

More students from S'pore heading to Oxbridge; majority from RI, Hwa Chong

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More students in Singapore are heading to Oxford University and Cambridge University, Britain's most prestigious universities, with those from top schools here leading the pack.

Singapore's Raffles Institution (RI) and Hwa Chong Institution (HCI) were the only two schools outside of Britain that featured in a league table ranking schools with the highest number of offers from Oxford University and Cambridge University, widely known as Oxbridge.

RI placed second with 37 offers from Oxford and 49 offers from Cambridge, while HCI came in fifth with 29 offers from Oxford and 34 offers from Cambridge.

Renowned British schools like Eton College and Westminster College made up the rest of the list of top 10 schools that was published by newspaper The Telegraph in 2023.

RI and HCI each send an average of 90 to 100 applications yearly to Oxford and Cambridge.

Overall, Oxford recorded 1,682 applications from Singapore from 2020 to 2022, compared with 1,515 from 2018 to 2020. Cambridge received 573 applications from Singapore in 2022, compared with 459 in 2019.

The growing popularity of these overseas institutions with students here is due in part to the amount of support they receive from their schools in this regard, and because of the strength of the schools' alumni networks.

Schools like RI and HCI have de-

partments that guide students on their overseas university applications – a tedious process that involves submitting personal statements, attending interviews and keeping track of deadlines to meet.

Students said the schools also conduct regular talks on overseas universities, offer one-to-one consultations, and remind them of important deadlines.

Counsellors from HCI's education and career guidance unit discuss with students their educational paths and universities they can go to based on their interests and academic results.

"Throughout their time in HCI, students are exposed to information on programmes offered by various universities, and the entry requirements and application procedures of the institutions," said a school spokesman.

For example, at the school's annual education, career and scholarship fair, students get to hear from local universities and scholarship partners.

Apart from facilitating visits and information sessions conducted by foreign universities, the education and career guidance unit also works with alumni and university partners to support students in their journey towards higher education, said the HCI spokesman.

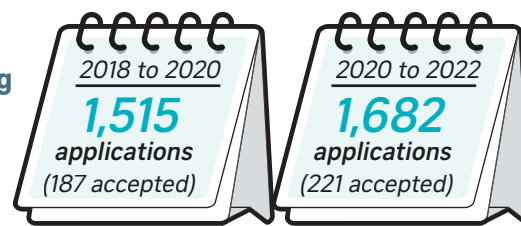
When contacted, RI declined to comment.

Other schools such as Nanyang Junior College and Victoria Junior College (VJC) have education and career guidance units and initiatives to prepare their students for overseas education.

Under VJC's Higher Education Programme, for instance, current students interact with alumni cur-

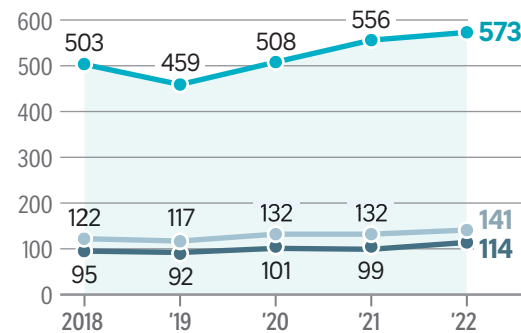
Getting into Oxbridge

More Singapore students heading to Oxford

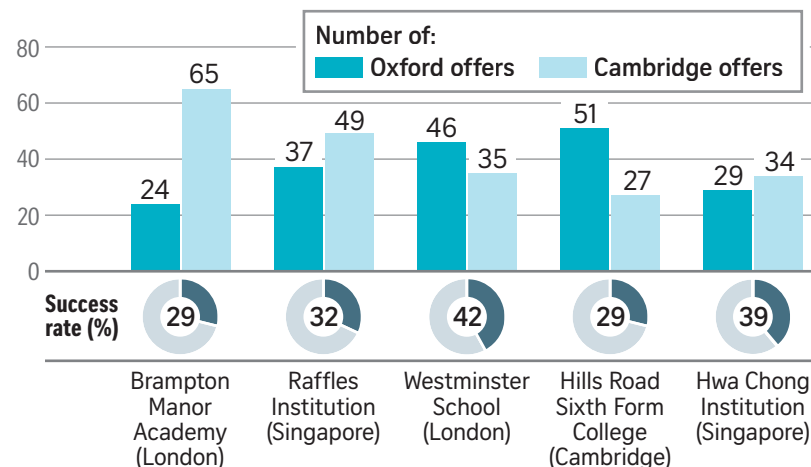


More Singapore students heading to Cambridge

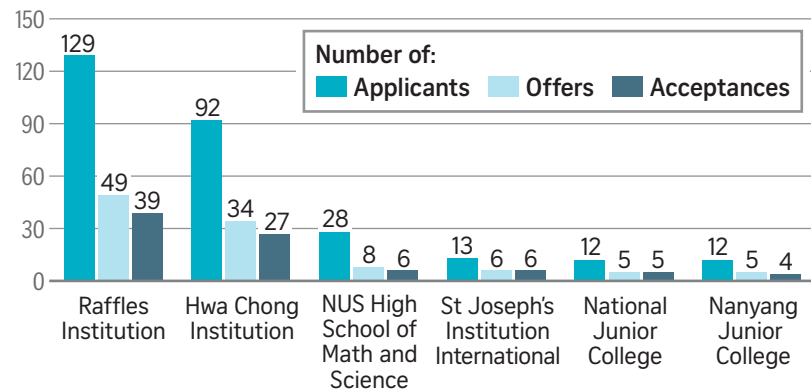
Number of applications
Offers
Acceptances



Top 5 schools with the most Oxbridge offers in 2022



Cambridge applications from schools in Singapore in 2022



Sources: UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, THE TELEGRAPH UK STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Hwa Chong Institution alumnus Ng Hui Ru is studying economics and management at the University of Oxford.



Anglo-Chinese Junior College alumnus Ashlyn Cheong is a law undergraduate at the University of Oxford.

rently studying abroad, and attend talks hosted by admission tutors from overseas universities throughout the year.

Students from other local schools like NUS High School of Math and Science and National Junior College also send in applications to Oxbridge, albeit in smaller numbers than HCI and RI.

In 2022, for example, NUS High School sent 28 applications to Cambridge and 21 to Oxford.

National Institute of Education Associate Professor Jason Tan said HCI's and RI's track records of sending higher numbers of students to Oxbridge would influence the aspirations of current students.

"For current (HCI and RI) students, there is the knowledge that many of their seniors went to Oxbridge. This impacts their motivations, and it is something to aspire to," he added.

Students' decisions are greatly influenced by the environment they are in, said Prof Tan, and both schools have a "high concentration of top-performing students" who are more likely to set their sights on Oxbridge and talk about these aspirations.

Being an Oxbridge graduate also holds "international prestige", he added, as such graduates may have a competitive edge in employment and have extensive networking opportunities that can translate into connections and job offers.

HCI alumnus Ng Hui Ru, 20, who is in her second year studying economics and management at the University of Oxford, started applying for overseas universities in June in her second year of junior college (JC) in 2021.

A part of the application process was "quite stressful", she said, as it coincided with her preparations for her preliminary examinations and A levels. In September 2021, she had to take her preliminary examinations while completing her personal statement as Oxford's submission deadline is earlier than

that of other British universities. She attended talks conducted by her school and external organisations to understand the application process.

One of the talks was held by the Oxford University Malaysian and Singaporean Student Association, where Oxford students and alumni shared their experiences with interested students.

Ms Ng received offers from both British and American universities, but she chose Oxford because it offered a course she was interested in, among other reasons.

Oxford is one of the few universities that offer a course in both economics and management, where others typically have either a pure economics or business degree, she said. Oxford is also known for its small-group tutorial system, where students can engage in in-depth discussions with their professors and subject experts.

Anglo-Chinese Junior College alumnus Ashlyn Cheong, 20, a second-year law undergraduate in Oxford, said her JC teachers supported her in the application process.

They helped review her personal statements and scholarship applications, conducted mock interviews with her and advised her on university choices.

Initially, she was hesitant about studying overseas due to the hefty annual fees of about £30,000 (\$51,000), but her parents encouraged her to go ahead.

They felt that having an Oxford degree in hand was worth it, as "learning from some of the best minds" would "broaden her horizons".

Ms Cheong also received offers from other British schools, including the University of Bristol and University of Nottingham, but she opted for Oxford. "I was already investing a lot of time and effort into my application and I wanted to shoot for the stars," she said.

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