EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

A part of Singapore's success story

The Singapore education system aims to help our students discover their talents, realise their potential, and develop a passion for learning that lasts them through their lives.

This brochure provides an overview of the Singapore education landscape and explains the programmes and curricula available to cater to the students' diverse aptitudes and interests.

Over **350** schools for primary, secondary and post-secondary education supported by 32,000 education officers

An international mix of world-class higher learning institutions

Annual education budget of $10.6 billion in 2012

Holistic education

Among the key strengths of the Singapore education system are our bilingual policy, emphasis on broad-based and holistic learning, focus on teacher quality and integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into learning. We also believe that our schools should work closely with the parents and the community.

Bilingual advantage

Bilingualism is a key feature of Singapore's education system. The main medium of instruction in school is English, but all students learn an official Mother Tongue Language.

Our bilingual policy aims to equip our students with the language competencies to access Asian cultures and develop a global outlook. This will give our students a competitive edge, enable them to appreciate their culture and heritage and connect with people from different backgrounds, so that they can thrive in a globalised world.

Broad-based and holistic learning

Holistic education will develop in our children an enduring core of competencies, values and character, and ensure they have the capabilities to thrive in the 21st century. Our multiple educational pathways cater to students with different strengths, interests and learning styles, developing each child to his fullest potential.

Our schools play a key role by providing a rich diversity of learning experiences that cater not only to the cognitive aspects, but also the physical, aesthetic, moral and socio-emotional domains. Apart from the academic curriculum, our students can develop their interests and talent in music,

arts and sports through co-curricular programmes. Through these activities, our students are provided with opportunities to hone their talents and leadership skills, as well as develop their socio-emotional competencies. Enrichment programmes that cater to our students' learning interests are also available. Contributing to the communities around the school through various service learning programmes is also an integral part of school life. In addition, education and career guidance offer perspectives beyond the classroom to help our students achieve their fullest potential.

All these learning experiences help nurture in our students qualities and values such as creativity, confidence, compassion and resilience – life skills essential in a rapidly changing world. At the same time, they gain values such as respect, responsibility, integrity, care and harmony, all of which are important for a cohesive and harmonious multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

Holistic education

Good teachers and school leaders

Teachers and school leaders form the core of Singapore's education system. We aim to nurture and motivate our teachers to achieve their best, in line with their aspirations and interests. Our teachers receive their comprehensive pre-service training at the National Institute of Education (NIE) and have many opportunities for continual development to build up their capabilities as teaching professionals. This is complemented by the teacher academies and language institutes, which will help to foster a stronger teacher-led culture of professional excellence.

ICT-infused curriculum

We are constantly working to enrich and transform the learning environments of our students and to equip them with the critical competencies to succeed in a knowledge-based economy. A key thrust is the purposeful integration of ICT into all types of lessons to enhance the students' learning experience.

Additional funding and resources enable schools to seed innovative teaching methods. A group of "future schools" are partnering industry players to use state-of-the-art technology to pilot new teaching and learning experiences.

Partnership with parents

Parents are our key partners in the journey to deliver a holistic education for our students. We value their involvement and support in school programmes, and actively encourage parents and the community to work together with schools to provide our students with a conducive learning environment, not just in schools but also in homes and in the community. This close partnership will allow us to bring out the best in all our students.

A system that stands out

Singapore ranked 2nd in "Quality of the Educational System"
– Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012

Singapore identified as one of the world's best-performing school systems
– McKinsey Report, published November 2010

Singapore students ranked among the top in Reading, Mathematics and Science
– Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009

Singapore students ranked among the top in Mathematics and Science
– Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2007

Singapore ranked among the top in Literacy
– Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006

One of the world's best-performing school systems

The McKinsey Report, which examines the characteristics of school systems that consistently produce students who perform well in international benchmarking tests, placed Singapore high on its list of the world's best-performing school systems. Quality teachers and first-rate instruction are just some of the factors highlighted in the report. In the Global Competitiveness Report, Singapore's education system is also consistently ranked amongst the best in terms of the ability to meet the needs of a competitive economy.

We set ourselves apart with our consistent and outstanding accomplishments in Mathematics and Science across all students at all levels. We also build strong linguistics foundations through our bilingual policy. Our students have excelled in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and recently, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Laying a strong foundation

Primary School Education

English Language, Mathematics and Mother Tongue Language make up a significant part of the primary school curriculum. These subjects help our students to develop literacy and problem solving skills – skills that provide a strong foundation as they progress on their educational journey.

Students also take up subjects like Art, Civics and Moral Education, Music, Social Studies and Physical Education. Science is introduced from Primary 3 onwards. These subjects expose our students to different areas of study at an early stage to allow them to discover their interests and talents, equip them holistically with a range of important knowledge and skills, and also provide teachable moments to develop in them the core values that define a person's character and their sense of responsibility to society.

After the initial foundation stage (Primary 1 to Primary 4), English Language, Mathematics, Mother Tongue Language and Science are offered to students at either the foundation or standard level at Primary 5 to Primary 6. Students who do well in their Mother Tongue Language may also offer Higher Mother Tongue Language. This means that teachers will take into account the ability of their students in designing their lessons and assessment tasks. Students thus learn at a pace that suits them.

A range of enhancements will be implemented in primary school education over the next few years to make learning more enjoyable and meaningful for students while developing the desired skills and values that will put them in good stead for the future. These include placing greater emphasis on engaging teaching methods and holistic assessment, and providing opportunities for lower primary pupils to try out activities in the areas of sports, outdoor education and the arts through the Programme for Active Learning (PAL).

At the end of Primary 6, all students are assessed on their academic abilities at that point via the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), and placed in a secondary school course that suits their academic learning pace and aptitude. Other than using PSLE results, students can also seek admission to a secondary school based on their achievements and talents across a diverse range of areas (including art and sports) through the Direct School Admission exercise.

Key features:
6 years of education (Primary 1 to Primary 6)
Typical age of student enrolled in Primary 1 is 7 years old

Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE)

↑

Orientation Stage (Primary 5–6)

↑

Foundation Stage (Primary 1–4)

LEGEND

CCA	Co-Curricular Activities
CME	Civics and Moral Education
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
NE	National Education
PE	Physical Education
PW	Project Work

SUBJECTS TESTED IN PSLE

Standard Subjects:
English, Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics, Science

Optional:
Higher Mother Tongue Language

Foundation Subjects:
Foundation English, Foundation Mother Tongue Language, Foundation Mathematics, Foundation Science

\# From Primary 5, English, Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics and Science will be taught at the appropriate level according to the ability of the student.

* Science is taught from Primary 3 onwards.

^ For Primary 1–4, Health Education is not a separate subject but relevant topics are included in the learning of English.

~ Project Work is conducted during curriculum time but is not an examination subject.

Building up strengths

Secondary School Education

At the secondary level, students have the opportunity to offer either the Express, Normal (Academic) or Normal (Technical) courses, depending on their academic ability (as measured initially by PSLE scores). The different courses are designed to cater to a range of academic learning abilities and interests. Throughout their secondary education, our students can move from one course to another based on their ability to access the curriculum offered in each of these courses.

Students in the Express course at the end of Secondary 4 typically offer six to eight subjects at the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination or GCE 'O' level examination. Those with exceptional academic ability may offer a ninth subject.

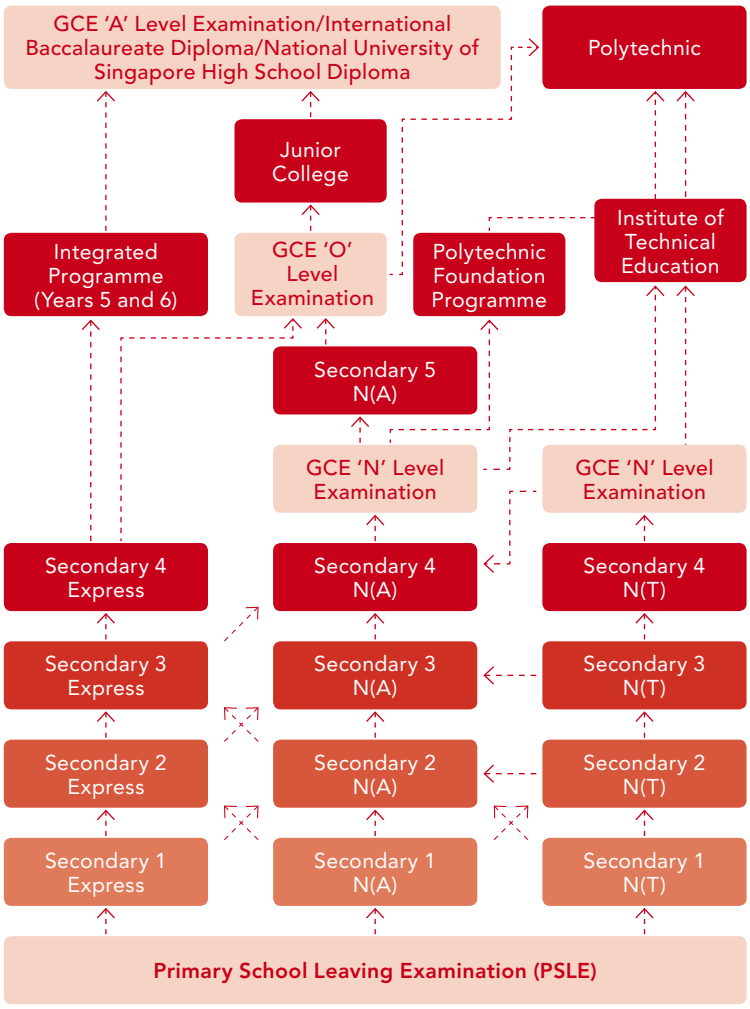
Students in the Normal (Academic) course will offer academically-based subjects while those in the Normal (Technical) course will follow a curriculum that is more practice-oriented. Students in both courses will sit for the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Normal Level) or GCE 'N' level examination at the end of Secondary 4. After the GCE 'N' level examination, students from the Normal (Academic) course who satisfy the academic requirements can go on to a fifth year of study, where they can sit for the GCE 'O' level examination at the end of the year. Students who meet the academic requirements can also be admitted to the polytechnics via the Polytechnic Foundation Programme, or to the Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) through a Direct Entry Scheme. Students from the Normal (Technical) course who satisfy the academic requirements can transfer laterally to the Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) course, or be admitted to the ITE for the Nitec course.

Students with a passion for the arts, music and languages can select from a range of elective programmes at secondary schools that focus on these specific areas of interests. They can also choose to take up advanced elective modules in applied areas such as Information Technology, Business, and Engineering offered in some secondary schools.

Some schools also offer the Integrated Programme (IP) – a 6-year programme that caters to academically-strong students who prefer a more independent and less-structured learning style. It allows secondary school students to proceed to pre-university education without sitting for the GCE 'O' level examination. Given the strong academic aptitude of its students, the IP aims to stretch the potential of its students in non-academic aspects by engaging them in broader learning experiences beyond the academic curriculum. Students sit for the pre-university examinations at the end of six years.

Key features:
Four to Five years of education [four years for Express and Normal (Technical) courses, and five years for Normal (Academic) course]
Typical age of student enrolled in Secondary 1 is 13 years old
Students attend single-session school
Students participate in co-curricular activities, such as sports, the arts, uniformed groups, clubs and societies

Flexibility Between Courses



* Refer to the Education Landscape in Singapore on p13 for the diverse education pathways offered beyond secondary schools.

Diverse pathways

We recognise the talents of our students in both academic and non-academic areas. Specialised Independent Schools offer special programmes to develop our students in areas such as the arts, sports, mathematics and science.

Through direct admission exercises, junior colleges and polytechnics have some flexibility in selecting students on the basis of a diverse range of talents, based on transparent and meritocratic criteria. This allows students, whose talents cannot be measured by standardised examinations, to further their study and interest in a post-secondary institution.

Key features:

Specialised Independent Schools such as the NUS High School of Mathematics and Science, Singapore Sports School, School of the Arts and School of Science and Technology focus on developing students' specific talents and abilities to an even higher level than what is normally offered.

Specialised Schools such as NorthLight School, Assumption Pathway School and Crest Secondary School offer enhanced programmes that are customised for students inclined towards hands-on and practical learning, leading to a combination of academic and vocational qualifications.

LEGEND

CCA	Co-Curricular Activities
CIP	Community Involvement Programme
CME	Civics and Moral Education
PCCG	Pastoral Care & Career Guidance
NE	National Education
PE	Physical Education
PW	Project Work

Gearing up for tertiary education

Pre-University Education

A pre-university course leading to the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination prepares our students for further education by equipping them with the essential skills and knowledge required for tertiary education.

Students may choose from a wide range of subjects from different academic areas such as the Humanities and the Arts, Languages and Mathematics and the Sciences. To ensure breadth of skills and knowledge, students are required to offer at least one contrasting subject – i.e. every student should take at least one subject from Mathematics and the Sciences, and at least one subject from the Humanities and the Arts.

Students offer subjects at three levels of study – Higher 1 (H1), Higher 2 (H2) and Higher 3 (H3). H1 subjects offer students breadth and sufficient depth for them to acquire foundational knowledge and skills in a subject area. H3 subjects offer students a variety of learning opportunities to study a subject area in more specialised depth.

Most students will offer a combination of three H2 subjects and a single H1 subject and compulsory subjects of Mother Tongue Language, General Paper and Project Work. Students with the ability and passion for a particular subject or subject areas can offer an expanded curriculum by taking an additional H1 or H2 subject to broaden their range of subjects and intellectual horizons, or by offering up to two H3 subjects for deeper specialisation.

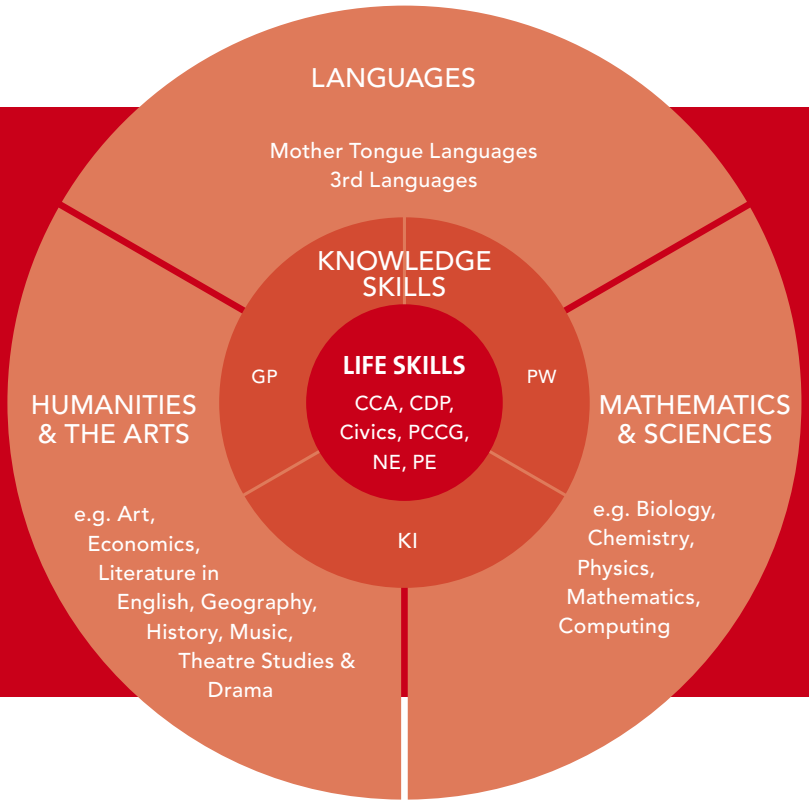
Key features:
Two to three years of education
Typical age of a pre-university student is 17 to 19 years old

H1
Half of H2 in terms of curriculum time.
H2
Equivalent to 'A' level subjects prior to 2006.[1]
H3
Subjects with diverse learning opportunities for in-depth study (e.g. advanced content research project/paper, university-conducted programmes).

[1] Revised Junior College (JC) curriculum introduced the H1, H2, H3 subjects where students will have to offer a contrasting subject. Prior to the revised JC curriculum, students offer subjects at the 'AO' and 'A' levels.

Special elective programmes are also available to cater to students with talents in specific areas, such as the arts, music, drama, languages and the humanities. These elective programmes are offered as supplementary courses on top of the students' core specialisation.

Besides content knowledge, socio-emotional competencies and life skills are an integral part of pre-university education. Students are given ample opportunities to engage in activities that will help them cultivate important life qualities such as initiative, leadership, social responsibility and strength of character.



LEGEND

CCA	Co-Curricular Activities
CDP	Character Development Programme
PCCG	Pastoral Care & Career Guidance
NE	National Education
PE	Physical Education
GP	General Paper
PW	Project Work
KI	Knowledge & Inquiry

Sharpening skills and abilities

Institutes of Technical Education/Polytechnics/Universities

Institute of Technical Education

The Institute of Technical Education (ITE) aims to equip students with technical skills and knowledge to meet the workforce needs of the various industry sectors. ITE provides full-time institutional training and traineeship programmes as well as continuing education and training programmes for working adults.

ITE offers a broad-based, multi-disciplinary curriculum ranging from engineering to technical, business and service skills areas. Through its collaborations with industry partners, ITE is able to enrich students' learning experiences and enhance their technical and professional knowledge.

Modern amenities and advanced facilities available on the ITE campuses allow students to be immersed in vibrant learning environments, and engage in hands-on learning.

Key features:
Full-time or part-time education with different durations of study
Typical age of an ITE student is 17 to 20 years old
Students can choose to take up the ITE Skills Certificate (ISC), National ITE Certificate (NITEC) or Higher NITEC in industries such as aerospace, automation, electronics, marine and fabrication, and precision engineering
Emphasis on hands-on training

Polytechnics

There are currently five polytechnics in Singapore: Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic.

Polytechnics provide quality practice-oriented training to equip students with skills to contribute to the technological and economic development of Singapore. Our polytechnic graduates are valued as practice-oriented and knowledgeable middle-level professionals, and are much sought after by industry.

The five polytechnics offer a wide range of courses that focus on students' interests and development in various fields of study. The curricular emphases are designed in close consultation with industry to meet market demands and requirements. This ensures that students keep abreast of changing technologies and developments in their chosen industry and enter the workforce with skilled technical and professional knowledge.

Key features:
Full-time or part-time education with different durations of study
Typical age of a polytechnic student is 17 to 20 years old
Students can choose to take up Diploma courses in disciplines such as business, chemical and bio-sciences, communications, design, digital media, engineering and manufacturing
Offers continuing education training in the form of Advanced and Specialist Diplomas

Singapore Institute of Technology

The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) was set up in 2009 to form partnerships with reputable foreign universities to offer their degree programmes in niche areas, providing an additional pathway for polytechnic students to obtain a publicly-subsidised university education in Singapore.

SIT's current partners include the Culinary Institute of America, Digipen Institute of Technology, Glasgow School of Art, Newcastle University, Technical University of Munich, University of Glasgow, University of Manchester, University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Wheelock College. More partners and programmes to expand its offerings to students are in the pipeline.

Universities

There are currently four publicly-funded local universities offering full-time degree programmes: the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), the Singapore Management University (SMU), and the newest, the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). In addition, SIM University offers publicly-subsidised part-time degree programmes to adult learners and working professionals.

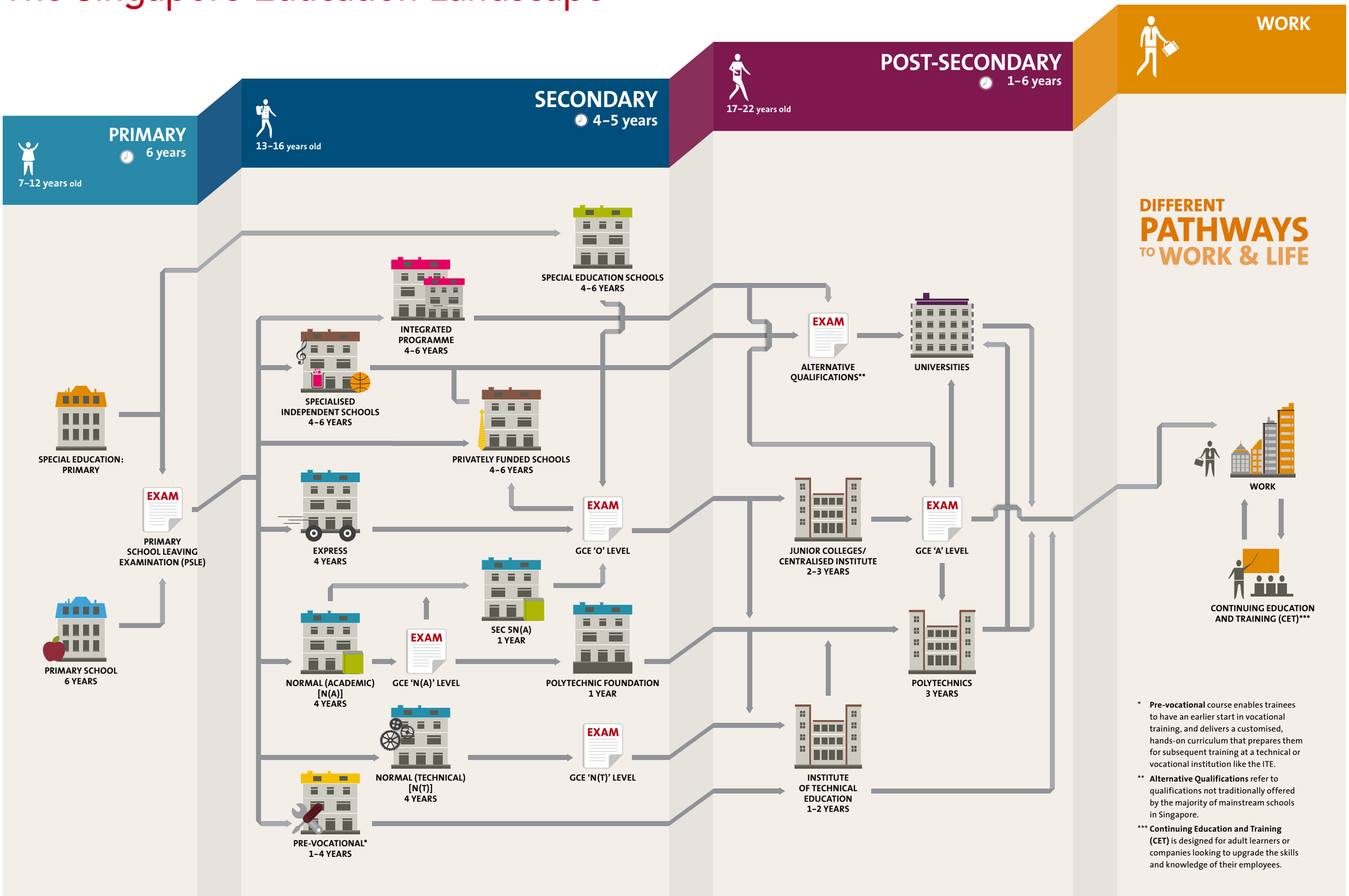
The publicly-funded autonomous universities maintain high standards of admission, and have developed programmes to equip students to achieve their full potential and contribute to the society.

NUS and NTU have established themselves as world-class research universities that attract a large number of top students every year. SMU has also established a reputation for producing high-quality graduates who are highly sought after by employers in both the public and private sectors. SUTD was set up with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States and Zhejiang University in China as key partners, and matriculated its first cohort of students in 2012.

Our universities establish close partnerships and collaborations with other top universities worldwide to provide our students and faculty with expanded opportunities in learning and research.

Key features:
Four publicly-funded autonomous universities
Global partnerships with leading universities and educational institutions overseas such as the Cornell University, Duke University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Imperial College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University, University of Adelaide, and University of California, Berkeley
SIM University offers a university education for adult learners and working professionals
Private universities with campuses here include INSEAD, Chicago GSB, S P Jain, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Singapore, ESSEC, Digipen Institute of Technology and New York Tisch School of the Arts Asia

The Singapore Education Landscape



* **Pre-vocational** course enables trainees to have an earlier start in vocational training, and delivers a customised, hands-on curriculum that prepares them for subsequent training at a technical or vocational institution like the ITE.

** **Alternative Qualifications** refer to qualifications not traditionally offered by the majority of mainstream schools in Singapore.

*** **Continuing Education and Training (CET)** is designed for adult learners or companies looking to upgrade the skills and knowledge of their employees.

Returning to Singapore?

Back to School for Returning Singaporean Children

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has provided several options for school admission so that returning Singaporeans can choose one or more options based on their individual needs.

For instance, returning Singaporeans who have a strong preference for a particular school may choose to approach the school directly to seek admission. If they are prepared to consider a few suitable schools, they can apply to MOE for assistance to be placed in a suitable school. Alternatively, returning Singaporeans may apply to participate in the special school placement exercises, such as the School Placement Exercise for Returning Singaporeans or the Direct School Admission Exercise, to seek admission.

More details on the different options are summarised below:

	Apply directly to schools / institutions (anytime)	Apply to MOE to facilitate placement (anytime)	Primary One Registration Exercise (Jul–Aug)	Direct School Admission Exercise (May–Aug)	School Placement Exercise (SPERS) (Jul–Oct) Supplementary Placement Exercise (Oct–Dec)
Primary					
Primary 1	✓	✓	✓		
Primary 2 to 5	✓	✓			
Secondary					
Secondary 1	✓	✓		✓	✓
Secondary 2 to 3	✓	✓			✓
Post-Secondary					
Junior College / Millennia Institute (Pre-U 1)	✓ (May to Feb)			✓	✓
Polytechnics	✓				
Institute of Technical Education (ITE)	✓				

Additional Information

Useful websites and links

- http://www.moe.gov.sg
  – For more information on the Ministry of Education and the Singapore Education System.
- http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/returning-singaporeans/
  – For information on schooling matters for returning Singaporeans.
- http://www.overseassingaporean.sg/
  – For information on Government services available to Overseas Singaporeans.

The Boarding Awards Scheme

Give your child the Singapore Education experience

The Boarding Awards Scheme (BAS) is the solution for Singaporean parents who live overseas, but would like their children to receive a Singapore education. With a new generation of school hostels in Singapore, they can be assured that their children will be well taken care of while they are away.

The BAS places students, at secondary level, in a hostel where they can learn, live and play in a safe and secure environment.

The comforts and security of a home away from home

In a hostel, students will have the benefit of interaction with their peers. This is an inclusive environment that helps students to forge friendships and encourages learning, giving them valuable experiences that build confidence and independence.

Students will have access to a number of recreational facilities, with modern amenities and multi-purpose environment that allow for expression in sports, arts and music. Access to computers and the Internet also means that students will have access to the global resource that the World Wide Web offers.

Students will have a housemaster who will be their mentor, guardian and friend. Like parents, the housemasters will ensure the welfare of their boarders and take care of their intellectual and emotional needs.

Additional Information

For more information on the Boarding Awards Scheme and online application, please visit http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/returning-singaporeans/boarding-awards-scheme/

Additional Information

Eligibility

- Child and one parent must be a Singapore citizen
- Child must be at secondary level or Pre-University level (junior colleges and Millennia Institute)
- Both parents must reside overseas
- Neither parent must be in Singapore for more than 90 days in a calendar year

Awards

- 50% of boarding fees for students studying in Singapore secondary schools or junior colleges or Millennia Institute
- 100% of boarding fees if student is a recipient of the Edusave Entrance Scholarships for Independent Schools (EESIS) or Edusave Scholarships for Integrated Programme Schools (ESIP)

Documents needed for application

- Student's Birth Certificate
- Singapore Identity Card or Singapore Citizenship Certificate
- Student's academic records and letter of offer for EESIS or ESIP (if any)
- Parent(s)' Singapore Identity Card or Singapore Citizenship Certificate
- Documents to certify parent(s)' employment/overseas posting

Leave of Absence Scheme

Secure a place for your child

For the Singaporeans working overseas, the Leave of Absence (LOA) scheme assures parents that their child will be able to re-enter the Singapore education system upon their return.

Eligibility for the LOA

Under this scheme, children can apply for LOA with their school when they go overseas with their parents who are on overseas posting, so that they can continue to be registered as a student of the school. When they are overseas, the schools can keep in touch with them. Upon their return, they can be re-admitted to their schools straight away.

The school principal can only grant an LOA if the child is already a student of the school.

Primary 1 Registration

Parents who are overseas can register their children who are Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents (PR) during the Primary 1 (P1) Registration Exercise held in July/August each year.

If an elder child is currently on LOA from a primary school, then the younger sibling who is due to enter P1 can be registered in the school under Phase 1 of the P1 Registration Exercise. If an elder child beyond primary school was previously a student of the primary school, the younger sibling due to enter P1 can be registered in the school under Phase 2A (2) of the P1 Registration Exercise.

Additional Information

Application can be made at the child's current school by completing the application form for Leave of Absence available at http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/returning-singaporeans/files/leave-of-absence-form.pdf
The completed application form should be submitted to the child's current school.

Additional Information

Eligibility

- Child must be a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident who is presently a student in a Singapore school and will be accompanying his parents on overseas posting, but intends to rejoin this school upon return; or
- Has registered for Primary 1 but will not be returning from overseas to join the school at the start of the school year.

Applying?

- Applications are made directly to the school concerned.
- A nominal fee will be charged annually.
- The amount will depend on the school concerned (may vary from year to year).
- Parents must renew their applications every year to avoid a lapse in the child's LOA status.

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The information contained in this
booklet is correct as of August 2012