

PRESS RELEASE



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

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START OF 2020 DIRECT SCHOOL ADMISSION EXERCISES

The Direct School Admission (DSA) exercise for admission to secondary schools and junior colleges (JCs) in 2021 will open for applications on 12 May 2020.

2. DSA provides a pathway for students to gain direct entry to secondary schools or JCs based on their diverse talents and achievements, beyond their performance at the national examinations. Upon admission, students can develop these talents further in their secondary schools or JCs. There are 146 secondary schools and 20 JCs participating in DSA this year.

Conduct of DSA Selection in view of the COVID-19 situation

3. To ensure the safety and well-being of our students and school personnel amid the COVID-19 situation, DSA schools will not hold any physical trials or face-to-face interviews as part of their DSA selection process. Instead, all interviews and selection for shortlisted DSA candidates will be done via electronic modes (e-modes). The e-modes will be conducted at the applicants' primary school for DSA-Sec, or the applicants' secondary school for DSA-JC, during the selection period. This avoids inter-mingling of students across schools, in line with safe distancing measures. It would also provide all students with access to video-conferencing capability, suitable venues and equipment, with standardisation of the setting and equipment to ensure fairness in the selection process. The selection period for schools for DSA-Sec is from 1 July to 14 September 2020, and for DSA-JC is from 29 June to 4 September 2020.

4. MOE has issued a set of guidelines to all DSA secondary schools and JCs on the conduct of DSA selection, to ensure the safety of students and staff, as well as fairness and transparency in the exercises¹. A list of FAQs on the conduct of this year's DSA selection can be found in the Annex.

5. To avoid creating additional workload for students, DSA schools will use e-modes which students are already familiar with for their selection assessment, such as conducting interviews through video conference and performance tasks. Students may also be asked during the e-interviews to perform simple tasks that can demonstrate their attributes and potential in a specific talent area, such as via simple pencil sketches or musical performances. The format and task will depend on the talent area and the school's selection criteria.

6. In addition to the interviews and selection via e-modes, schools will also consider a wide range of available information such as the student's Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) records and past achievements. They may also seek additional inputs

¹ The DSA selection principles are: transparency, objectivity, talent-specificity, inclusiveness and student-centricity.

from the student's current school. We recognise that there might be limitations in assessing students via e-modes for certain talent areas, like team sports. However, schools will adopt a holistic approach towards selection. More information on the DSA schools' selection criteria will be published on their respective websites.

DSA Commitment

7. Students participating in the DSA-Sec or DSA-JC Exercise are still required to take the PSLE or GCE O-Level examination respectively. As in previous years, students will be informed of the outcome of their DSA application and if an offer is made, they will need to decide whether to take up the offer by the indicated deadline, which will be before the release of the national examination results. A student who takes up a DSA-Sec confirmed offer is guaranteed a place in that secondary school, provided his/her PSLE results meet the minimum requirement for a course [Express / Normal (Academic) / Normal (Technical)] offered by the school. Students seeking entry to the Integrated Programme (IP) track must meet the minimum requirement for entry to the Express course. Similarly, for a student who takes up a DSA-JC offer, his/her GCE O-Level result must meet the eligibility criteria² for admission to the JCs.

8. In accepting an offer of admission through the DSA-Sec or DSA-JC, students are expressing a commitment to study in that school, to develop their talent in the chosen area, and should honour this commitment. Students successfully admitted to a school via DSA-Sec or DSA-JC will not be participating in the Secondary 1 Posting Exercise (S1 Ex) or Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE). They will also not be allowed to transfer to another school after obtaining their PSLE or GCE O-Level results.

9. Students should carefully consider their DSA application, based on their aptitudes and strengths, the school's academic and non-academic requirements, and the programmes available to develop their talents.

DSA-Sec Application

10. Students and parents may submit applications for DSA-Sec via a centralised online portal from 12 May to 5 June 2020. The link to the portal will be available on the DSA-Sec website (<https://www.moe.gov.sg/dsa-sec>) from 12 May 2020, 9:00am to 5 June 2020, 3:00pm. Applicants only need to fill in one online form to apply to multiple schools and talent areas, and their details will be provided electronically to the schools they apply to.

11. Application through the portal is free-of-charge and requires one parent's SingPass to login, for authentication purposes. Parents who do not have SingPass access can approach their child's primary school for assistance.

12. Each applicant can indicate up to three choices in the application form. For each choice, applicants will need to choose a secondary school and a talent area offered by that school. For a student with more than one talent area, he/she can indicate a different talent area for each of his/her three choices, and a maximum of two choices may be used for the same school.

² Please refer to <https://moe.gov.sg/jc-eligibility-criteria> for more information.

DSA-JC Application

13. Students applying for DSA-JC are encouraged to check the MOE DSA-JC website (<https://www.moe.gov.sg/dsa-jc>) for important dates and timelines, and to find out how the exercise will be conducted. Interested students should visit the respective JCs' websites for more information on application periods, procedures and selection criteria, which may differ across JCs.

Further Information

14. Students interested in the DSA-Sec and DSA-JC should visit the websites of the participating DSA schools for more details. They are advised to do so before submitting their application form. More information is also available at the respective MOE websites:

- DSA-Sec
<https://www.moe.gov.sg/dsa-sec>
- DSA-JC
<https://www.moe.gov.sg/dsa-jc>

Financial Assistance Schemes

15. MOE provides financial assistance through various schemes such as the MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) and Opportunity Fund, to ensure that students from low-income families are not deprived of developmental opportunities. In addition, students who are interested in applying to Independent Schools (ISes) can tap on the Independent School Bursary (ISB) and the Edusave Scholarship for Independent Schools (ESIS) to help defray the higher fees in these schools. The UPLIFT Scholarship is also available to provide an annual cash award of \$800 for eligible IS students from low-income families. More information on these scholarships can be found at <https://www.moe.gov.sg/admissions/scholarships>.

Applications for the Early Admissions Exercise (EAE)

16. Details on the applications process for the Early Admissions Exercises (EAE) to the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and the polytechnics will be announced separately.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF DSA SELECTION
IN VIEW OF THE COVID-19 SITUATION**

1. Why did MOE proceed with the DSA exercises this year? Should the DSA exercises be delayed until the COVID-19 situation has improved?

The DSA exercises provide students with the opportunity for admission into a secondary school or JC based on their diverse range of achievements and talents, beyond academic performance at the national examinations. As part of our continued emphasis on holistic education and broadening definitions of success, we want to preserve this pathway for this year's primary and secondary school graduates, and not delay the exercises unnecessarily.

MOE will work closely with schools to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety and well-being of our students and staff. This includes scheduling the use of simple video-conferencing tools. There will be designated rooms in the applicant's primary or secondary schools with ample space to ensure safe distancing during video-conferencing.

2. With the use of e-modes, will schools focus more on students' past achievements and records? Will this disadvantage students with little or no prior training or formal certification?

Our teachers and school leaders are experienced in conducting DSA selection, and will do their best to ensure that students are given due recognition for their diverse talents and achievements. When selecting students, DSA schools will continue to adopt a holistic approach, even with e-modes. Schools will consider various qualities and attributes and will not focus on students' past achievements alone. Schools will continue to shortlist students with potential, exemplary character and desirable personal qualities, regardless of whether they had prior training or formal certification.

These attributes can be assessed through e-modes or input from the students' primary or secondary schools. This ensures that students from less advantaged backgrounds, who may not have the resources to acquire formal training, are given due consideration.

3. How will MOE ensure a level playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

The e-modes will be conducted at the applicants' primary or secondary schools for standardisation of the setting and equipment available, to ensure fairness in the selection process. School staff will also be present to provide technical support where necessary, and there will be no assistance from others.

In addition, MOE provides financial assistance schemes, subsidies, scholarships and sets aside resources to ensure that no student with potential misses the opportunity to benefit from DSA due to financial concerns. Schools will continue to reach out to students from less advantaged backgrounds to ensure that they are aware of the support available to them and encourage those with talent and potential to apply for suitable DSA schools.

4. How will schools be able to accurately assess students' talents and potential without in-person trials and auditions, and given the suspension of the National School Games (NSG), Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) Arts Presentation and CCAs?

Due to the exceptional circumstances this year, in-person trials and auditions, and events like the NSG and SYF Arts Presentation cannot be used to assess students' talent, potential, passion and character. This means that besides using e-modes or input from the students' primary or secondary schools, the DSA schools will need to rely more heavily on students' track records in school and information provided in their application.

In-person assessments and placements in national events are only one of the many ways to assess students' competencies, dedication and training attitude.

Each school has its own criteria and assessment, but all schools look at a range of skills and attributes when shortlisting students. This includes students who demonstrate potential and personal qualities like resilience, which can be assessed through e-modes or input from the students' primary or secondary schools. These are all existing DSA selection practices that schools will continue to utilise.

5. Will DSA schools be allowed to conduct in-person trials and selection if the COVID-19 situation improves?

As the COVID-19 situation is fluid and may change from now till the end of the selection period, we will adopt e-modes of selection for the entire duration of the selection process this year, which is suitable for most scenarios.