

OUR
POLY

The polytechnics can be an attractive choice for students after secondary school. In the first of five special reports that will run over five weeks, The New Paper looks at what is available for prospective students at the five polytechnics here

School is COOL

In the first part of this series, we showcase the vibrant campus life in polytechnics. Five polytechnic students tell **Linette Heng** (linheng@sph.com.sg) how they juggle education and after-school activities

Nanyang Polytechnic's second-year Industrial Design student Tommy Cheong was confused when he first saw a number beside the "Current Grade Point Average (GPA)" on his results slip. Tommy, 19, who scored 3.66 in his first semester, said: "My former classmates now in ITE, which also uses the GPA system, told me that I did well, but I didn't realise why at first."

The GPA, a grading tool used by polytechnics, may seem foreign to new students.

A graduating student's academic performance is assessed by a Cumulative Grade Point Average, which is calculated based on all graded modules taken over three years.

This means that students who want to do well have to perform consistently in their studies. (See story at right.)

"It allows three years of effort to contribute to your final results, but it also helps that one exam won't screw up your final score," said Raphael Ng, 19, a biomedical science student at Singapore Polytechnic.

Project work and course work make up a large percentage of the grade.

Juliana Chia, 19, a communications and media management student from Temasek Polytechnic, admitted that she was worried about the emphasis on projects at first.

"I'm good at memorising, but I'm not sure if I'm as proficient at the technical stuff. But it turned out okay because I enjoyed the subjects and course work that came along with it," said Juliana.

Despite the academic demands, polytechnic life allows students the opportunity to pursue other activities.

Kenneth Gwee, 20, a biomedical science student at Republic Polytechnic



WHAT IS GPA?

The Grade Point Average (GPA) will be a common acronym in a polytechnic student's life.

It is an indication of a student's academic performance and may determine opportunities such as overseas attachments and a place in university.

The polytechnics adopt a four-point scale grading system. An A would be a 4.0 while an F would be a 0.

At the end of each semester, the average score of all the graded modules will be the GPA.

Students can look at the semester's GPA to assess their performance for the particular semester and a cumulative GPA will tell them how they have fared so far in polytechnic.

(RP), does volunteer work.

"I was introduced to volunteering in junior college and I take part in independently organised activities in RP," he said.

Nurul Suhaila, 19, who is in the national silat team, can still take part in competitions while studying at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film and Media Studies.

"Know your goals and work towards them. Practise good time management," she advised.

Read about the students' school life on the next two pages.

NANYANG POLYTECHNIC

Street dancer a shy student in class

Nineteen-year-old Tommy Cheong is a soft-spoken teenager who transforms into a confident street dancer after class every day.

He is the president of Foreign Bodies, a street dance hip hop group at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP). It is one of the most popular groups among the wide range of 80 CCAs in the school.

"I was in the basketball team when I was in secondary school, but I always had an interest in dance. I went through two auditions before I finally got in," said Tommy, who joined the club in his first year at NYP.

The dance group ventures into different genres of dance including breakdancing, popping, locking, house and dancehall.

About 300 to 400 students audition each year to join the CCA. Many of the dancers in the group are self-taught and they are coached by an alumnus who is a professional choreographer.

Tommy, who spends most of his days in school, splits his time between running the CCA and doing his school work.

The second-year Industrial Design student is on the School of Design's director's list, which means he is one of the top students in the course.

"My grades are mostly dependent on projects

rather than exams, meaning I have to be consistent in my work," said the former Normal (Academic) student at Hillgrove Secondary.

"My parents wondered why I was spending so much time in school. But my school results in the first year took everyone, even myself, by surprise. I'm motivated to keep working to maintain my grades and aim even higher."

Tommy said he is glad that he is able to combine his passion for dance and design at NYP.

"I plan to pursue Industrial design further and I will come back to help out with Foreign Bodies even after I graduate," he said.



HIP: Industrial Design student Tommy Cheong is the president of Foreign Bodies, a street dance hip-hop group at Nanyang Polytechnic. TNP PHOTO: JEREMY LONG