

TEMBUSU  
COLLEGE

Tembusu College

Regardless of faculty, department, or major, being a member of our college is an opportunity for you to grow as an individual while discovering more about yourself and those around you — and doing so within a community that is itself always evolving.



## Promoting Multi-Disciplinarity

Core to college values is an open-mindedness and curiosity that transcend any one interest or mode of thinking. A Tembusu collegian is not a narrow partisan of his or her particular discipline but someone who can navigate different disciplines classically described in terms of science, technology, arts and social sciences and draw connections among them. Many of our fellows research, read and write in multi-disciplinary fields that are related to examining the relationship between science, technology and people. We, as a

College, ask questions about how society, culture, and politics shape our views, choices and knowledge about the world which we live in. We ask these questions to understand the possibilities and challenges for people living today and in the future. And to re-imagine what a better world could or might be. For the fellows and students of Tembusu College, these sets of questions are not distinct and cannot be adequately addressed by adopting a singular disciplinary perspective or paradigm.



## Engaging the World

Our Rector, Professor Tommy Koh, declared early in the college's history that he intended to "Bring the world to Tembusu, and bring Tembusu to the world." Tembusu has since become a college with a global reputation, and one that aspires to make its members – whether local or foreign – feel part of a global community. That means, among other things, engaging with global issues and with people from other parts of the world. Each year we take in a small cohort of foreign exchange

students from a wide variety of countries, and likewise encourage our Singaporean students to spend time abroad, either through university programmes or other opportunities. Our fellows also span the globe in their national origin and life-time experiences. And of course having Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large as our Rector means that diplomats and figures of international reputation are often invited to speak at the Tembusu forum.





## Helping People and Species in Need

Human and animal societies are under great stress in the 21st century, and as privileged and knowledgeable people, it is our responsibility, if not obligation, to help where and when we can. Being named after a tree and containing Houses named after endangered animals, Tembusu College feels a special commitment to biodiversity, the natural environment, and sustainability. This inculcates a particular awareness among our students of the dangers of habitat loss, the illegal trade in wildlife, and the ethics of human-animal relations – all highly relevant issues in Southeast Asia. Our students are also involved in projects, both within Singapore and in neighbouring countries, dedicated to actively helping the vulnerable – especially children and youths, the elderly, and those who have been marginalised in and by society.

## Developing Creativity

Tembusu is a lively place for the arts, and provides a space conducive for people who are nurturing an interest, skill, and talent in that direction. From music to dance to photography and theatre, the college creates space for – and encourages self-discovery through – the arts as part of everyday life. We also teach a course on mural painting, sponsor open-mike performances, and maintain a fully-equipped music room.





These elements of our ethos are not discrete — we strive as far as possible to activate them in combination. That can mean, for example, promoting an art project which helps conserve endangered species, mounting a multi-disciplinary course on a global problem which can be approached from multiple perspectives, or planning a project to engage with marginalised or underprivileged communities.



What you'll encounter  
at Tembusu College is  
*a community — and a space —  
where people and ideas come together.*

It's a place where you'll meet others who are different, unique, and singular in their own right. A place where you'll have the opportunity to collaborate with people who love what they do and are good at it. Above all, you'll explore and develop yourself, and your personal interests, while living and learning with those around you.



*“Alone, we can do so little;  
together, we can do so much.”*

– Helen Keller

Tembusu College aspires to be a community where individuals find a home. We are a community which brings forth opportunities for students to learn from each other, and from fellows and staff of the college, by providing them with different situations, contexts, and environments, to interact and learn in.

We share the responsibility of creating such a space where we can grow and support each other, as well as help those in need in the society. Building such a culture of care and inclusivity requires members of the college to adopt an open mind in embracing

differences and inculcating mutual respect for each other.

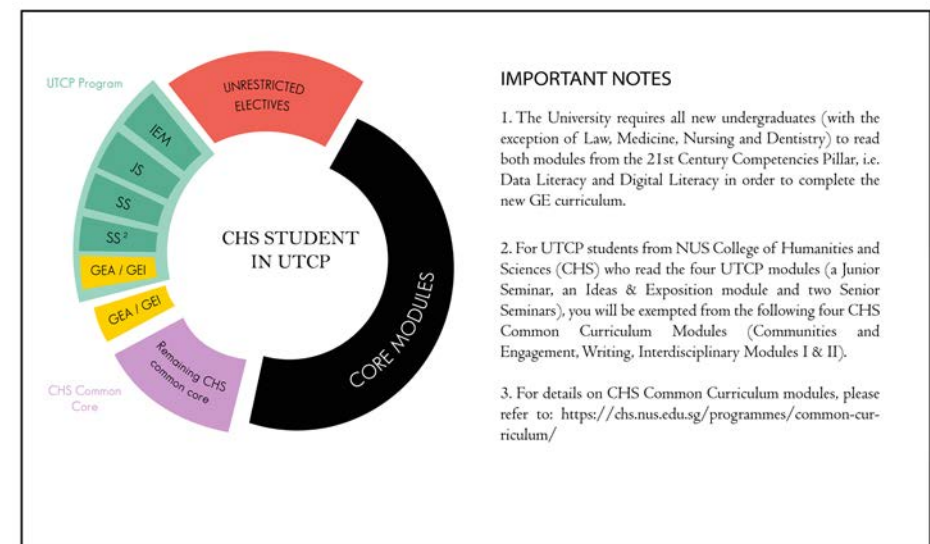
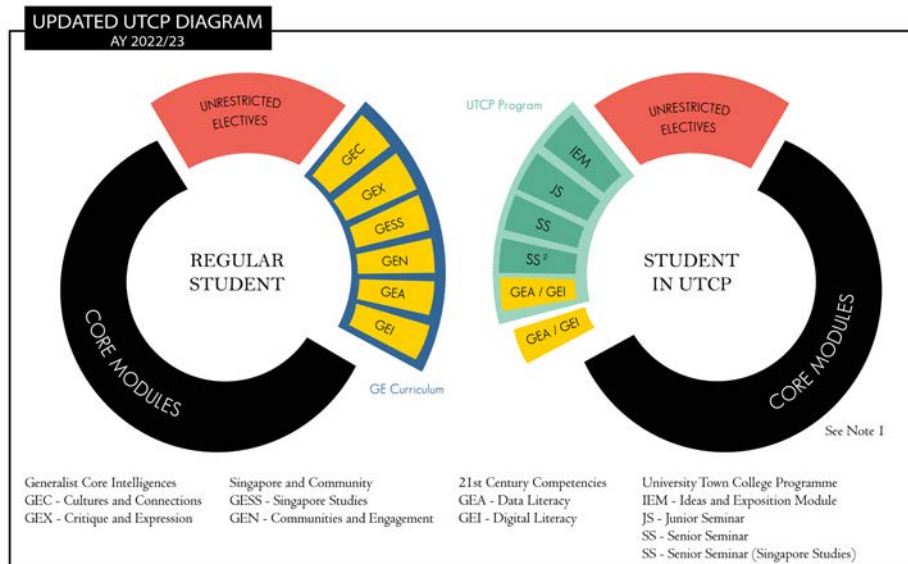
Members of the college are at the heart of such a culture. Beyond the structural guidelines is the need for every resident to live by such an approach to others and to ourselves, in order to create a safe and welcoming environment that the college embodies.

The classes you will take at Tembusu College contribute to your existing NUS graduation requirements, so are not 'extra' courses.

Most degree programmes at NUS require you to read six modules outside your home department. This is where the certificate-granting University Town College Programme (UTCP) fits in — five modules you read over your two years at Tembusu College fulfil these General Education Curriculum requirements (GEC). Four of these modules are taught in the college context.

In your first year, you'll read one Junior Seminar and an Ideas & Exposition Module (IEM); in your second, two Senior Seminars and a fifth module meeting the Data Literacy or Digital Literacy requirement.

The major difference between college classes and others, lies in the learning experience they offer — you'll have the opportunity to engage in small group seminar-style learning that's closely integrated with residential life. Upon completion of the UTCP you'll be provided with a certificate in addition to your degree.



## Junior & Senior Seminars

Our seminars bring together students and Fellows from different backgrounds, and disciplines. The result is an interaction between participants that is steeped in diversity and an array of ideas that open new perspectives on the world. Small classes — of approximately 15 persons — let us spend time listening to each other as individuals, and give more time to develop, discuss, and play with concepts and ideas.

The forms of the Junior and Senior Seminars are similar — they are interactive, discussion-based, and formatively assessed without any sort of final exam. The only difference is that Junior Seminars are taught by individual lecturers — and are thus structured around their interests and specialisations — while Senior Seminars are sometimes taught in teams who engage with a common topic that invites multi-disciplinary interaction and perspectives.

## Ideas & Exposition Modules

Run by the Centre for English Language Communication, these classes are based on a diverse range of engaging topics taught by writing specialists. Particular attention is paid to honing your writing, critical thinking, and communication skills, thereby helping you better develop and express your thoughts, especially in the genre of academic writing.



The seminars at the college cover a wide range of topics, such as the Internet and media, concepts of time, artificial intelligence, gaming, medical innovations, climate change, criminology, natural history, programmes in mural painting, critical theory, negotiation, and other themes of specialisation for our fellows.



**Having a formal curriculum is an important facet of our college, but it only encompasses one aspect of education.**

From the beginning, we have paid much attention to developing an informal, non-compulsory, 'out of classroom' curriculum creating activities defining the college experience. While our dining hall and other spaces within the college provide for many conversations and informal encounters between our students and fellows, this deeper level of engagement requires planning and resources. Thus, a big part of the college experience happens in this 'middle space' between

faculty-led seminars and activities led wholly by students (such as clubs, interest groups, and the like).

What we have created in this space is true *out-of-classroom learning*: structured education-centred experiences designed either by fellows—in areas that they were personally interested and invested—or ideally by fellows together with a group of students who share similar interests.



## Teas

Over the semester, you'll be invited to the Master's Common Lounge or virtually on online platforms to meet and chat with guests — both local and international. Our guest list places a value on diversity and typically includes politicians, diplomats, artists, writers, poets, scientists, and activists. The only thing we ask of guests is that they bring something interesting to our community. Hosted by the Master of the College, these sessions offer the possibility for you to meet, mingle, and hear from our guests in an informal, small-group setting.

In addition to teas sponsored by the Master, students and fellows alike are able to invite and host peers and guests — anybody they believe can bring something to and enliven the college community. Fellow teas often involve guests related with their seminars while student tea guests have ranged from interesting and successful alumni, to CEOs of start-up businesses, to local social activists and entertainment personalities.



## Curios

For the more literary-inclined among us, there is *Curios Magazine*. It is a thematic collection of essays, poetry, short stories, photography and illustrations, created and curated by our very own community in Tembusu. We feature works from the perspective of the Tembusu community that are interwoven into a critical and intimate examination of society, community and human experiences. Written and assembled by the people of the college, *Curios* hopes to encourage our community to think, reflect and contribute to the Tembusu thought collective.

## marginalities

For those who want to contribute to the community, *marginalities* is an initiative that aims to raise awareness about different forms of marginalities in Singapore and in the region. With a special focus on refugees, as well as migrant workers and underprivileged communities in Singapore, you are invited to contribute, even in a small way, to help these individuals overcome their difficulties. *Marginalities*

has organised talks, reading groups, discussion sessions, exhibitions and brought together a human library, migrant poetry competition and volunteer programmes in collaboration with local and international organizations from the humanitarian sector, such as HOME (Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics) and many more.

## Techne

For the 'tinkerers' among us, *Techne* provides the perfect avenue to experiment, tinker and even to break! Based in the new Blank Canvas makerspace, *Techne* provides a space and equipment for making things, tinkering, prototyping, and, sometimes, breaking stuff. We hold workshops that teach students new skills like 3D

printing, physical computing, DIY alarm clocks, repairing household items, and how to experiment with properties like light and sound. Students also work on longer-term projects, often in groups. Recently, we have an associated working group exploring the ethics of AI.



## Urban Farmers

For those with green fingers, *Urban Farmers* welcomes you! We began embarking on the aim of building sustainable urban food gardens within the college in 2013. In an increasingly dense and urban environment, *Urban Farmers* offers the opportunity to stay connected to nature and to appreciate that growing one's food is a time-consuming process that requires

lots of effort and patience. Our urban farmers experiment with different farming systems, such as hydroponics, aquaponics, and traditional soil planting. We bond over farm excursions and tending to the garden at Level 3, which we have christened the *Tembusu Misty Garden*. We also hold mini-events on farm-related topics and to share our labour of love.



The flagship event of our college  
— *The Tembusu Forum* —  
takes place twice a semester, and is hosted  
and moderated by our Rector,  
Professor Tommy Koh.

Compelling, important, and  
occasionally contentious, issues  
— often suggested by students —  
are taken up, discussed, and  
debated by eminent personalities  
at the forefront of their respective  
fields.

Hearing the different views of experts will help you develop and expand your own thoughts on the crucial issues of the day. There are few forums like the Tembusu Forum where all the questions to our prominent guests are directed by students, allowing you to practise your public speaking skills.





Throughout your stay with us, you'll be part of one of the five houses in the College. Named after endangered Asian animal species in their indigenous names, *Gaja, Shan, Ora, Tancho, and Ponya* are smaller, more intimate communities within the larger college community; each house has its own traditions and sub-cultures – ones that you'll experience, and perhaps also influence.

## Formal Dinner

At least once a semester, the Master of the College hosts a formal dinner: which is an opportunity for the entire community to come together. And perhaps more importantly, it is a chance for you to dress up and look glamorous.



Students selected to stay in the College for a third year continue to explore their potential — primarily through our  
**‘Senior Learning Experience’.**



You will engage in a specially-designed programme in your extended stay, working under the supervision of a fellow in a small-group setting. This programme might involve giving back to the community, developing career-relevant skills or engaging in academic research.

A small number of students will have the opportunity to be with the college for a fourth year. During this year, you will be mentored by a fellow or

staff member of the college to collectively craft a learning experience that may involve contributing to the College in some way. As a senior member of the community, you will also be responsible for imparting the values of the College to newer Tembusians, challenging and empowering them to step up and try new things.





## Rooms

You'll have your own room which comes furnished with everything you might need to work and rest in comfort. Whilst all the rooms are identically designed, you have the choice of a room along the corridor, or within a six-room apartment which comes with an additional living area to relax and chat with suite-mates.

## Dining Hall

Eating together is a significant part of communal living. Breakfasts & dinners are included in your college fee to ensure you start and end your day well. Upon entering the Dining Hall, you'll immediately notice the tables are arranged for conversation — often the most enjoyable part of eating. This is where you unwind and recuperate with friends, fellows, and guests, before and after classes. You can be assured you'll never be starved — of choice, at least.





## Reading Room

The Reading Room is a space beautifully furnished that features a wide variety of books across a range of genres and disciplines — the perfect place to spend a leisurely evening. Reading Pods, amongst many other events centred around books, are often held here as well.

## The Oasis

Take a break and wind down from your daily stresses in this quiet, comfortable, and safe space, alongside your peers and dear friends.

## The Abbey

Go to the Abbey and you'll find it equipped with guitars, drums, keyboards — everything you might possibly need to make music. Get together with your friends; jam and sing as much as you want.

## The Box Office

If you're interested in coffee, film or just looking for a place to chill, you'll definitely want to head over to The Box Office! Whether you want to relax, catch up and bond over making coffee, or a movie (or two!) — there's no better place to do it than in Tembusu's own home cinema.

## The Blank Canvas

As its name suggests, the Blank Canvas is a place for the creative and artistic minds. Be it photography, visual arts, bringing forth something new — exploring all aspects of maker culture, as it were — it is the space, the place, where students can explore new ideas, materials, and techniques.



Interest groups are where you can cultivate your hobbies, develop your skills, and most importantly, learn to meet with and work with new people.

We have, amongst more than 50 others, a group dedicated to discussing the political questions of the day, another to the craft of making the perfect cuppa, a photo and video production team, various dance and theatre ensembles, and numerous sports and musical groups.

We also have several groups that embrace the call of helping others and are concerned with positively affecting, and changing, communities both locally and abroad.





# ADMISSIONS

To join the University Town College Programme at Tembusu College, you will have to submit an essay with your application. We will contact you to arrange an interview if you are shortlisted. The interview is an important moment, as it is a chance for us to get to know you better and learn about you as an individual — as you also learn about us a little more. This is also an opportune moment for you to ask any questions you might have about the programme, or college life in general.

We are open to students from all faculties, and admissions are based on four criteria:

**Essay**

**Interview**

**Interests and talents**

**Willingness to contribute to the college community**

For students who require financial aid, grants, scholarships, and bursary schemes are available.

Admissions open in March

For more information on application procedures, visit [tembusu.nus.edu.sg/admissions](https://tembusu.nus.edu.sg/admissions)

Please go to our website at [tembusu.nus.edu.sg](https://tembusu.nus.edu.sg) for the most up-to-date information.

## CONTACT US

### **Tembusu College Office**

University Town, NUS  
28 College Avenue East  
#BI-01

Singapore 138598  
[tembusu@nus.edu.sg](mailto:tembusu@nus.edu.sg)

(65) 66012150

### Operating Hours

Mondays to Thursdays 8.30am to  
6.00pm

Fridays 8.30am to 5.30pm

Closed on Saturdays, Sundays and  
Public Holidays

Instagram: [@tembusucollege](https://www.instagram.com/tembusucollege)



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