

Relief package by NTU to help students facing financial difficulties amid coronavirus outbreak



A new \$2 million OneNTU Fund will support students who are Singapore citizens and permanent residents. PHOTO: ST FILE

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SINGAPORE - The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has launched a private philanthropic programme to help its students, with the university's president Subra Suresh and his wife, Mrs Mary Suresh, making a personal gift of \$100,000 to seed and anchor the fund.

"We will use the new NTU Priorities Fund and other sources of philanthropic support to alleviate the financial burden of our students, so that those needing immediate help can continue to focus on their studies and their future," said Professor Suresh, an American scientist who began his presidency at NTU in January 2018.

In a statement on Wednesday (April 22), the university said the fund is part of a new NTU Covid-19 Relief Package to help students who may be facing financial difficulties amid the outbreak.

It is the university's first such package of assistance, and comprises three new coordinated measures to assist students.

NTU said that the fund will help its neediest students who come from families whose monthly household income per capita is \$690 or less, and/or are experiencing an emergency situation.

Such emergency situations include the student losing a part-time job that supported their education, and the student's family breadwinner suffering an income loss because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To fund the schemes, NTU is using its own university resources together with available sources of public funding and private philanthropic gifts.

A new \$2 million OneNTU Fund will support students who are Singapore citizens and permanent residents.

Eligible students may get an interest-free advance of up to \$1,500 each, which they will reimburse the university within two years of graduation.

The NTU Priorities Fund, which will be driven by private philanthropy, aims to offer financial assistance to the neediest NTU students from Singapore and abroad who are most affected by the coronavirus.

Recipients of the fund will pledge to "pay it forward" within two years of graduation and return the interest-free cash assistance to the university.

"By nurturing this 'evergreen fund' as a university resource to benefit future generations of students, NTU aims to perpetuate the cycle of philanthropy so that future students who need assistance can continue to receive financial aid," the statement said.

Priority will be given to those enrolled full-time at NTU.

Students can complete a single online application process for financial assistance.

The type and amount of financial aid will depend on each applicant's circumstances and needs.

Meanwhile, to assist final-year PhD and master's students who face difficulties completing their research work within this semester because of the disruptions caused by the closure of their laboratories, NTU will extend their candidature with a full waiver of tuition fees for up to one semester.

It will cover PhD and master's students receiving their final year of NTU scholarship, and all other research students in their final year of candidature.

NTU's announcement comes in the wake of a freeze in tuition fee increases for Singaporeans enrolled in government-subsidised undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for the 2020 academic year.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and tertiary education institutions had announced this on April 1, saying it applies to all six autonomous universities.

This is in line with the [one-year deferment of government fee increases](#) announced under the Resilience Budget.

The six universities - NTU, National University of Singapore, Singapore Management University, Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore Institute of Technology, and Singapore University of Social Sciences - will also step up efforts to reach out to students in financial need.

Under the fee hike freeze, Singaporean undergraduates who enrolled in academic year 2019 or earlier will continue to pay what they paid during the 2019 academic year for the remaining duration of their course.

New Singaporean undergraduates starting university in academic year 2020 will also pay the same fees as those who enrolled in academic year 2019, and this will likewise apply to the whole period of their undergraduate studies in university.

This also applies to current and new postgraduate students, but for them, the deferment in fee hikes will only apply for one academic year.

MOE and the six universities will review their fee schedules before the start of the next academic year.

Source: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/relief-package-by-ntu-to-help-students-facing-financial-difficulties-amid-coronavirus>