Hall rooms vs YOG: let the contest begin

Strict criteria for students to get a room in hall during the upcoming vacation, because of Games

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WITH fewer than 3,500 rooms available for students over the vacation, it will be tougher to find somewhere to stay on campus this summer.

Most hall rooms will be reserved for the athletes and coaches participating in the Youth Olympic Games in August. As a result, students wishing to stay on campus must fulfill strict criteria.

"Only those who are attending academic programmes during the summer break and do not have a home in Singapore will be considered for hostel accommodation during the May to August break," said Ms Angela Shang Lai Peng, Deputy Director (Student Accommodation) of the Student Affairs Office (SAO).

Only school-approved industrial orientations, attachments, internships and Special Terms are taken as academic programmes.

The strict adherence to both criteria is necessary as only six of the 16 halls will be available for students.

As these six halls (Halls 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7) can accommodate only 3,277 people, those who do not fulfill requirements are advised to look for accommodation off-campus.

They could also consider temporarily sharing a room with two other tenants, said Ms Shang.

However, students also raised questions about the feasibility of this option as permission of both tenants have to be obtained beforehand and the current rooms are too small for three occupants.

Ms Shang was speaking with three other speakers at the YOG & YOU dialogue session organised by the Students’ Union, which aimed to provide a channel for students to understand and enquire how they could be affected by YOG, which will take place from August 14th to 26th.

This is the second such dialogue session, after the first almost 12 months ago.

Approximately 80 students attended the session, held at LT19A on February 11th, and raised questions after question about hall accommodation and shifting.

“I wish to know more about how I would be affected by the moving out as I stay in hall and would like to make to necessary preparations,” said Tay Xiong Sheng, 25, a second-year student from the School of Biological Sciences.

The tight rules meant some difficult decisions had to be made.

For example, the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) has brought forward its Design and Innovation Project from the summer break to the current semester. It will not be a programme considered for hostel application.

Consequently, second-year EEE student Vinal Gopalakrishnan, 25, is deciding between signing up for Special Term and returning to his home country during the four-month break.

He explained that his main worry is the date of announcement of the application. "It’s really difficult to find rented houses and with a student budget it gets even more difficult. The panel answered my question, but the reply was disappointing," he said.

Another issue raised concerned the start of semester for the next academic year.

The date chosen is August 30th, just four days after the end of the YOG. Students are worried as this means that they will have to move in to the halls on August 29th, Sunday, when hall offices will be closed.

One of the speakers, YOG consultant Mr Chong Peng Jek, said that SAO would look into opening the hall offices on that Sunday to help students’ moving in.

He added that even though SAO would prefer a later start, the date was decided by the top management of the university.

He understands that NTU does not want to compromise on the quality of education, and hence kept the semester at 13 weeks.

While most questions asked were targeted at hall issues, there were a few on the accessibility of NTU during the break.

Some hall orientation committee members wanted to find out if they could have access to places such as the Sports and Recreation Centre for the Freshmen Orientation Camps.

They were not given concrete answers, though SAO did assure students that the libraries will be open for students’ use during the holiday.

The session, which lasted for around two hours, received good feedback from the students.

Sean Tan, 22, a third-year student from the School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, felt that though the session could have been improved to better cater to students’ needs and inquiries, it was informative.