

HOW TO:

**JOIN SG'S
LEADING ~~SUW~~ SJW
LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGE**

A Blind Mice Guide to Yale-NUS College Application

BY



Disclaimer:

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She would like to add that the information presented is solely based on her personal experience and research. All advice given is in no way representative of the views of any institutions.

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***J was also a successful applicant to YNC**

INTRODUCTION

Yale-NUS College is a liberal arts and sciences college that draws on both Asian and Western aspects for an interdisciplinary education. It is a collaboration between Yale University and the National University of Singapore. Students graduate the four year programme with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree or a Bachelor of Science (Honours), majoring in one of the 14 majors of their choice.

Application

The college application is independent and separate from NUS, but it can be submitted jointly with a Yale University application. There are two application windows. Polytechnic students usually apply in the later window. There is no discretionary admission as all applicants are considered on equal footing. You will also need at least two teacher recommendations who have each taught you at least one module. It is similar to US college applications.

The application calls for a list of up to ten co-curricular activities, 500 characters on Why Yale-NUS, two essays and five short answer questions. It wants to know more about your interests, the way you think and your ambitions. In my opinion, Yale-NUS is the only local school that seriously cares about your character just as much as your grades. You will not get into the school with just a 4.0! You should start at least a month in advance because the essays can get hard to write. Let's say you want to be a research scientist and your entire essay is about your passion for the sciences. Bad idea!! :(Again, this school really cares for who you are as a person, so instead of throwing in the chemical equations and talking about why you love science, write instead about how science shapes you into the person you are. All applicants are also automatically considered for merit scholarships, so treat it like a scholarship application too.

Interview

Your long wait and nights of relentless prayers begin once you hit submit. All applicants require an interview to be considered for admission. I received my interview two weeks after the deadline, which I believe is the general timeframe. You will be interviewed by a senior, who then writes more than he/she asks during the interview. He/she will do up a summary and pass it on to the admissions team where they will collectively review each applicant and decide in or out.

The interview can get scary. It's unlike any interview because of how chill it is. It's really like talking to a friend, except you're praying that this friend is impressed by you. LOL. I heard that many interviewers like to zoom in on particular points of the submitted application and ask for elaborations. So study your application! For me, my interviewer asked more general questions.

Questions I got:

1. Why Yale-NUS? (this question comes up for sure no matter your interviewer)
2. What was your favourite extra curricular?
3. Tell me about how polytechnic was like for you.
4. What was your favourite subject in polytechnic?
5. Why did you choose your major (insert intended major)?
6. What is something you want to tick off your bucket list?
7. Do you have Any questions for me? (YES, ask good questions)

TLDR: Be yourself and show how you are unique through the skills, experiences and perspectives that you can bring to the YNC community!

Financial Aid

2 words: JUST APPLY! It does not matter how rich or poor you think you are because this school takes financial aid differently. They will know if you genuinely require financial aid even if your income tax document doesn't seem to say so. They will surprise you! The application opens for you once you get an interview invite.

SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

The following samples are strictly for reference only. Their sole purpose is to provide you with a gauge on the standard of content and language (which can definitely be better) required.

As mentioned previously, individuality and character are attributes that YNC pays great attention to. So please don't even considering plagiarising any parts of it...

If you can't even have a single original idea for an essay ABOUT YOURSELF, why bother applying at all?

SAMPLE APPLICATION (J)*

Writing Supplement

Why Yale-NUS College?

As a curious student whose pastime involves reading up on current affairs, history and politics, I am drawn towards the Common Curriculum that Yale-NUS offers. Keen on studying the socio-political aspects of our lives as well as the applications of scientific inquiry; the Yale-NUS curriculum is the perfect opportunity for me to pursue both my passions.

To be able to develop this desired interdisciplinary perspective with a group of diverse and talented people is an opportunity I would not forgo

Writing Questions

My friends would be surprised if they knew that I

am well-versed in the history of religion, have read the Koran and can recite the Shahada even though I am agnostic.

How have you changed in the last three years?

I have grown to be more appreciative and adept at finding the learning points from people and experiences. I am now more grateful for all the learning opportunities I received.

What challenges you?

Taking on more responsibilities be it at home or in the community. Managing my time efficiently to fit in more socially contributive and meaningful activities. Constantly learning something new.

What item would you bring to Yale-NUS that represents you or your community and why?

An open heart and an open mind. As a youth living in a multi-racial society, I believe that being accepting of diversity is a good representation of my values.

What is a question you want answered?

How can we as students help the community in the most effective and sustainable way possible?

Essay 1

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realisation that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Mr Quek was one of the first patients I took care at Assisi Hospice. He was 73 and dying of cancer.

Apart from his brother, Mr Quek had no one else to accompany him on this ending journey. I volunteered every Saturday, enjoying the time spent listening to his life stories. I learnt his favourite food and bought it for him. He even taught me how to play Checkers just so we could play it together - he stopped after a few games because he said I was too inept. While that may have seemed a little harsh, it was far from the truth. Such interactions summed up how comfortable and open we were with each other. We were always quipping about our quirks and making observational jokes about one another.

Having a close relationship with Mr Quek helped when it came to assisting the nurses in duties such as changing his diapers and feeding him. These scenarios became more of an interaction between 'family members' rather than that of a patient and a healthcare provider.

However, I felt guilty that while Mr Quek became close to me, I did not feel likewise. Even in my past volunteering experiences, I was always able to make others feel that they meant a lot to me, when in fact they were merely beneficiaries whom I had the duty to help. It was as if there was a boundary that prevented me from forming any emotional attachment with others. This was something that I was never comfortable with. I thought it was unfair to have people share with me their deepest concerns and fears because they trusted me - when the trust was not mutual. After all, who would ever want to be on the giving side of a one-sided friendship?

Wrangling internally over the moral dilemma of reciprocation, the six months I had spent with Mr Quek also made me forget about the inevitable one it struck.

Perhaps the 18-year-old me should have known better than to volunteer at a hospice of all places. All I knew was that I wanted to do something related to my Diploma in Biomedical Science and palliative care seemed like a worthwhile place to start. While such services are usually associated with terminal illnesses, it was a fact that I decided not to ponder much on.

Two years in a healthcare diploma had not prepared me for this moment. Within a week, Mr Quek usual lively self soon devolved into a semi-conscious one. The nurses estimated that it was only a matter of weeks, and yet by the next morning, he passed away.

With only his brother present, his cremation was on the very same afternoon. Without any funeral or obituaries to mark his departure, his presence simply disappeared. To be holding a person's hand one moment and witnessing his cremation the next moment in less than twenty-four hours was surreal.

Having to manage my studies, internship and volunteering commitments during this challenging period, I was stretched emotionally and psychologically. While overwhelmed initially, I soon realised that the existing 'relationship boundary' was a coping mechanism I had subconsciously developed over the years as a volunteer. After serving in various family service centres and recently the hospice, I was exposed to the never-ending trickle of new underprivileged children and patients. To form a deep emotional attachment with every single one of them would have steadily burned me out. This meant that I had to balance between knowing how much to give and where to draw the line.

Rather than shun or be ashamed of it, Mr Quek's death has shown me that such an ability would only give me the strength and resilience to continue helping others. With this revelation, I am now more motivated and prepared than ever to embark on a lifelong service to the community.

Essay 2

Why try something new? Illustrate with a personal example.

When the body identifies certain of its own tissues or useful commensal bacteria as foreign and starts destroying them - it creates adverse reactions and debilitating effects for itself. This condition may sometimes be caused by the lack of tolerance to certain environmental factors

Poring over hundreds of relevant literature review and scientific textbooks for my final year research report, it was amusing to discover that autoimmunity was in some way, a social commentary on xenophobia. Realising that various aspects of the human body and society were reflections of another, I came to appreciate how everything was interconnected and related in one way or another. Just like how engineers use inspirations from nature to improve their designs, I realised that every lesson learned can often be applied somewhere else. It was only a matter of perspective. The newfound synergy between the knowledge and skills I had learnt from school and the community greatly inspired me. It was also this realisation that cemented my values of curiosity and lifelong learning. Influenced by this revelation, I constantly went beyond academia in order to gain new insights and understanding.

Pursuing a diploma in Biomedical Science, I am aware of the healthcare implications of climate change and environmental issues. This was the reason I decided to leave my comfort zone and participate in the *Chili Padi Academy (CPA)*, a programme to nurture the next generation of environmental leaders in the ASEAN region. Despite having no experience in environmentalism, I wanted to use the opportunity to apply data analytical and scientific thinking skills on a different issue other than biomedical science. Furthermore, I was also interested in exploring how the concepts of environmentalism could be applied back to my course.

It was during CPA that I was exposed to the Design Thinking process. As a science student whose hypothesis is often based on past research papers and existing knowledge, the concept of empathising first to define the problem was an eye-opening one. I used to liken environmental issues to scientific ones, where I could understand any of them just through books and studies. However, CPA reminded me that environmental problems are often caused by underlying social issues ranging from education to poverty. Without empathy to reveal these exact causes, I would only be treating the symptoms of the problem - akin to how my final year project was only seeking to ameliorate joint inflammation. My experiences in CPA has shown how design thinking could also be incorporated into certain areas of the research field as well. After all, understanding the real needs of patients is the first step to helping them.

These realisations that I had through CPA has reaffirm my beliefs in curiosity and lifelong learning. I do not wish to be content with what I have done thus far. By trying new things, I hope to gain the experience and knowledge to better contribute to the community.

SAMPLE APPLICATION (KY)

Writing Supplement

Why Yale-NUS College?

The interdisciplinary curriculum makes me excited for my learning and development. I learn best when modules are taught in seminars, where peer-learning and discussion is encouraged with a diverse and culturally-rich community of friends and teachers who I can gain different perspectives from. The provision of a liberal learning environment beyond traditional classrooms will support and enrich my education while intellectually challenging me to feed existing interests while discovering new ones.

Writing Questions

My friends would be surprised if they knew that I

hug my chou-chou (security blanket) nightly. My ahma handstitched it for me when I was three-months-old. It symbolises my special relationship with grandma and values my family instils in me.

How have you changed in the last three years?

I have become an adventurous learner. I delved into different experiences beyond my studies, discovering new aspirations (e.g. public sector), developing skills (e.g. leadership) and meeting different people.

Essay 2

Why try something new? Illustrate with a personal example.

In polytechnic, I courageously enrolled in the EDGE programme which nurtures academically strong students – a group I steered clear of in secondary school. Above that, EDGE encourages students to explore programmes outside of class. My decision catalysed my growth in the last three years as I experienced how trying something new continually expands my world in aspects that further develop me.

Recognising this made me hungry for adventures that broaden my mind. Chairing in the Youth Model ASEAN Conference (YMAC) allowed me to understand domestic issues from a global perspective while the Singapore Model Parliament taught me how policies impact citizens and the responsibilities of public and private stakeholders. I developed skills in leadership, facilitation and debate. My adventurous spirit brought me to pursue never-before-explored topics in Singapore for a school assignment. Working on a documentary about an interfaith marriage between a Christian and Muslim elderly couple saw my team and I delve beyond our boundaries, deepening our understanding of the concept of sacrificial love.

My greatest prize was meeting new people who are now part of my treasured community. [REDACTED], my EDGE mentor, believes in my potential and heart to pursue change in society. Interacting with her other mentees from various disciplines enriched my understanding of different topics. We started a food wastage project that synergised our ideas and expertise as we championed for a greener environment. My regional friendships with my ASEAN friends from YMAC let me in on a diversity of cultures. The idea of a community is something I appreciate – it establishes new bonds, creates opportunities for collaboration and bridge gaps.