SINGAPORE GLOBAL NETWORK

Study in Singapore: a guide for students of all ages

All you need to know about how to apply, fees, and more



Photo Credit: Ministry of Education

2024 Edition

Hi there!

Thinking of enrolling your child in Singapore? Or perhaps you're furthering studies yourself? There's no better place to start than Singapore.

Whether you're looking to further your studies here or weighing the options between local and international schools for your child, we've prepared this guide with everything you need to know about enrolling in a school here. navigating the housing market and getting around.

If reading isn't your thing, you can skip this and speak with one of our **regional representatives** directly, or **get in touch via our website.**

We look forward to seeing you in Singapore!

Warmly,
The Singapore Global Network

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Singapore's Education Philosophy

Since our independence in 1965, Singapore has transformed from an underdeveloped country to a first-world nation. Much of this success is underpinned by an education system that focuses on bringing out the best in our students, and promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

As of 2020, the education system has also undergone significant reform. Moving away from an emphasis on academic results, we've introduced greater flexibility to develop students' individual strengths – while retaining signature tenets of our education system, such as bilingualism.

By helping each student to access opportunities, become lifelong learners and carve out their own pathway to success, we are readying our students for a future that demands greater creativity, critical thinking, and resilience.

Quality Education in Singapore

1st **in the world**	**2nd** **in the world**	**>30**
in school quality [(i)]	*for science, mathematics & reading* [(ii)]	*foreign system schools* [(iii)]

Source: (i) HSBC, Expat Explorer Survey 2019; (ii) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) 2018; (iii) The Business Times, "Singapore seeks to attract more foreign system schools", 28 April 2015

Overview Of Our Education System

There are two types of schools in Singapore: public and private. While private international schools remain the dominant school of choice for expats, the affordability and value that Singapore's public school system offers has seen more expats enrol their children in local schools instead.

Don't worry though – Singapore has a world-class education system with highly-regarded public schools, so you can't go wrong either way.

Here's a quick comparison for your consideration.









Pre-school (3 years)

Starting from 3 years of age, children are encouraged to enroll in pre-school. These include half-day and full-day care programmes and kindergarten education.

The focus in the early years, centers around confidence building, social skills, as well as foundational literacy and numeracy.

Primary School (6 years)

Compulsory education for students starting from primary 1 at age 7.
This is the equivalent of elementary school in the US. The curriculum aims to provide children with learning opportunities that recognise their strengths and develop their potential. Students take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) at the end of Primary 6.

Secondary School (4-5 years)

The equivalent of junior high to high school in the U.S., students are exposed to a wide range of academic subjects and non-academic activities.

Students can plan their own pathways catering to individual strengths and interests. At the end of it, they can take either the GCE 'O'-Level examinations or the GCE 'N(A)'-Level examinations before pursuing further education.

Further Tertiary Education (2–3 years)

Students may:

1. Attend a Junior College (JC), which leads to the GCE 'A'-Level Examinations
2. Pursue a diploma at a polytechnic, sports or arts institution
3. Pursue vocational studies at schools such as the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) or SHATEC, The Industry School for Culinary and Hospitality Talents

Thereafter, they may further their studies at one of Singapore's top-ranked local universities or pursue other private higher education.

Comparing Public & Private Schools



Public Schools

Ranges between $7,052.51 to $16,365.61 annually up to the pre-university level (including miscellaneous fees, as at December 2020).

Secondary School

Singapore Citizens
$4.89 per month;
$58.66 per annum

Singapore PR
$159.81 per month;
$1,908.64 per annum

International Students
up to $587.71 per month;
up to $7,052.51 per annum

Primary School

Singapore Citizens
$11.28 per month;
$135.36 per annum

Singapore PR
$293.29 per month;
$3,519.48 per annum

International Students
up to $1,097.96 per month;
up to $13,175.51 per annum

Pre-University

Singapore Citizens
$14.66 per month;
$175.97 per annum

Singapore PR
$356.08 per month;
$4,273.02 per annum

International Students
up to $1,363.80 per month;
up to $16,297.92 per annum

*The rates of school and miscellaneous fees payable are reviewed by the Ministry of Education and individual schools from time to time. Use this **fee calculator** to calculate the possible school fees for your child.*

Fees

**A comparison of pre-university fees only*



Private Schools

Ranges between $9,776.35 to $37,601.33 annually up to the pre-university level. We've extracted some fees from a couple of the more popular and highly regarded international schools to give you an idea of the fees you can expect, but we urge you to check the individual school's website for more details.

Singapore American School

Pre-school
$23,298.54

Kindergarten to High School
S$29,452.37 to $33,195.21

Application Fee
$1,880.07

Enrolment Fees
$5,632.68 for US passport or green card holders,
$7,242.02 for students not holding US passport or green card
Re-enrolment fee: $1,880.07 per year
Facility fee / building fee / capital levy / development levy: $5,552.21

Australian Internation School

Nursery to Pre-school
S$11,154.06 to $23,673.80
(3 to 5 days half or full sessions)

Prep to Year 12
$26,188.58 to $31,910

Application Fee
$376.01

Enrolment Fees
$2,150.80
Facility fee / building fee / capital levy / development levy: $2,011.67 for Early Years students; $4,828.01 for Elementary and Secondary school students

The rates of school application, enrolment and miscelleanous fees indicated are per annum.

Admissions process

Refer to schools' websites, attend Open House events, or speak with us or other expat families to find out more about the different entry requirements of public and private schools.

International parents are advised to apply for multiple schools to increase their child's chances of securing a placement in a school of their choice.International students applying for Primary 2 to Primary 5 and Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 are required to sit for the Admissions Exercise for International Students (AEIS) or the Supplementary AEIS (S-AEIS). **Click here** for more information on applying to a public school.

International students must own a visa and have their general paperwork in place to apply for admission to private schools. While the admission process could differ between schools, it generally includes a minimum grade requirement, entry tests for language, math and science, and in some cases, an oral interview screening test. **Click here** for a checklist of application guidelines for a Singapore student visa.

School Terms and Hours

The academic year starts in January with school breaks in March, June, September and December. Public schools typically start at 7am and ends at 1.30pm, with a 30-minute break in between. Supplementary and extra-curriculum activities are often held between 2pm to 6pm.

The academic year starts in August with school breaks in June, October, December and March. Private school typically starts at 8am and ends at 3:30pm, with more frequent and lengthier breaks. School terms and hours are subjected to each individual private school's curriculum.

Curriculum

Public school curriculum follows the Singapore curriculum, which focuses on subject-based bending (SBB). This prepares secondary school students to sit for the N-Level or O-Level exams,or JC students to sit for the A-Level exams.By 2024, the SBB scheme will aid students in learning at their own pace, and a new national exam and certification framework will replace the N-Level or O-Level exams.

Private school curriculums include a wide variety of curriculums, from Advanced Placement (AP), National Curriculum, to International Baccalaureate and International Curriculum.



"If you have young kids, Singapore is a great place to get to know Asia while giving them safety and adventure, without sacrificing stability for the children. Public transportation is amazing and everything's so close. It's just easy living.

Marina Lopez
Freelance journalist who moved to Singapore in 2021

Overview Of Preschools In Singapore

From play-based learning, bilingual immersion programmes to long-day childcare options, you will have no trouble finding a preschool that meets your child's needs.



Understanding different preschools in Singapore

With so many preschools in Singapore, it can be challenging to understand the difference between childcare, anchor operators and alternative kindergartens. Here's a quick comparison between the types of preschools in Singapore.

	Pedagogy	Eligibility	Cost (Monthly)	Link to website
Ministry of Education (MOE) Kindergartens	- State-run kindergartens whose core pedagogies are Purposeful Play and Quality interactions - Focuses on developing bilingualism and holistic development through integrated learning - Generally open for only 3 hours - Meals and snacks vary	Citizens and Permanent Residents (PR) only	$150 (citizens) $300 (PRs)	MOE Kindergartens
Anchor Operators	- Childcare chains who receive government subsidies - Offers discounted rates on infant care and kindergarten programmes - More closely matches culture of local primary schools than international preschools	All	Varies between schools; check respective websites	- My First Skool - Sparkletots - MY World Preschool - Skool4Kidz - E-bridge Preschool (EtonHouse)
Childcare Centres	- Privately-run and regulated by the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) - Open to children >18 months - Some serve infants as young as 2 months - Open from 7am-7pm; may be open for half-days on Saturdays - Provides 2 meals per day	All	Subsidies are available for citizens for all childcare centres	List of childcare providers
Private Kindergartens	- Privatively-run and regulated by MOE - Focuses on readying children for local primary schools	All	Varies between schools; check respective websites	List of private kindergartens
Alternative Kindergartens	- Privately-run and regulated by MOE - Progressive pedagogy with structured educational philosophies - Three main chains: Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf	All	Varies between schools; check respective websites	Montessori for Children **Reggio Emilia:** - Between Two Trees - Blue House International School - Odyssey the Global Playschool - The Children's Place - White Lodge - EtonHouse - Waldorf

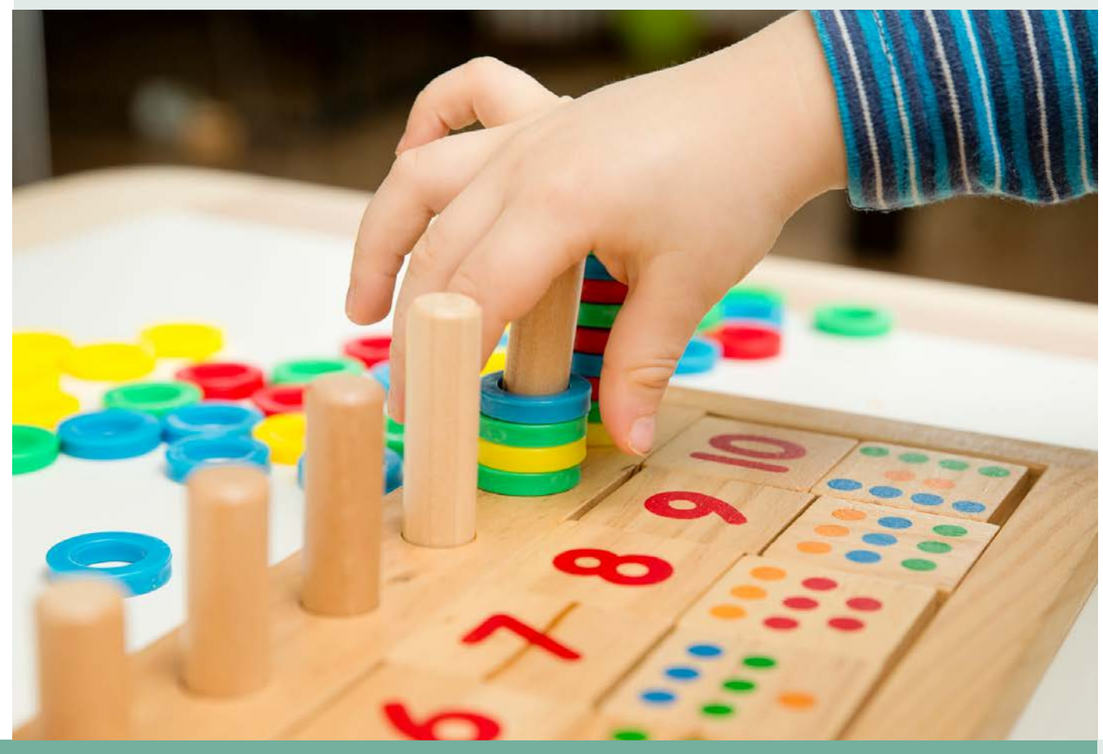
10 questions to ask when choosing a preschool



01

Location

How accessible is the preschool? A preschool that is too far away might tire your child out with the commute.



02

Curriculum

What type of programme does the preschool offer? While some preschools follow a particular educational system (e.g. Montessori, Reggio Emilia or IB Primary Years Programme), others take a more flexible approach to learning and playing.

03

Language Programme

What language does the preschool teach? You could choose a full Mandarin-immersion programme, a bilingual programme or an English-instruction school that teaches Mandarin as part of the programme. It's always helpful to ask how much second language tuition is included in the day.

04

Special Needs

Could your child do with extra personal attention, or do they have different learning abilities that may require early intervention? This Guide to Special Education in Singapore includes information on government support for differently-abled students as well as a roundup of special needs schools and early intervention programmes.

05

Philosophy & Values

What are the school's philosophies and values? It is recommended to find a school that aligns with your family's values and parenting philosophy to avoid teaching approaches that might contradict your own.

06

Accreditation

Find out whether the preschool is recognised by the government. Preschools with the SPARK accreditation show that the preschool has been evaluated. This accreditation was introduced by the Ministry of Education to raise the standards of preschool education in Singapore.

07

School hours

How long is the school day? Some preschools work off a strict half or full day timetable (9am- 12pm or 9am-3pm) while others take more of a daycare approach and offer longer days (7am-7pm).

08

Facilities

What facilities does the preschool offer? While some preschools will have snazzy classrooms, others offer more in the way of outdoor play spaces.

09

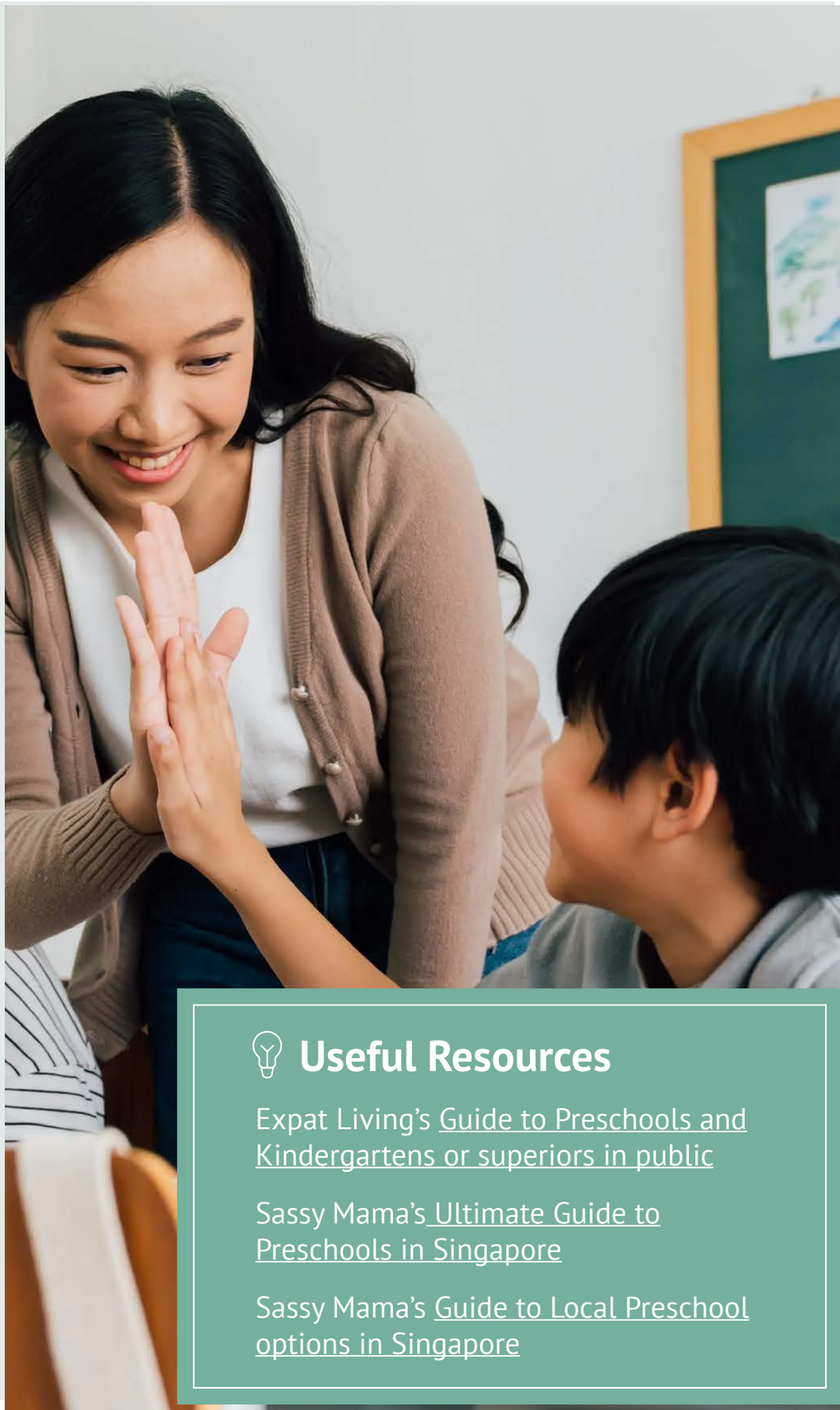
Teachers

ttend open houses or visit the school to get to know the teachers in person. Ensure that they are qualified, both in background and education. Also ask about the teacher to student ratio and how they update parents about their child's progress.

10

Cost

How much do the fees cost per term? Prices vary significantly amongst preschools. Always ask if holiday programmes are included in the termly fees — some schools have long holiday breaks while others are in session nearly all year round.



Useful Resources

Expat Living's Guide to Preschools and Kindergartens or superiors in public

Sassy Mama's Ultimate Guide to Preschools in Singapore

Sassy Mama's Guide to Local Preschool options in Singapore

Overview Of International Schools in Singapore

With over 80 international schools in Singapore, choosing a school in an unfamiliar country can be a challenge. Here's how you can get started.

Key characteristics of international schools in Singapore



Most school carry internationally-recognised certifications such as International Baccalaureate® (IB) programmes, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) qualification and International Primary Curriculum (IPC), among others

Certain schools may follow nation-specific curricula. This includes:

- German Abitur offered at German European School Singapore
- Korean curriculum offered at Singapore Korean International School
- Australian curriculum offered at Australian International School and Integrated International School

Some schools offer pre-school education for children from as young as two months through to five years old. However, Pre-schools within international schools may not match the small class sizes and low teacher to student ratios; plus, they will only offer pre-school childcare during term-time.

10 questions to ask when choosing an International School

Where is the school located? Is it a manageable commute to the campus from home - and what are public transport links like?



What is the curriculum, and will it suit my child's educational needs and the future plans of our family?

What are class sizes like, and is there a high teacher-to-child ratio?

What is the language programme at the school? Is there a compulsory second language?

What are the school facilities like for educational, sporting and cultural pursuits?

> It's important not to prioritise or eliminate schools merely on the basis of curriculum. Each school has its own unique characteristics and curriculum is rarely the most important.
>
> **Ruth Benny**
> *Founder, Top Schools*

What kinds of school excursions are offered? Might there be opportunities for visits to foreign countries for volunteering and community engagement? What about excursions on a local level?

Can parents get involved at the school? This can be a great way to meet new people and become a part of the community.

What are the school's methods of communication with parents?

What kind of extracurricular opportunities are offered as a balance to my child's academic studies and to help widen his or her educational experience?

What is the term calendar like? When does school start, and when are the holidays?



*For a comprehensive snapshot of international schools in Singapore, refer to this article we produced with Expat Living Hong Kong **here**.*

Overview Of Tertiary Institutions In Singapore

For over a decade, Singapore has ranked at or near the top of international league tables alongside education heavyweights of the likes of South Korea, Japan, China and Finland. The OECD's most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) saw Singapore outrank every other participating nation in all three major literacy disciplines: science, reading and mathematics.

Depending on a student's strengths and aspirations, they may choose to further their post-secondary studies in one of our many tertiary institutions.



These include:

- Polytechnics
- Junior Colleges and Millenia Institute
- Singapore Sport Schools (SSP), School of the Arts (SOTA)
- Institute of Technical Education (ITE)
- LASALLE, NAFA, University of the Arts Singapore
- Government-affiliated educational institutes
- Autonomous universities

Regardless of which path a student may choose to take, rest assured that they will be honing their skills in a world-class education institution.

Helpful resources

Overview of Post-Secondary Education in Singapore

Expat's guide to studying in Singapore

Special Education For Differently-Abled Students

Depending on their individual needs and abilities, students with special needs may attend a mainstream school or a Special Education (SPED) school – run by Voluntary Welfare Organisations and funded by MOE and the National Council of Social Service – or other private and international schools.

SPED schools offer differentiated programmes for children who are unable to attend mainstream schooling. The curriculum aims to help these children become independent, self-sufficient and contributing members of society. Apart from classroom learning, the students also receive additional support from paramedical professionals.

For detailed information on support offered by schools for students with special needs, ***click here*****.**



Kickstarting The Enrollment Process

Here's a quick guide to enrolling you or your child in one of our schools.

Documents checklist

While admissions timings and registration requirements may vary between school, they generally require the following documents as a start.

- ○ Completed and signed application form (this may be completed online or as a hard copy, depending on the school)
- ○ Application fee (the average fee in Singapore is $1,500 but check the school website for the exact cost)
- ○ Passport size photographs of your child
- ○ Photocopy of child's birth certificate
- ○ Photocopy of child's passport
- ○ Photocopy of parents' passports
- ○ Photocopy of the child's immigration status/visa (Dependant Pass, Student Pass, Permanent Resident Re-Entry Permit, Diplomatic Pass or Immigration Exemption Order)
- ○ Photocopies of parents' immigration status/visa (Employment Pass, Dependant Pass, PR Pass, or Diplomatic Pass)
- ○ Official Transfer Certificate or report cards for the current year and two years prior (officially translated and notarized if not in English)
- ○ Any speech/language, educational psych testing, or learning needs evaluations/records (if applicable)
- ○ Employment letter of guarantee (if your employer is paying school fees)
- ○ Legal custody papers (if parents are divorced)

**Note: All documents supplied must be in English or a certified translation.*

Application Process

Now that you have your documents in order, here's what a typical application process is like.

01

Apply at your school of choice (with documents in order)

02

Complete school placement test and await Letter of Acceptance (LOA)

If applicant passes the placement test and the school accepts them, the school will issue a Letter of Acceptance (LOA). The LOA will indicate in-principle acceptance of the applicant to the school. The applicant may then proceed to ICA to apply for a student's pass with this letter (see Step 3)

Acceptance to the school is subject to the applicant obtaining and returning with a student's pass from Immigration and Checkpoints Authority(ICA) within 2 weeks from date of issue of the LOA.

Applicants who are holding a Dependant's Pass (DP) or an Immigration Exemption Order (IEO) are not required to apply for a student's pass from ICA. They may be admitted by the school immediately upon passing the placement test.

03

Apply for Student Pass at the Immigrations Checkpoints Authority (ICA)

The LOA is valid for 2 weeks from date of issue. Upon receiving the LOA, the applicant should proceed to ICA immediately to apply for a student's pass. Applicant must produce the original LOA endorsed by the School to ICA.

04

Return to School within 2 weeks with Student's Pass

The applicant must return to school with a valid student's pass within 2 weeks from the date of the LOA. The applicant will forfeit his/her admission to the school if he/she does not return within 2 weeks.

For Children of S Pass and Work Permit (R Pass) Holders Only

Applicants with at least one parent working in Singapore on S Pass or Work Permit (R Pass) must pass a qualifying test (Assessment of General Ability conducted by Civil Service College Consultants) before they can be considered for admission.

Applicants who have not taken the qualifying test may apply online at **General Ability Test Singapore website.**

The applicant will receive by post a letter on the Outcome of the Qualifying Test. If the letter shows that he/she is eligible to seek admission to a Singapore school, he/she can then approach a school of choice with the letter to apply for school admission



Enrolling In School As A Returning Singaporean

As a returning Singaporean Citizen or Permanent Resident (PR), many support schemes are available to support your child's education journey.

Support schemes for Singaporeans going Overseas

Leave of Absence Scheme
Secure your child's current school place even while your child is overseas.

Find out more

Boarding Award Scheme
For parents working on residing overseas, place your child in a boarding school for him or her to live in a safe environment while pursuing his or her education.

Find out more





Available services for Overseas Singaporeans

Immersion Programme
Enrol your child in a short-term immersion programme to experience school life in Singapore and ease his or her re-entry to the system.

Find out more

Student Learning Space (SLS)
Apply for access to SLS for your child to keep in touch with the national curriculum while overseas.

Find out more

School admission options for Singaporeans returning Home

Assured School Placement
Apply for Assured School Placement where MOE can gurantee your child a place in a primary or secondary school with vacancies near your residence.

Find out more

Centralised School Placement Exercises
Find out about the School Placement Exercise for Returning Singaporeans (SPERS) and Supplementary Placement Exercise (SPE).

SPERS-Secondary and SPE

SPERS-JC/MI & Post-Secondary Options

Direct School Admission
Apply for Direct School Admission for Secondary Schools (DSA-Sec) or Junior Colleges (DSA-JC).

DSA-Sec

DSA-JC

Scholarships & Financial Assistance

In Singapore, education is a basic right that all children are entitled to. For students in need, there are many schemes in place through which they may receive financial support.





For Singaporeans

Post-Secondary Education Account (PSEA)

All eligible Singaporean citizens and PRs have a PSEA which is automatically opened. You may draw on this to (1) Pay for your child or their siblings' approved programmes at approved institutions or (2) Repay government education loans and financial schemes.

Edusave Account

All Singapore Citizen students have an Edusave account which receive an annual contribution for their educational use.

Financial Assistance

Singapore citizens in financial need may receive assistance from MOE on school fees and other expenses.

Government Loan Schemes

Designed to help students finance their diploma, undergraduate or post-graduate programmes, these support students looking to further their tertiary education.

Merit-based Awards & Scholarships

Ranging from programme-specific scholarships for pre-university to industry scholarships, there is a wide range of merit-based scholarships for students in need.

For Non-Singaporeans

Merit-based Awards & Scholarships

International students may qualify for select merit-based scholarships, such as the MOE Tuition Grant, ASEAN Scholarships, A*STAR Youth Scholarship, Nanyang Scholarship and other scholarships offered by external organisations.

Financial Aid

External organisations, such as universities like the National University of Singapore, also offer financial aid which cover tuition fees, living expenses and hostel feels.



Photo Credit: Kari Shea

Helpful Resources

1. A Comparison of School Fees in Singapore (2021)
2. Scholarships for Singaporean and International Students
3. School Fee Estimator Tool



Our Parting Words

We hope that this guide has been useful in peeling back the curtain on what it's like to work in Singapore.

You may also be interested in:

- Guide to living n Singapore
- Guide to working in Singapore
- Guide to relocating to Singapore

If you would like to chat instead, we are always happy to connect you with one of our **regional representatives** or put you in touch with someone who can share their experience of enrolling themselves or their children in school here.

Just **get in touch via our website** and we'll take care of the rest. We hope to welcome you here soon!

Warmly,
The Singapore Global Network