements and achieve at least an Honours (Merit) degree in the Home Faculty.

Each student whose cumulative average point (CAP) is below 3.5 for any semester will receive a warning that his or her academic performance is inadequate. Students with inadequate academic performance will be counselled.

At the end of their second year, students are required to have completed at least three USP modules (applicable to Cohort 2015 and earlier) or six USP modules (applicable to Cohort 2016 and onwards). Those who have not will be asked to produce justification, and a study plan on how they aim to complete the programme.

In addition, students are expected to participate actively in learning-beyond-the-classroom activities offered by USP. They are also encouraged to gain significant international experience through study abroad opportunities offered by USP, NUS and others, including student exchanges, overseas internships and attachments, international summer programmes, overseas expeditions and community projects, and international conferences and leadership forums.

### **3.9 USP Dismissal Policy (applicable to 2014 cohort and onwards)**

To graduate with a USP certificate, an undergraduate student must achieve at least an Honours (Merit) degree, i.e. have a minimum CAP of 3.5. USP students should note the following:

- should a student's CAP fall below 3.0 (but  $\geq 2.5$ ) for three consecutive semesters, the student will be dismissed from USP in the next semester of study; and
- should a student's CAP fall below 2.5 for two consecutive semesters, the student will be dismissed from USP in the next semester of study.

### **3.10 Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme (CTPCLP)**

Launched in November 2011, the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme (CTPCLP), resides in USP and is supported by USP. Each year, a small number of NUS undergraduates, majoring in various disciplines and USP, will be admitted to the CTPCLP as fellows. The CTPCLP aims to nurture Singapore's next generation of changemakers. The fellows nurtured by the CTPCLP will not only be intellectually engaged with social and community issues, but also passionate about partnering social service organisations to address social and community challenges in Singapore. They will be tomorrow's changemakers, driven by a sense of true calling to mobilise the community to collectively solve social problems.

Currently, the programme has partnerships with various government agencies, social service and welfare organisations that deal with differing societal challenges facing Singaporeans (e.g. Bizlink Centre, Brahm Centre, Jurong Spring Community Club, Ren Ci Hospital, Singapore Cancer Society, Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises, Tsao Foundation, WeCare@MarineParade). These partnerships expose students to a range of societal challenges while also providing them with in-depth, on-the ground experiences of community development through various research attachments.

Besides the research projects and attachments, the fellows are offered opportunities to participate in interest hubs where they can initiate and execute awareness and advocacy projects focusing on different social issues, and take two modules that examine social challenges and issues from a range of perspectives, including modules from USP.