

# NUS students get afternoons off on Wednesday as part of holistic education



The new NUSOne approach, which will be rolled out in the new academic year, aims to ease the transition into university life for freshmen, and encourage greater self-directed personal growth and development from the first year. PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

## There will also be new sports-themed hostel to build an active and inclusive community

Gabrielle Chan

Come August, most students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) will be able to enjoy Wednesday afternoons off, as part of a fresh initiative by the university to provide a more holistic student experience.

The move is part of the new NUSOne approach, which will be rolled out in the new academic year. It aims to ease the transition into university life for freshmen, and encourage greater self-directed personal growth and development from the first year.

NUS took in more than 7,400 freshmen in 2023.

Most undergraduate students can look forward to a protected time slot from 3pm to 6pm on Wednesdays, for them to take part in out-of-classroom and other student activities, said NUS on June 28. Exceptions to this include students with classes that require special venues like laboratories.

But plans for more students to access this time slot will be developed as NUSOne is rolled out progressively.

There will also be a new sports-themed hostel, Valour House, that will be ready come August 2025. It will be a space for athletes and sports enthusiasts to find community among people with similar interests.

Opening in NUS' Kent Ridge campus, next to the university's sports centre, the hostel will be able to take up to 600 residents. Of the spaces, 50 per cent will be given to athletes and individuals who show sporting excellence, and the rest to other students.

"By emphasising community sports, Valour House seeks to build an active and inclusive community bonded through shared athletic experiences," NUS said.

Students will be given opportunities to organise sports events for the wider NUS community.

With the opening of Valour House, the total number of on-campus hostel places will increase to 12,500.

It is a "major step towards realising our aspiration to provide every undergraduate the opportunity to experience on-campus living and learning for a year, especially during the freshman year", the university added.

Currently, close to two-thirds of first-year students apply to stay on campus, and the majority are assigned rooms.

NUS has an undergraduate population of about 30,300.

Professor Aaron Thean, NUS' provost and deputy president of academic affairs, said NUSOne is designed to place greater emphasis on student life and extracurricular activities, offering students not just academic excellence but also a holistic education.

"Research studies on university education have shown that first-year experiences set the tone for and significantly influence students' attitudes and performance in their senior years," he added.

"Based on our own experiences and observations in NUS, students who have acquired the necessary academic, social and personal skills earlier on are better placed to successfully transition to university life, and subsequently thrive and excel within and beyond the classroom," he noted.

Starting in August 2024, NUS will implement a new programme, Transition to Higher Education, to help freshmen adjust to university life by providing essential skills and resources.

Under this programme, freshmen will be offered six non-unit-bearing courses, with two of the six being mandatory courses.

Topics covered include emotional awareness and well-being, creating a culture of respect and consent, academic integrity and research ethics, learning strategies, and a guide to generative artificial



The site of the upcoming Valour House hostel at NUS. Opening in Kent Ridge campus, next to the university's sports centre, the hostel will be able to take up to 600 residents. Of the spaces, half will be given to athletes and individuals who show sporting excellence, and the rest to other students. ST PHOTO: AZMI ATHNI

intelligence.

A toolkit and road map will also be provided to all freshmen, consolidating information including how to apply for courses and extracurricular activities available.

Ms Dewi Wulandari, an incoming Year 2 civil engineering student, said that when she enrolled in NUS, she found it challenging to keep up with course and tutorial registrations, and discover extracurricular activities.

"I got a lot of advice from the seniors whom I met at my freshmen

orientation camp," the 20-year-old added. They introduced her to her current co-curricular activity, NUS Silat, a martial arts group.

She said getting time off on Wednesday afternoons, which are now filled with classes and tutorials, could potentially allow her to go home earlier to rest.

"For students in sports teams, such as NUS Silat, we typically start our training late in the day to accommodate our academic schedules," she added.

"With Wednesday afternoons

mostly free from classes, training sessions can now take place earlier."

It will also help students rest in the middle of the week, or give them time to pursue activities beyond academics, Ms Wulandari said.

"I think this is really good and helpful in taking care of our mental well-being," she added.

NUSOne continues the university's efforts to reform its approach to education, including curriculum enhancements, more interdisci-

plinary opportunities and support for arts education.

NUS announced in March that students will have an option to take a second major or minor in performing arts, as part of a new initiative to integrate the arts into their learning.

NUS placed eighth in the world and 1st in Asia, according to the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings 2025 announced in early June.

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