

One in five NUS medical students gets financial help

The National University of Singapore's (NUS) medical degree course is the most competitive course to get into. It is also the most expensive – charging almost \$29,000 in tuition fees a year. So one would expect a large number of students entering the school to come from fairly affluent families who can afford to pay the high fees.

But figures from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine show that almost one in five of its students comes from homes with a monthly per capita income of \$1,900, which qualifies them for financial aid from the school. The figure is higher than the 16.8 per cent of undergraduates universitywide at NUS who received financial aid for the academic year of 2017.

The bursaries and scholarships from the school cover tuition fees. Students who need more aid are also given help in meeting their living expenses.

NUS medicine dean Chong Yap Seng said the admissions process is need-blind. The school received over 2,000 applications this year and selected 280. "We don't look at whether a student will be able to pay the fees. Just whether he or she will make a good doctor. No student will be denied the opportunity to study medicine at NUS because he is unable to pay the tuition fees," he added.

Ms Vernicia Neo, 20, for one, is grateful for the help. The first-year medical student, who will soon be starting on her second year of studies, said her taxi driver father's yearly income is less than the \$29,000 yearly tuition fees for the undergraduate medical fee.

"There's no way my father will be able to afford the fees. In fact, when I got (in), both my dad and my mum, who is a housewife, were very happy, but they also worried about the fees. Luckily for us, I qualified for financial help," said Ms Neo, who gives private tuition during the holidays to pay for her living expenses.

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