

ADMISSIONS

CURRICULUM

STUDENT LIFE

INTERNATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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## Making the Most: Academic, Professional, and Residential Support

### A Letter from Catherine Sanger, Vice Rector of Cendana Residential College

“Asking for help is a sign of maturity and savvy, not weakness.” This is one of my core mantras when advising students. And as one of your student’s primary academic and residential advisors, I could really use your help getting this message across!

So many of our students have been programmed by competitive high schools and JCs to hide any signs of struggle, to conceal questions or concerns. Another characteristic of many Yale-NUS students is that before coming to college, they have faced little academic adversity. We attract and enroll high achievers and go-getters. Many of our students were big fish in their previous ponds, and now find themselves getting B’s and C’s for the first time. Often, these setbacks undermine student’s self-esteem, leading to shame and panic: “Me, get a C, how could this be!” What often frustrates students and their family members, is that faculty and staff do not find these grades alarming. In fact, we fully expect our students to get lower grades in their first few years at Yale-NUS than they have received in the past. They come to college, to this college, to be challenged. Our courses are designed to challenge you with new and difficult thinking, to inculcate unfamiliar intellectual skills. The Common Curriculum is a program of mandatory breadth, inviting students to take a wide variety of courses often in subjects they have not taken for several years or have no experience with whatsoever. That means our student body is taking courses well outside their previous academic comfort zone, and we expect that for many students this will involve a steep learning curve. The Yale-NUS experience is designed to bring some of the brightest students in the world together and elevate their intellectual and inter-personal capabilities. In other words, it is designed to be difficult. No one should be alarmed, therefore, when students feel particularly challenged.

At Yale-NUS, asking for help is encouraged. Because we ask a lot of our students, we also offer a lot of support. This is why I need your help to encourage your student that maturity is not about perfection, it is about leveraging strengths and acknowledging weaknesses. And there are many resources available I will describe below: Vice Rectors, Dean’s Fellows, The Writer’s Center, Faculty Office Hours, Heads of Study, CIPE Advisors. Not taking full advantage of these resources is like buying a concert ticket and only showing up for the last song, or ordering a delicious three course meal and not eating the appetizer. Taking full advantage of Yale-NUS means more than perfect attendance in class – it means also taking advantage of outside the classroom support.

We hope you will partner with us to encourage students to use these supports. Whether your student is excelling in all courses or struggling in some, those who take advantage of these resources will have a fuller and more productive academic experience. If your student expresses concern about their course performance, instead of asking “why aren’t you working harder?” please ask if they have approached their professors or academic advisors to develop stronger study strategies: “Have you gone to office hours?” Or “Have you discussed this with your Vice Rector?” Together we can encourage students to sidestep shame or panic in the face of setbacks and instead be proactive in reaching out for the help they need.

Here are some of the many sources of support available to students at Yale-NUS. When your students are concerned about the quality of a final course grade, their ability to get their work done and find time to sleep, which major to pick, or anything else, here are some of the resources available to them:

**Faculty Office Hours:** Our faculty are genuinely interested in working with undergraduate students. That is why they have chosen to work at a liberal arts college. Students who go to their professors’ office hours have a significant advantage, because they can get even more context of what the professor is trying to accomplish in the class and ask questions to excel in the assignments. If a student is confused or underperforming, going to faculty office hours should always be added to their schedule. Similarly, if a student loves and excels in a class, they should also be going to office hours – it is a great way to accelerate their learning even further.

**The Writer’s Center:** The Writers’ Centre is a friendly and welcoming space open to all members of the Yale-NUS community. Select Dean’s Fellows provide regular individual writing consultations and group workshops on rhetorical skills, revision strategies, and the conventions of format and style appropriate to different genres. As consultants, they are able to provide general feedback about the articulation of ideas, tone, audience awareness, argumentation, structure, grammar, clarity, and style, regardless of the discipline, at any stage in the writing process. In addition to academic writing, Dean’s Fellows will also read creative writing and help with personal statements, application essays, and grant proposals. From time to time, faculty

members may offer specialised sessions in their field as advertised. Ultimately, consultants and faculty share the Writing Programme's goal to attendees come to a deeper understanding about their own writing processes.

**Heads of Study:** Each major at Yale-NUS has a Head of Study, a faculty member who is responsible for envisioning and articulating that major and coaching faculty within that field, and ensuring that students who are planning to major in that field are successfully progressing through the requirements. If students have questions about courses that will be offered in subsequent semesters, or concerns about current courses in the they can bring those to the relevant Head of Study.

**Faculty Advisors:** Upon entering the college every student will be assigned a Faculty Advisor, who is a faculty member affiliated with the student Residential College. The Faculty Advisor is a source of counsel on course selection and strategies for success as a college student. Once students declare a major their Faculty Advisor will become a faculty member in that major. In their senior year students will take on a Capstone Advisor to advise on their research program.

**CIPE:** "Will I ever get a job?" "How do I get an internship this summer?" "I need to earn some extra cash this semester!" These are great questions. CIPE – the Center for International and Professional Experience. CIPE is staffed with experts in different facets of the student extra-curricular experience from internships to travel opportunities to graduate school applications.

**The Dean's Fellows and College 101:** Each incoming student is assigned to a Dean's Fellow, a new college graduate responsible for supporting and mentoring our students. Dean's Fellows have recently gone through the range of college experiences, and can therefore speak from personal experience to a range of opportunities and struggles that come about during college. Especially during the first semester, Dean's Fellows lead a College 101 of evening workshops on different issues of importance to new students: study habits, how to approach professors, balancing academic and extracurricular interests, and other residential issues. The Dean's Fellows live in the Residential Colleges with students to be available when students need support.

**Vice Rectors:** Each Residential College has a Vice Rector who serves as students' primary academic and residential advisor. The Vice Rector oversees the college and plays a significant role in residential life. The Vice Rector oversees the health and wellness of students and coordinates community events. The Vice Rector also plays a role in academics, providing support and advice to students on an individual basis on topics ranging from course selection to study habits to broader curriculum and life planning.

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