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**Subject:** Joint Statement Between NUS and NUSSU on Academic Support for Semester 1 of AY20/21



NUS Internal  
SDPPVO 51/20  
24 December 2020  
NUS Students

Dear Students,

**Joint Statement Between NUS and NUSSU on Academic Support for Semester 1 of AY20/21**

Over the past semester, NUSSU and NUS have been in constant discussion, reflecting on and addressing the academic concerns of students in light of changes to the mode of learning used in many modules.

NUSSU has gathered student sentiment from the Exam Welfare Pack survey, the Semester 1 Examination Disruptions survey, and our academic and feedback e-mail account. Students have stated that due to changes in the mode of learning, there has been:

1. An increased academic / examination workload,
2. A perceived reduction in the effectiveness of learning online,
3. Uncertainty in terms of mode of assessment,
4. A lack of conducive environments in which to study, and
5. A more restrictive assessment norm.

These factors have led to increased stress in students. NUSSU has provided proposals to tackle these issues. More information on these proposals and the feedback received can be found on NUSync.

NUS has also been working to give students as best a learning experience as possible under the prevailing circumstances. In particular, NUS has:

1. Instructed teaching staff to adhere to the lecture time slots allocated and followed up with the teaching staff for modules that failed to do so,

2. Trained teaching staff to administer various formats of examinations and instructed them to prepare examinations ahead of time, as well as conduct mock assessments, for example,
3. Kept a technical team on standby during examinations to expediently deal with technical glitches and problems,
4. Investigated all reported technical glitches that occurred during examinations, and
5. Moderated the marks for modules affected by technical glitches to make sure students taking these modules would not be worse off. Students taking these modules will have received more details from the departments hosting the modules.

NUS and NUSSU recognize that the last two semesters have been a new experience for students and that the disruptions that transpired can be overwhelming for students. NUS and NUSSU have worked together, and will continue to work together, to address the academic concerns of students.

### **Providing Additional MCs of S/U to Students for Semester 1 of AY20/21**

On 29 October 2020, NUSSU ExCo and presidents of the union's constituent bodies met members of NUS senior management and vice deans of undergraduate studies at the meeting of the Board of Undergraduate Studies to discuss the academic concerns of students. NUSSU ExCo then followed up with NUS senior management on this matter. In particular, NUSSU proposed that an additional 5 MCs of S/U be given to affected students. NUSSU recognized that not all modules are the same and students should be given discretion to exercise the option themselves. NUSSU pointed out that changes in learning format and disruptions to examinations necessitate the additional 5 MCs of S/U. The quality of learning has diminished significantly and many assessments, especially during week 7 and the examination week, were heavily disrupted by technical glitches.

However, NUS took a different position from that of NUSSU. Rather than providing additional MCs of S/U to all students, NUS will look into every module that had examinations disrupted by technical glitches and moderate the marks to make sure that students taking these modules will not be worse off. The rationale for this approach is that having too many MCs of S/U in a transcript will adversely affect the employment prospects of students. Consider that students could exercise up to 32 MCs of S/U, were given an additional 10 MCs of S/U in the previous semester and could receive more MCs of S/U through student exchange programmes and summer/winter programmes.

NUS will be providing academic support for students as follows:

1. Investigate every module with examinations disrupted by technical glitches raised by NUSSU during the discussion,
2. Moderate the marks for modules affected by technical glitches and allow affected students to file for Special Consideration through the regular channel, and
3. Allow students to transfer credits for e-summer and e-winter programmes; more information on this can be found on the GRO website.

If you need clarification, please approach your [faculty contacts](#). If you have academic concerns, please approach your [faculty student support managers](#). If you are experiencing stress, please seek [mental health support services](#).

### **Improving Academic Support**

NUSSU has advocated for financial and administrative support for online courses provided by external course providers and accreditation programmes to allow students to fulfil their academic requirements in their own time.

NUSSU has also advocated for a review of Special Consideration guidelines to reflect the needs of students in this pandemic and to improve the options available to students; e.g., students who are

granted IC grades will not be able to receive MCs for the effort they have put in, which is not ideal. NUSSU has also sought clarification from NUS on the rationale and guidelines for granting Special Consideration, and for this information to be communicated to students.

NUSSU and NUS will work closely to make sure all learning formats (virtual, physical, or hybrid) can meet the high educational standards that NUS seeks to achieve. We appreciate the effort put in by students to cope with the disruptions. While we may differ on policy approaches, we share a common objective of wanting to provide the best academic experience for students. We will continue to work together to further the interests of students.

We wish you a good year-end break and a successful semester ahead.

Best wishes,

Professor Bernard Tan  
Senior Vice Provost (Undergraduate Education)

Ms. Wee Su-ann  
President, 42<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee  
National University of Singapore Students' Union Council