

# NUS APPLICATION GUIDE

## HEO ALUMNI GUIDE FOR CLASS OF 2023

### Holistic Admissions



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From 2024, NUS is adopting a holistic approach to assessing applicants for admission into their chosen degree programmes.\*

**All** NUS applicants need to fill in an achievement section where you answer **five short questions** about your interest and aptitude for your chosen major.

You will also provide a list of up to **three achievements**. These achievements may be academic, co-curricular or outside of school.

\* You may rank up to eight Single Degree Programme choices in your form. This section of your application should focus on the programme you have ranked as your first choice. Note that Medicine applicants have a separate portfolio to prepare (see our [HEO Medicine Alumni Guide](#)).

Need more help?

Refer to the NUS Office of Admissions web site:

<https://www.nus.edu.sg/oam/undergraduate-programmes/aptitude-based-admission>.

For all questions, [contact NUS Admissions](#) directly. They will be best placed to address your queries.





# ANSWERING THE FIVE QUESTIONS

- In your responses, **keep focused and balanced** by addressing two things at one go: keeping relevant to the question and **to the demonstration of your fit for the major and/or university and community.**
- When writing about why you desire your chosen programme, focus on the learning and experiences you pursued, and **why** these experiences helped you understand your own passion to go further in the field, rather than on awards and medals only.
- This allows you to **demonstrate** values & attributes, and/or understanding of your chosen major.
- Avoid generalisations and sweeping statements, e.g. “Artificial Intelligence is the future of programming.”  
Contextualise to your own interests and motivations. Why AI and not other areas? Use your activities to **clarify** your intention and suitability for your major.
- In Q4, make specific effort to **link** directly to one (or more) of the five NUS values of Innovation, Resilience, Excellence, Respect and Integrity.

## Tips for writing

Each question has a limit of 550 characters (except Q4 which has 1100 characters), so it pays to be succinct.

Especially for questions that demand a personal response (such as Q3 and Q5), **know what your own focal point is.** What do you want the university to know about you, **as a match for them?**

Avoid repetition so that in total, your five responses form a multi-faceted picture of you: your fit for the major, your fit for the university.

Write in Standard English and straight to the point.



# THE FIVE QUESTIONS

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Understand the purpose of holistic admissions. This means it is not just about the grades, but about your suitability for the major, and the kind of person you will be in the NUS community. Thus, the overarching guiding question: what can you **contribute**, that the university will welcome you? What kind of person will you be, **in the community**?

## Here are some questions to reflect on:

What are key values you have, which define you as a person?

What are you proudest of, and why?

Which of NUS' values resonate with you? (NUS' five values are: Innovation, Resilience, Excellence, Respect and Integrity.)

Reflect practically on your own suitability for the programmes you've chosen. Curate carefully from your **activities and experiences**. Amidst all your activities and experiences beyond the H2 syllabus, what have you done that is **relevant** to your desired major? This can be an online course, a self-initiated project, a part-time job, skills learnt from CCAs, etc.



# THE THREE ACHIEVEMENTS

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## What are achievements?

Examples of **academic achievements**: academic prizes, scholarships, Olympiad and related competitions, CCA-related competitions, or other external competitions you participated in independently.

Examples of **non-academic achievements**: arts performances, sports representation, key leadership experiences in organisations inside/outside of the school environment, entrepreneurial efforts, software creation projects, sustained community involvement.

*note: this list is non-exhaustive.*

You should list at least one, and up to three achievements. These need not be relevant to your major.

When writing, give the formal title of your achievement. Avoid abbreviations or acronyms that will not make sense to a non-RI or non-school audience.

Where possible, it can be useful to contextualise your achievements. For instance, how many competitors were there? What was the age group? Any positive impact on the wider community?



## IN SUMMARY

Given the character limits, express yourself concisely and clearly. Leave out irrelevant content.

Avoid laundry-listing activities or repetition in answering the five questions. Ensure the five responses you give are relevant to you as a good fit for the major and university, and that they showcase different facets of yourself.

**#HEOprotip:** it is only possible to answer the five questions **after** you're certain of your choice of programme and related majors. Hence, prepare ahead, explore your options, and make a decision before drafting your responses. Lastly, give yourself sufficient time to edit and refine your responses to meet the character limits.

Given the brevity and specificity of the prompts for these personal questions, HEO does not read NUS statements; we trust you will find this guide useful!

*Wishing you all the best in your applications!*

