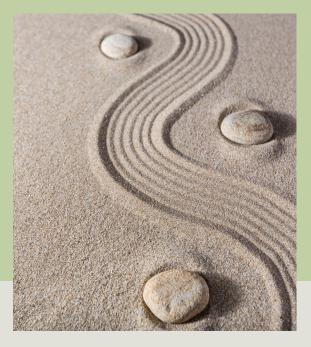# NUS APPLICATION GUIDE

2025 HEO ALUMNI GUIDE

Holistic Admissions

NUS' admissions is now **holistic.** What this means:

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 **four 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,, refer directly to:
NUS FAQ and contact

ANSWERING THE FIVE QUESTIONS

In your responses, **keep focused and balanced** by addressing two things at one go: relevance to the question and to the demonstration of your fit for the major and/or university and community.

Q1: (on preparation for desired degree programmes, outside of school curriculum)

- This prompt allows you to elaborate on academic and other skills, related to your discipline. It is wise to focus not just on soft skills, but on academic supercurriculars--i.e., what you have done beyond the H2 syllabus, that further prepared you for the desired major(s).
- It works best if your choices are consistently within the same basket (E.g., STEM-focused, as opposed to completely oppositional choices like Med and Law). If your choices are very different, it makes sense to either focus on your top choice, or else to draw out relevant links between the disciplines, such that you can explain why you chose such different fields, and why you are suited for both/more.

Q2 & Q3: (on lessons from failure and something meaningful to you)

- Q2 is really a chance for you to reflect on personal growth, bouncing back from setbacks, and the lessons learnt that have made you stronger. Q3 meanwhile can be a personal response or a reflection on a cause larger than the self. Do what is authentic to yourself.

Tips for writing

Each question has a limit of 600 characters (except Q4 which has 1100 characters), so it pays to be succinct. **Know what your own focal points are for each question, so that you avoid repetition between prompts.**

Through the set of 5, you are really answering: What do you want the university to know about you, as a match?

Write in Standard English and given brevity, get straight to the point.

Avoid generalisations and sweeping statements, e.g. "Artificial Intelligence is the future of programming."

As explicitly instructed by NUS: **AI and any external aid are not to be used.**

THE FIVE QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

Q4 (on your proudest achievement, how you accomplished this with the help of others, and how it resonates with NUS' values)

- Given this has the longest character limit of 1100, read between the lines!
- Sincerely think through what you are proudest of. Which, how and why, of NUS' values of Innovation, Resilience, Excellence, Respect, and Integrity does it resonates with.
- Importantly: recognise that no achievement is done alone. In attaining what you are proudest of, who were those who helped you, whom you helped, how have you, through attaining this, **helped each other become better persons?**
- One way of looking at this question, is considering how you have contributed to the community, and the kind of team player you are, how aware you are of what genuine, lasting achievements mean, thereby, how much consideration, appreciation and gratitude you have for those around you.

Q5 (on anything else you wish us to know)
- This prompt can be fruitfully utilised to let the university know what else is important to you, that has not been discussed in any of the four above. It could be personal, formal or informal (e.g., a hobby that reveals a different side of you), or anything of interest that makes you stand out!

Note: For those going for ABAs for other universities: The prompts for NUS are similar to other universities' ABAs, so working on NUS' prompts first can give you a good starting point for the ABA for other universities. If you do not require an ABA, don't!

THE FOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

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 four achievements. These need not be directly 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. Know your own focal points for each prompt.

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. if you require teacher references, **please ping them early**. If references are **not required**, do **not** request for them -avoid spamming a university.

Given the brevity and specificity of the prompts for these personal questions as well as NUS' policy on non-usage of external aids, HEO is unable to read these statements. We trust you will find this guide useful. Have confidence in yourself, and write authentically, and genuinely!

Wishing you all the best in your applications!