

FAQs

What is the Sec 2 Subject Allocation timeline like?

The students have been given a brief introduction in Term 1 Week 1 .

A subject preference polling will be conducted in Term 3 for school planning purpose.

Students will be informed of the possible subject combinations, together with the letter of offer, in Term 4 after their end-of-year examinations.

The Sec 3 2027 Subject and Class Allocation will tentatively be released on 6 November 2026.

Key Dates

	S2 to S3 Subject Allocation Exercise	Date
1	<i>YH Start of Year Talk</i>	<i>Orientation Day (completed)</i>
2	Sec 2 Parents Webinar	Term 1 Week 4 (30 Jan)
3	Sec 2 Parent-Teacher Meet	Term 2 Week 10 (29 May)
4	Survey on Subject Preferences Class dialogue / Assembly Talk	Term 2 & 3
5	Introduction of S3 subjects by Dept Heads PG letter to parents on subjects offering.	Term 4 Week 6
6	Release of Sec 3 (2027) Subjects Allocation	Term 4 Week 8 (6 Nov, tbc)



FAQs

What are the different educational pathways my daughter can take after her Sec 4 Exams?

1. **JCs/MIs : L1R4** (wef 2028)
2. **Polytechnics : ELR2B2** (wef 2028)
3. **PFP (Polytechnic Foundation Programme): ELMAB3**
4. **Higher Nitec Programme: 2 to 3 years prog**
5. **NFP (NAFA Foundation): 1 year foundation programme** that leads to arts-based diploma.
6. **“Year 5”**: Continue in CHIJ to take subjects at G3.

FAQs

Will my daughter be given her first choice of subject combination?

The subject combinations your daughter is offered will be based on her overall subjects performance for Sec 2, as it is a good indicator of her ability to cope with the demands of the subjects at Sec 3.

She can then select the subject combination she wants based on her interest and aptitude. If she meets the subject-specific criteria for the subject combination, she will be offered her first choice.

FAQs

When can we expect the revised JC cut-off points given the L1R4?



The new L1R4 requirements for JC/MI will only be effective for the 2028 Admission onwards.

The eligibility criteria for entry to JC from 2028 has been reduced from 20 (L1R5) to 16 (L1R4).

Students should choose the subjects based on their strengths and interests. Parents and students should also refer to the website of the different institutions and the multiple pathways provided in helping to set goals for their child.

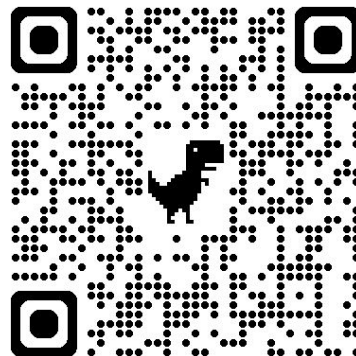


FAQs

Will we talk about polytechnics? Do specific courses in Poly require specific O level (G3) subjects?

We will give some guides on the pathways to the Polytechnics based on 2028 admission. However, as there is a variety of courses in the polytechnics, the course specific requirements will not be covered.

Parents can refer to the Polytechnic websites for course requirement information.



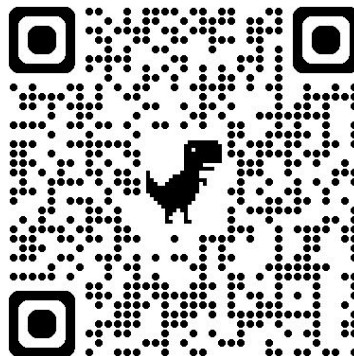
FAQs

Will we talk about polytechnics? Do specific courses in Poly require specific O level (G3) subjects?

[cont'd]

The school will have more sessions such as ECG workshops to help students find out more about post secondary courses in upper secondary. Meanwhile, parents may also use this MOE website link “Course Finder” to get more information about Poly.

<https://www.moe.gov.sg/coursefinder?journey=Polytechnics>



FAQs

How does my daughter take art or music as a subject in O level?

Music as an O level subject has to be taken at an external centre.

A PG on taking Music as an elective subject will be sent to parents in Term 2. The school music teacher will also inform students when the details are available..

CHIJ Sec offers G3 Art/Higher Art as a subject in upper secondary subjected to min. class size and availability of school resources.

FAQs

Will there be Drama in Upper Secondary?

O level Drama is no longer offered as a subject by the School.

FAQs

Can I view a recording of the session?

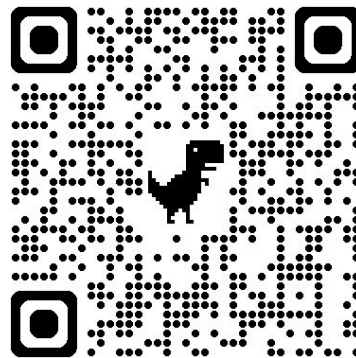
The slides will be available on the school website.

FAQs

What is the difference in "combined" subject vs "pure" subject with regard to JC/Poly course selection?

For polytechnic courses, there is no distinction between pure and combined science. The entry criteria is the ELR2B2.

Students who meet the published cut-off point for the polytechnic course can apply for it.



FAQs

What is the difference in "combined" subject vs "pure" subject with regard to JC/Poly course selection?

The faculties in JCs have their own cut-off points and criteria for course selection.

The current guidelines from our affiliated CJC are:

If you are taking pure science for O level, you need to have a minimum grade before you are allowed to take the Science subject at the H2 standard.

FAQs

What is the difference in "combined" subject vs "pure" subject with regard to JC/Poly course selection?

[cont'd]

If you are taking combined science for O level there are two possible outcomes

One science at H2 standard: Attain a minimum grade before you are allowed to take one science at the H2 standard.

Example: CJC - B3 for Combined Science (with Chemistry)

Two science at H2 standard:

Example: CJC Attain A1 for Combined Science.

FAQs

What is the difference in "combined" subject vs "pure" subject- jc/poly, course selection

[cont'd]

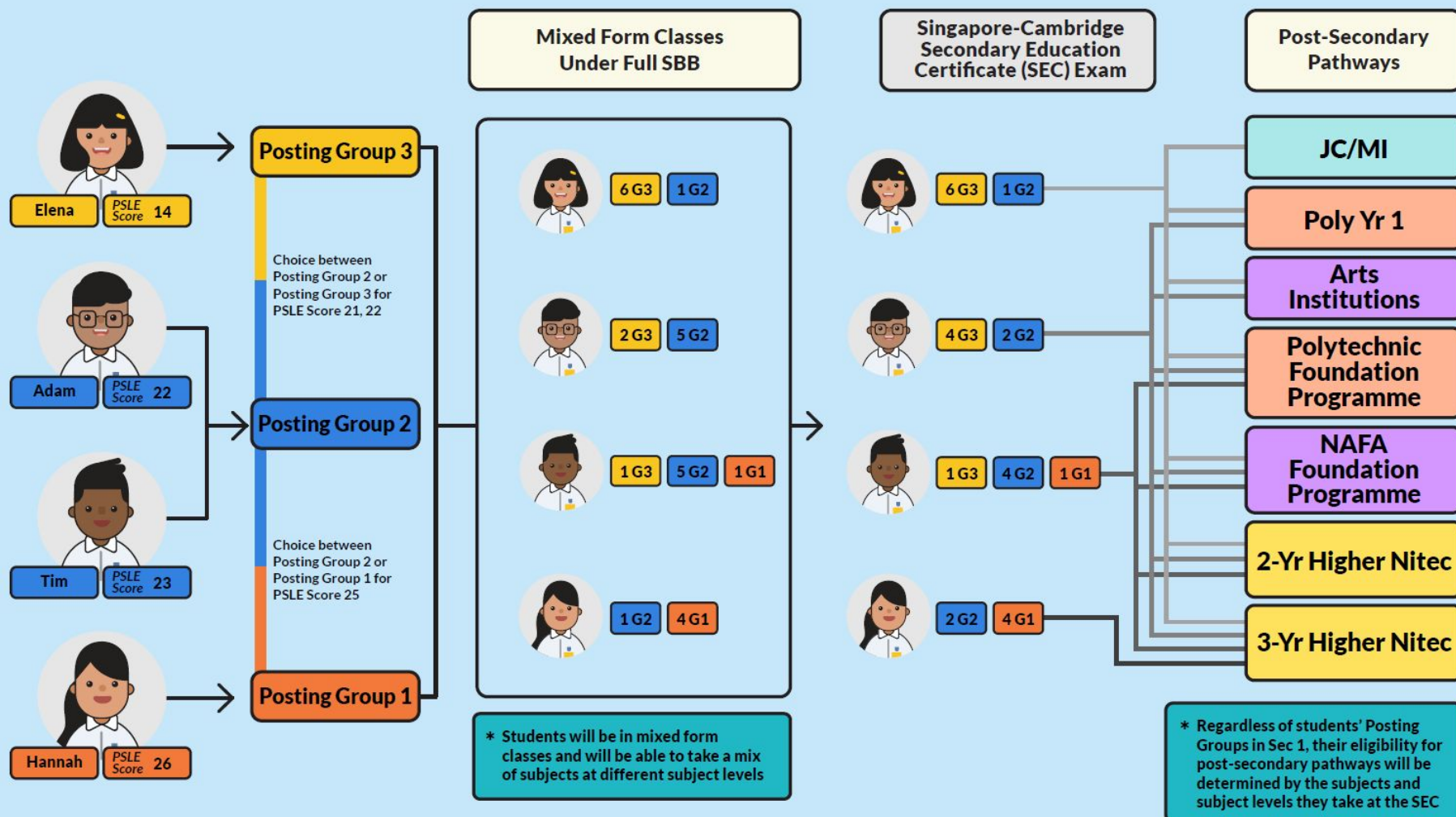
The requirement can differ for each JC and it would be best to refer to the JC website for more information. Some JCs might only allow one science at H2 while the other is taken at H1.

Secondary School Experience and Post-Secondary Pathways Under Full SBB



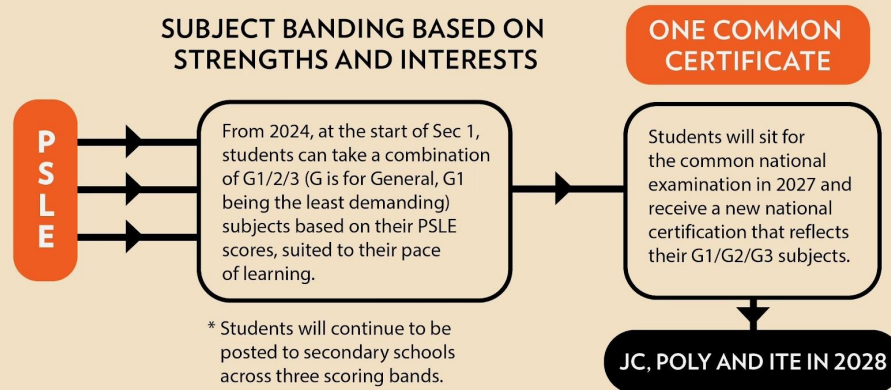
Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

From 2024, you can take subjects at different levels, eg. G1, G2 or G3, which suit your strengths, interests and learning needs. Along the way, your teachers will guide you to make adjustments as needed. At the end of Secondary Four, all students will take the Singapore-Cambridge Secondary Education Certificate examinations. There will be more options for your post-secondary pathways, and many more opportunities to excel in the pathway you choose. The future is yours to make!



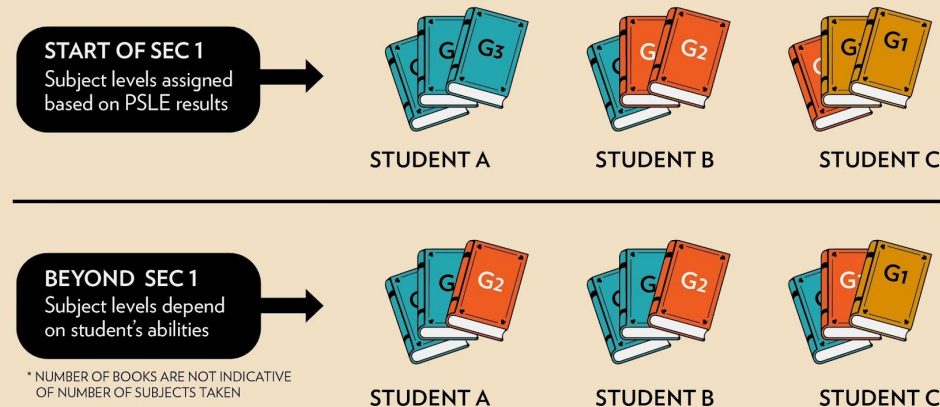
Remaking secondary school pathways

SECONDARY EDUCATION WITHOUT STREAMING



HOW SUBJECT-BASED BANDING (SBB) WORKS

With full SBB, students can take subjects at G1/G2/G3 academic levels, which are based on today's N(T)-, N(A)-, and O-Level subjects respectively.



Sunday, March 09, 2025

Fewer O-level subjects for JC admission could ease pressure: Students, parents

But they say more guidance about long-term implications of subject choice will be needed

Gabrielle Chan

Counting one less subject for the junior college (JC) admission score will help relieve a little academic pressure at the O levels, allowing students to explore other interests and prioritise their well-being.

That is what some students, parents and school leaders say about the change Education Minister Chan Chun Sing announced on March 6.

Students will also have more flexibility in subject choices, they said, though more guidance and advice will be required to help them think about the long-term implications of their chosen subjects.

Mr Chan said during the Ministry of Education's (MOE) budget debate that from 2028, students applying for admission to JCs will need only five subjects instead of six at the O-level examinations.

Students must score 16 points or less for their LIR4 – one language and four relevant subjects – to qualify for JC admission. The current LIR5 system requires 20 points or less across six subjects.

With this change, Secondary 1 and 2 students said they would rethink the number of subjects to take, but had mixed views on whether fewer subjects would translate into less stress.

Zaki Zukifili, a 13-year-old Bukit View Secondary School student, was grateful for the change, saying: "I was not able to cope well during PSLE, and that was only four subjects."

He added that he would drop literature, as he prefers science subjects.

"With my free time, I hope to relax more and exercise. I can't be studying the whole day," he quipped.

Sec 2 student Olive Shirley, 14, echoed this, saying having fewer subjects "makes our lives easier" and reduces stress for both students and parents.

She plans to go to JC, but will drop subjects she is weaker at, like

history.

However, Sec 1 student Ian Torrey said the rigour for him remains the same, even though JC admission will require one less subject.

While he will have more time to devote to each subject, others would too, and there may be "more competition". "I still have to work hard either way," the 13-year-old said.

Importantly, he added, he has to make sure he picks the correct subjects in Sec 3.

This view was shared by a Sec 2 student, who declined to be named and who said that with fewer subjects taken at the O levels, they may have fewer choices in JC.

"From my perspective, it is still better to take various subjects to see what I am good at, especially for the sciences, and to have more choices in JC and after JC," he said, though he welcomed the flexibility of requiring only five subjects for JC admission.

MOE said the proportion of O-level candidates who took eight or more subjects increased from about 15 per cent in 1997 to about 30 per cent in 2023.

More students are also taking seven subjects – 48 per cent in 2023, up from 43 per cent in 1997, said MOE.

Fewer students are taking six subjects – 23 per cent in 2023, down from 34 per cent in 1997.

Parents The Sunday Times spoke to expressed relief at the move by MOE as it will reduce academic pressure, with some saying they will encourage their children to take fewer subjects so they have more time to focus on their weaker ones.

Ms Yusnizan Taib, Zaki's mother, said that she will encourage him to work on his chosen subjects and use the free time to focus on his interests.

"The journey is long. After education, there is also chasing a career," the 48-year-old assistant project manager said. "Parents should realise it is a long journey for their kids and let them grow up more chill, focusing on their well-



Students at Bendemeer Secondary School in January. After Education Minister Chan Chun Sing's announcement on March 6, Secondary 1 and 2 students said they would rethink the number of subjects to take. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

LESS STRESS

I believe MOE is trying to move towards a less stressful academic environment. But of course, like all changes, it may or may not result in the desired outcome.



MRS SHER-LI TORREY, whose son is in Sec 1. The founder of a portal for working mothers says while she is not sure whether the change will encourage participation in activities outside of academics, it does reduce "intense studying".

being."

Mother of three Vasuki Utravathy, 45, who is director of school health and outreach at the Health Promotion Board, said the reduction in the number of subjects means that her 14-year-old son is freed up to pursue his interest in coding. She also has two daughters, aged 13 and nine.

Mrs Utravathy said that with the reduction, her son will now need to go to only one of his two tuition

EXERCISE AND RELAX

I was not able to cope well during PSLE, and that was only four subjects. With my free time, I hope to relax more and exercise. I can't be studying the whole day.



ZAKI ZUKIFILI, a Bukit View Secondary School student, 13, who is grateful for the change, adding that he would drop literature as he prefers science subjects.

classes and can drop the other.

"I believe adolescence is a period to gain experiences, and the reduction in required subjects allows those who are more academically inclined to pursue and develop their non-academic interests," she said, adding that parents can talk to their children early to understand their strengths and guide them on what subjects to take.

Ian's mother, Mrs Sher-li Torrey, said that while she does not know

whether the reduction in number of subjects will encourage students to participate in activities outside of academics, the change reduces "intense studying".

"I believe MOE is trying to move towards a less stressful academic environment," said the 48-year-old founder of Mums@Work, a portal for working mothers. "But of course, like all changes, it may or may not result in the desired outcome."

There may be some who take fewer subjects who could feel like they would have to do even better, she said, adding that subject selection is largely dependent on the mindset of the child and parents.

Students need to be clear about what subjects they can and want to do well in, said Mrs Torrey, adding that she encourages her children to think long-term about what jobs they want to do in the future.

She said that she hopes Ian continues to develop his passion for sports and leadership, as he is now class vice-chairperson and hopes to be captain of the softball team in his school.

"If you are asking me if I agree with what MOE is doing, I feel that it is a change – but stress is not always just related to markers of assessment," Mrs Torrey said. "You can move the goal posts, but if the game is still going on and the competitors are still hungry for success, then nothing changes."

Shifting of mindsets is a potential challenge, said Bukit Merah Secondary School's principal Darren Chong, as there could be parents or students who would be "fearful of missing out", or may see taking more subjects as a "source of pride".

"Taking fewer subjects might lead some parents to wonder if their children's time would be meaningfully occupied and if it needs to be filled with more enrichment programmes," Mr Chong said.

"The calibration in admission criteria is timely and encourages students to rethink their mindset," he added. "The pursuit of excellence need not be achieved through stockpiling of subjects or accumulation of academic credentials."

Temasek Secondary School's principal Tan Shun Loong said he hopes to see his students become more open to taking fewer subjects in upper secondary.

"We will assure students and parents that we will not add on to students' workload, for example, by pushing more for CCAs (co-curricular activities)," Mr Tan said.

"We will continue to assure them that every student is unique and that so long as the child knows who he is, where he wants to go, and how he wants to get there, the school will walk with them along the way."

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**INFANT JESUS
SECONDARY**





THE STRAITS TIMES

Monday, October 20, 2025

More Sec 3 students likely to take seven subjects, with revised JC admission criteria

From 2028, fewer subjects are required for admission to junior colleges

Jane Ng
Senior Correspondent

More Secondary 3 students are likely to take seven instead of eight subjects, with fewer subjects required for admission to junior colleges (JCs) from 2028.

Only five subjects will be needed by then, instead of six currently.

Students now in Sec 2 – who are about to choose their upper secondary subjects – will be the first to be affected by this change.

Currently, students need an LIR5 score of 20 or lower across six O-level subjects to be eligible for JC admission. LIR5 stands for one lan-

guage and five relevant subjects.

With the change, which was announced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in March, students will need to get 16 points or fewer for their LIR4 score.

MOE said it has “engaged schools on the opportunity for students to recalibrate the number of subjects they would like to offer in upper secondary”.

“This can give students more time to strengthen their development of 21st century competencies and pursue other interests,” said a spokesperson for the ministry.

Schools will adjust their subject combinations based on factors such as student profiles and time-

tabling arrangements.

Some schools that previously offered mainly eight-subject combinations will reduce such options and provide more options for students keen to take seven subjects.

In Tanjong Katong Secondary School (TKSS), most students previously took eight subjects, with about one-sixth opting for seven subjects.

Mr Bob Lau, the school’s year head for lower secondary, said those taking seven subjects were not necessarily academically less able.

“These could be students who wanted to free up time to pursue their interests, such as in leadership, CCAs (co-curricular activities) or to focus on their subjects,” he said.

In 2026, the school expects most students to take seven subjects.



Mrs Elaine Poon, seen here with her daughter, Isabelle, a Tanjong Katong Girls’ School Sec 2 student, is happy that her daughter can focus on fewer subjects, which would help her excel in them. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

“Students would likely focus on two instead of three science subjects or take one instead of double humanities subjects,” Mr Lau said.

Eight-subject combinations would be offered to those who are able to balance the academic load with their interests, he said, adding that “they will not be the majority”. Jurong Secondary School also plans to reduce the number of eight-subject combinations offered, said principal Yeo Siok Ee, who expects more students to take up to seven subjects.

A small group of students may continue to take eight subjects. For instance, those who have an interest in and aptitude for computing or literature in Chinese, which are offered by the school, may want to

take it up as their eighth subject.

“This would provide them with a foundation to pursue these interests in JC or the polytechnic,” said Ms Yeo.

Mr Terence Yao, principal of Chung Cheng High School (Main), said his school will continue to offer up to eight-subject combinations.

But he expects more students to take seven subjects as that would free them up for a non-examinable elective from the school’s applied learning programme, which includes modules like public speaking and coding, which has been gaining popularity over the years.

Students keen on subjects from the school’s Chinese Language Elective Programme, or music, art or Malay (Special Programme), may also offer up to eight subjects.

To cater to students’ diverse interests and strengths, some schools, like Anderson Secondary School, will continue offering the same number of eight-subject combination options, while adding more permutations for those who wish to take six or seven subjects.

Its principal Tan Po Chin said that nearly one-third of its Sec 3 Express cohort in 2025 already take seven subjects.

“We anticipate a gradual increase in this proportion over the next few years,” she said.

The school stopped offering nine-subject combinations from the 2025 Sec 3 cohort, following a decline in enrolment for this option and “to better manage students’ overall curriculum load and support their holistic development”, said Ms Tan.

Victoria School, a dual-track school offering both the Integrated

Programme and the O-level track, said Sec 3 students on the O-level track can still offer up to eight subjects.

Principal Low Chun Meng said academically stronger students could take up to nine subjects, for instance by studying a third language.

Schools have been engaging parents and students on the changes and range of education paths for different subject combinations.

Bukit Panjang Government High School principal Seet Tiat Hee said parents like the idea of students having more time to develop 21st century competencies and pursuing other interests.

Homemaker Elaine Poon, 50, whose daughter is a Sec 2 student in Tanjong Katong Girls’ School, said parents were encouraged to rethink if doing eight subjects was necessary, and she sees this as a positive change.

“It means that my daughter can concentrate on fewer subjects, which would help her excel in them,” she said.

TKSS student Yaasir Nor Azahar, 14, who is in Sec 2 and plans to study in a JC, was relieved to hear that fewer subjects will be needed for admission.

“With fewer subjects, I have more time for football. Juggling competitions and studies can be a challenge,” said the vice-captain of the school’s football team who is also in the Geylang International Under-14 squad and has a rigorous training schedule.

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SEE LIFE • C1

**CONVENT OF THE HOLY INFANT JESUS
SECONDARY**



Sunday, January 12, 2025

More O-level school leavers choosing poly route despite qualifying for JC

Figure jumps to 49% in 2024, up from 45% the year before amid changing mindsets

Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

With a better understanding of their aspirations and encouraged by more polytechnic graduates winning places at the local universities, more O-level school leavers are choosing the polytechnic route despite qualifying for junior college (JC).

Nearly half – around 49 per cent – of the students who were admitted to the polytechnics in the 2024 Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE), 52 per cent went to the polytechnics and 39 per cent to JCs, up from 45 per cent in 2023.

In 2014, the figure was 40 per cent.

The JAE is held in January every year for O-level students. Of the 19,200 candidates who were posted to a post-secondary institution in the 2024 JAE, 52 per cent went to the polytechnics and 39 per cent to JCs and Millennia Institute (MI), figures from the Ministry of Education (MOE) show.

To qualify for a JC, students need better results. Their LIR5 score – based on English language and five relevant subjects – must not exceed 20 points.

Polytechnics require grades for English language and four other subjects to not exceed 26 points, although for the more popular courses, successful applicants need to score under 12 points.

All in, 20,800 students enrolled in full-time diploma courses across the five polytechnics, including those who entered through non-JAE pathways like the Early Admissions Exercise and Polytechnic Foundation Programme, said MOE.

About 270 students who entered the polytechnics in 2024 came from the JCs and MI, switching midway through their studies or after completing their A-level exams.

Students who picked a polytechnic over junior college said mindsets are changing, and polytechnics are now seen as a pathway of choice embraced by many of their peers and their parents. The five

polytechnics are Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic.

One of these students is Anjali Curic, 17, who applied for early admission into engineering science at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, despite having O-level results that qualify her for the top Integrated Programme schools, including Raffles Institution and Hwa Chong Institution.

The School of Science and Technology student said she was leaning towards the JC route, as it is “considered more academically rigorous”, but her parents – both academics with PhDs in engineering – surprisingly nudged her into considering the polytechnic pathway as she enjoys learning through projects.

“I was surprised when they told me I should check out the polytechnics, so I went to the open house held by Ngee Ann to have a look and immediately decided to apply for a place through the early admission scheme.

“My parents know me well and they knew that the poly route would suit me better as I learn best through projects and hands-on learning. On the other hand, I had some schoolmates who questioned my choice of taking the poly route over JC, especially since I had good O-level results.”

Another student who picked a polytechnic over JC is Ms Anne Wang, 20, who is in the third year of her diploma in environmental and marine science course at Republic Polytechnic.

The former Ngee Ann Secondary student has been passionate about environmental conservation since her primary school days, an interest fostered by her mother, who is a biology teacher in a secondary school.

“I grew up watching nature documentaries, and when it came to making the JC or poly choice after the O-levels, it was quite an easy choice for me,” she said.

“I knew I was interested in environmental science, and I picked Republic Polytechnic which is well known for its courses in the field.



Visitors to Nanyang Polytechnic's open house on Jan 5 observing demonstrations by current nursing diploma students at its School of Health and Social Sciences. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



Ngee Ann Polytechnic student Anjali Curic, 17, said she chose to study engineering science at a polytechnic as she learns best through projects. PHOTO: NGEEN ANN POLYTECHNIC

Never mind that the polytechnic is at the other end of the island from my home in the east.”

She said she is encouraged by the fact that more polytechnic graduates are getting into the six local universities and even entering more competitive courses such as

medicine, law and computing.

With a high grade point average of 3.88, she has applied to study environmental science at the National University of Singapore and is awaiting the outcome. She hopes to graduate with a degree and work to conserve the biodiversity of rainforests.

Mr Mah Wee Beng, deputy principal and registrar of Ngee Ann Polytechnic, said about 65 per cent of the students enrolling in its diploma programmes are JC-eligible.

He said that education and career guidance programmes in schools have helped more students discover their interests and make more informed decisions. Mindsets are also changing, he added.

“The polytechnic route used to be for those who want to go to work, and the JC route for those who want to go to university. But now at the polys, we prepare our students for both work and further education... whichever pathway they choose,” said Mr Mah.

In recent years, about one in three fresh polytechnic graduates matriculates in the six universities, up from about one in four in 2015. Based on the 20,000-strong an-

nual cohort of polytechnic graduates, that translates to around 7,000 of them being admitted into the local universities yearly.

Parents who have been to the polytechnics' open houses this week, ahead of the release of the O-level results on Jan 10, agreed that they are more open to their children taking the polytechnic route, because many more polytechnic graduates are entering the local universities.

Said Mr A. Rasul, 46, a business development manager who visited two polytechnics with his son: “My son's clear preference is for the poly route, although he is likely to do well enough to make it to a good JC. But I decided to be open-minded and went to the open house, and I must say it's very different from my days as a student.

“I think the emphasis the polys give to practical hands-on learning in the classroom and work attachments will be good for my son who is interested in computing. So after visiting two polys, I really do think he will do well taking the diploma route.”

KEY ADMISSION FIGURES

- In the 2024 Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE), of the 19,200 candidates who were posted to a post-secondary institution, 52 per cent went to the polytechnics, 39 per cent were assigned to junior colleges (JCs) and Millennia Institute (MI), and 9 per cent to the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).
- Around 49 per cent of the students who were admitted to the polytechnics were eligible for JC, up from 45 per cent in 2023.
- In total, around 20,800 students enrolled in full-time diploma courses in the polytechnics. These include students who enrolled through the JAE, as well as non-JAE pathways such as the Early Admissions Exercise (EAE), Joint Polytechnic Admissions Exercise, Polytechnic Foundation Programme (PFP) and independent applications.
- About 270 students who entered the polytechnics in 2024 came from the JCs and MI, switching midway through their studies or after completing their A-level exams.
- Around 9,500 students from secondary schools applied for admission via the Poly EAE, of whom around 4,000 received an offer. The scheme allows polytechnics to admit students based on their skills and talents apart from grades.
- In 2024, the polytechnics received around 2,050 applications for the PFP, with around 2,000 students admitted to the programme eventually. The programme allows Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) students to apply directly to polytechnics for a foundation year instead of completing Secondary 5 and the O levels. Students need to pass all their PFP modules to progress to Polytechnic Year 1, and almost all have been able to do so.
- Over the past few years, an average of about 4,000 ITE graduates progress to polytechnics each year.

**JESUS
ONDARY**



Monday, November 22, 2021

'No regrets in giving JC a shot'

Ms Nur Atiqah Mohamad Rafi did not trust that she could cope in junior college (JC), even though her O-level results qualified her for it.

She had heard from a friend that the JC "content was 10 times worse than in secondary school" and that it was quite difficult to study for humanities subjects as there was no fixed answer.

"I doubted my abilities and decided to go to a polytechnic because I felt it was the safer option," said the 20-year-old, who is now studying for a Bachelor of Science in real estate at the National University of Singapore.

She had picked a nursing diploma programme at Ngee Ann Polytechnic as she felt a career as a nurse would be "noble and fulfill-

ing", but hospital attachments during her first semester made her realise it was not her calling.

She also regretted not trying for a JC like some of her former

classmates did.

"I was envious of them. It could have been me if I didn't worry too much. I kept wondering how my life would have turned out if I went



**MS NUR ATIQA
MOHAMAD RAFI SAYS:**
Follow your passion.

THE STRAITS TIMES

Former Jurong Pioneer Junior College student Nur Atiqah Mohamad Rafi found it easy to adjust to the JC system as the timetable was similar to secondary school.
ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

to JC," she said.

After speaking to her parents, a career counsellor and some friends, she decided to apply to Jurong Pioneer JC as it was near her home.

She said it was not too difficult for her to adjust to the JC system as the timetable, although more packed than in polytechnic, was similar to secondary school.

She had classes every day and could clarify doubts with her teachers by arranging for consultations easily.

She managed to cope not only with schoolwork, but also CCA. This gave her a chance to be one of the college ambassadors – she was one of the faces of the school during events and helped usher guests of honour or host overseas students.

She also volunteered to represent the college in Malay dance at the Singapore Youth Festival as she had prior experience in secondary school.

Her advice for students deciding on a post-secondary pathway?

"Don't give in to your fears. If you feel you are passionate about it, just go for it," she said.

Student on course to fulfil dream of being a pilot

17-year-old, who juggled aviation and ITE studies, among youngest here with recreational pilot cert

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent

In 2016, a newspaper article about Singapore's first local Malay woman to become a commercial pilot made Haazeqah Nur Atikah Abdullah sit up.

The story sparked the Secondary 2 student's interest in flying.

After she and her mother, a civil servant, did some research, the former Junyuan Secondary School student decided to take up aerospace technology at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) last year after her N levels.

She also joined private aviation school Aeroviation last year, setting her on a course towards her dream of becoming a commercial pilot.

The 17-year-old started lessons in August last year, and last month

spent two weeks in Australia to attain a Recreational Pilot Certificate, which allows her to fly light-sport aircraft, which are smaller and have a maximum weight of 600kg.

The achievement is a starting point. The 25 hours she has chalked up in flying to earn the certificate can be counted towards getting a commercial pilot licence in future.

According to Aeroviation, Haazeqah is among the youngest in Singapore – and likely to be the first female here – to obtain this certificate, which was introduced in recent years as a faster and cheaper route than a private pilot's licence.

Most of the school's 23 students who attained the certificate last year are under 18 years of age or in their 20s.

The course includes theory components as well as simulator train-

ing, and the certification costs \$10,000.

"My mother has been supporting me from the start, and she's proud of me and wants me to learn even more," said Haazeqah, an only child. "I want to learn all there is about flying and the aviation industry."

For a few months last year, she spent three to four hours almost every weekday attending night classes at Aeroviation in Ubi, juggling her ITE schoolwork at the same time.

She is now on an internship with aircraft engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney Canada, and plans to train further to eventually obtain a commercial pilot licence.

She wants to continue her studies at Nanyang Polytechnic in an aeronautical and aerospace engineering diploma course, and obtain a university degree in time to come.

Being a pilot also takes mental

and physical strength, she said.

During her first few flights in Adelaide, Australia, she had to handle turbulence and a phenomenon called thermals, where air rises because of heat.

"The weather wasn't very good during training, and it felt like my aircraft was being blown away, so I had to work to control it," she said.

"It required a lot of focus, and my Australian instructor told me that one hour of flying can feel like four hours of driving because of how draining it is."

But she added: "I like flying a lot. I like the feeling of adrenaline rush in my body."

Haazeqah's dream is to be a pilot with Singapore Airlines. "If given that opportunity, I would like to do that, to represent my country."

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Inspired by a newspaper article about Singapore's first local Malay woman to become a commercial pilot, Haazeqah Nur Atikah Abdullah enrolled in private aviation school Aeroviation and spent three to four hours almost every weekday for a few months last year attending night classes there, juggling her ITE schoolwork at the same time.

ST PHOTO:
KELLY HUI

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Number of hours chalked up in flying to earn a Recreational Pilot Certificate in Australia. This allows Haazeqah Nur Atikah Abdullah to fly light-sport aircraft, which are smaller and have a maximum weight of 600kg. The 25 hours can be counted towards getting a commercial pilot licence in future.

Friday, May 09, 2025

More S'pore polytechnic graduates heading to top overseas universities

Move abroad driven by greater access to information and desire for broader exposure

Joakim Kang

While serving national service in 2021, Mr Nicolas Chew received news that would have once been unimaginable – an offer to study human, social and political sciences at the prestigious University of Cambridge in Britain.

Coming from a less affluent background, he had always received help to pay for school fees in primary and secondary school. During his polytechnic days, he worked part-time as a customer service agent at Changi Airport to cover essential costs like transport. It was not until the Covid-19 pandemic hit that he began considering studying overseas.

Mr Chew is one of a growing number of polytechnic students in Singapore seeking overseas university experiences, mainly in Britain and Europe, driven by greater access to information and a desire for broader exposure.

This comes as more students are choosing the polytechnic route despite qualifying for junior college, and local university enrolment for them has risen, with one-third of poly graduates matriculating at local universities.

Mr Chew, 26, a communications and media management graduate from Temasek Polytechnic, successfully juggled studies and work, topping his cohort with a grade point average of 3.97 out of 4.

He was given a place to study at Cambridge and a scholarship from Changi Airport Group that covered his undergraduate studies.

He is now pursuing a postgraduate degree in Digital Media: Critical Studies at University College London, which is also covered by the scholarship.

In response to queries, Temasek Polytechnic said more of its alumni are qualifying for admission to top universities overseas, without giving exact figures.

Similarly, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic spokesperson said there has been an "almost threefold increase" in graduates going to these

staying in Britain, Mr Chew said studying overseas has broadened his horizons.

It has given him a more "holistic, open-minded view of the world", on politics and sociology or on social and digital media, he said.

"This has given me a more critical, nuanced view and understanding of the world we live in, one that accounts for both Singaporean and external contexts and challenges," said Mr Chew. His mother is an early childhood educator and his father works part-time in the food and beverage industry.

Making friends from all over the world has expanded his world view, he added, exposing him to other cultures and ways of life.

Some diploma holders decide to pursue courses overseas because the local options do not suit their interests and specialisations.

Ms Chiyo Tan, 22, a biotechnology graduate from Singapore Polytechnic, is now a third-year undergraduate studying veterinary medicine and surgery at Britain's University of Edinburgh.

She wanted to pursue a veterinary career, but there are no veterinary schools in Singapore. She chose Britain as it was more affordable compared with elsewhere, such as Australia. Her current annual tuition fees are £34,200 (\$560,000).

Her polytechnic helped with her personal statement. She also hired a consultant, TheRightU, to help with the administrative details of applying to a university overseas.

Ms Joanne Gao, a regional manager at admissions consultancy Crimson Education, said: "Poly students are driven by the need for specialised education that aligns with their career goals. They've already gained key skills through their polytechnic courses and see university as an opportunity to deepen their expertise."

She said that while A-level graduates typically apply for fields such as medicine and law, diploma holders gravitate towards Stem (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses such as



Mr Gabriel Lee had no interest in going abroad to study, but after encouragement from family and friends, and a scholarship offer, the Singapore Polytechnic graduate is set to pursue undergraduate studies in electrical and electronic engineering at the University of Edinburgh. PHOTO: COURTESY OF GABRIEL LEE



Temasek Polytechnic graduate Nicolas Chew at his graduation ceremony in 2024 at Cambridge University, with his mother, Madam Chia Yuen Mei, and younger brother Timothy Chew. He is now pursuing a postgraduate degree in Digital Media: Critical Studies at University College London. PHOTO: COURTESY OF NICOLAS CHEW



With no veterinary schools in Singapore, Ms Chiyo Tan, a Singapore Polytechnic graduate, is pursuing her interest and studying veterinary medicine and surgery at the University of Edinburgh. PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHIYO TAN



Ms Lois Pang, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic graduate, wanted to challenge herself and try something new, and decided to pursue a Bachelor of Arts with a North American Minor at Sciences Po, France. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LOIS PANG

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Senior ECG Counsellor Ms Sharon Tay



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