

Local varsities offer NSF's options for early entry: Mindef

THE Ministry of Defence (Mindef) is mindful that national service requires our males to delay their personal pursuits, and will not make the duration of full-time national service longer than necessary ("Enable NSF's to enter varsities earlier" by Mr Han Tiew Siew, June 1; and "Gap months' useful break for local students" by Mr Benny Tan and "Allow overseas students to complete remainder of NS after graduation" by Mr James Teh, Forum Online, last Friday).

The current two years of full-time national service are necessary to train our national servicemen to the required level of proficiency, so that they can be part of the standing force to meet operational needs.

The enlistment for full-time national service takes place during every quarter of the year to accommodate various cohorts of students, who complete their studies in different institutions at different times. Apart from operational considerations and practical capacity constraints, individual circumstances such as the individual's medical condition and physical fitness will also affect when he enlists and subsequently completes his full-time national service.

Mindef grants disruptions to full-time national servicemen to allow them to commence their

university studies at the same time as the NS-liable males in their local school cohort. We abide by the principle that individuals in the same local school cohort, but in different enlistment intakes, can proceed for their degree studies at the same university at the same time.

This ensures that they are no better or worse off than their peers in the same cohort, who have also served national service.

In terms of entry to local universities, there are more options now. The National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University have special terms, starting between April and June each year, to allow national servicemen to enrol earlier before the main matriculation in August, to take modules that count towards their degrees.

In addition, the Singapore University of Technology and Design has a unique academic calendar that starts in May, ahead of other universities, and its eight-semester course can be completed in 3½ years.

The Singapore Institute of Technology also offers a January intake for some of its programmes.

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