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Preparing for university



Singapore University of Social Sciences final-year undergraduate Goh Zhen Han divides his time between schoolwork, working part-time and serving as the president of the Supply Chain Interest Group at the university. He is also part of the orientation organising committee for freshmen this year. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

TIP
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MARGOH ZHEN HAN, a final-year supply chain management student at Singapore University of Social Sciences

UNIQUE EDUCATION

With many local universities starting their new academic year soon, here are eight tips on how to get the most out of university life



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As the new academic year starts next month for most local universities, soon-to-be undergraduates may be thinking about what campus life will be like.

First-year undergraduates have to adjust to greater academic autonomy, coupled with an emphasis on preparing for their eventual career.

Students are often required to take on job attachments, community service and overseas job placements or exchange programmes. Having an undergraduate LinkedIn profile, learning to write resumes and professional training are commonplace.

Here are eight tips for freshmen on how to get the most out of university life.



Students at the National University of Singapore's University Town Hall in an October 2020 photo (left). Undergraduates should prepare well for class, and use the time then to ask professors anything they do not understand. PHOTO: ST FILE

1 Understand the challenges
Associate Professor Ho Han Kiat, dean of students at National University of Singapore, says: "One of the common challenges freshmen face is academic transition as they discover how their autonomy as learners increases significantly from pre-tertiary to university. "Freshmen may experience a heightened sense of independence as learning becomes modular-

based with no fixed classes, and contact with classmates – some of whom they may meet only once during four years of academic pursuits – is more transient." Freshmen may struggle with "time-management, decision-making and competition with their peers as they balance academic demands and other activities such as residential life and co-curricular activities (CCA)", he says.

2 Manage your time for school and interests
Mr Goh Zhen Han, a final-year supply chain management student at Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), says the freedom – whether it is to choose one's academic modules or internships, or even to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities – can be confusing to navigate. He says: "You have to build up

your time management skills and find pockets of time to do what you want.

"There won't be anybody forcing you to study or find jobs." The 25-year-old is part of the organising committee for orientation, which started this month, for the freshman cohort of more than 950 full-time students.

He also works part-time in the supply chain sector, and is the president of the Supply Chain Interest Group at SUSS, which comprises students majoring in the same subject.

3 Use class time to ask questions
Do not do the bare minimum in preparing for lectures, tutorials or seminars at university, where undergraduates have far fewer classes, compared with their earlier years in education.

Mr Goh recommends "studying before class" to optimise face time with professors in the fast-paced university environment.

"Class time is the time to ask questions or clarify anything that you don't understand," he suggests.

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