NTU Social Science Challenge 2024

Introduction

Welcome to our inaugural NTU Social Science Challenge 2024, an exciting platform for students and professionals to showcase their analytical skills and policy evaluation prowess. This competition aims to foster innovative solutions to real-world policy challenges while providing participants with a unique opportunity to engage in rigorous debate, collaboration, and networking.

This is a significant platform for students and professionals to engage in critical thinking, collaboration, and advocacy for positive change. We invite all participants to rise to the Challenge, unleash their creativity, and contribute to developing innovative policy solutions that will shape resilient societies for future generations.

This is open to all Pre-University students from Junior Colleges (JCs), Polytechnics, Millennia Institute (MI) and NUS High School of Math and Science to participate in the NTU Social Science Challenge.

Objective

Through this NTU Social Science Challenge 2024, participants will be able to deep-dive into policies in Singapore that adversely impact various demographics while gaining skill sets related to policy evaluation and analysis of Singapore society and its demographics.

Participants will also have the valuable opportunity to learn from NTU's Professors and current undergraduate students through a series of Masterclasses and networking sessions. Throughout the Challenge, student Mentors from the School of Social Sciences will be attached to each group, offering support in their preparation. Additionally, groups will be able to receive feedback on their Policy Memo during certain checkpoints from our Professors and Mentors to aid their learning.

The NTU Social Science Challenge will focus on four specific groups in Singapore society: low-income families, single parents, migrant workers, and youths at risk.

Schedule of Key Deadlines and Events

The competition will consist of multiple stages to enhance participants' abilities to analyse, synthesise, and communicate their policy proposals effectively.

Date	Key Events	Details/Remarks
22nd March - 20th April	Sign-Up Period for Participants	Representative teachers should sign-up for the finalised groups from each group at the following link: https://forms.office.com/r/DMYmEXBEAd
25th May	Kickstart Day	- Held from 9.30AM to 4PM in NTU - Opening ceremony and briefing - Meet-the-Mentor Session 2 Masterclasses by NTU SSS Professors
26th May - 10th July	Academic Support	One representative from each group can pose content-related queries that will be answered by the Competition Advisor, Dr. Kwa Kai Xiang to sssclub-ssc@e.ntu.edu.sg.
19th June (2359H)	Submission of Policy Memo Draft for Feedback	One representative from each group should email the draft that will be vetted by the Competition Advisor, Dr. Kwa Kai Xiang to sssclub-ssc@e.ntu.edu.sg
22nd June	Online Check-In Session	- Held online through Zoom from 10AM to 12PM - Participants can seek guidance from Mentors and receive feedback on their progress. - Participants are also free to pose any questions they have on their Policy Memo and Final Presentation as needed.
30th June (2359H)	Final Submission of Policy Memo	One representative from each group must email their final Policy Memo to sssclub-ssc@e.ntu.edu.sg
13th July	Finale Day	- Held from 9.30AM to 6.30PM in NTU - Lunch and network working session with School of Social Sciences (SSS) Professors and Mentors - Final presentation by all participants - Awards and prize presentation ceremony

Masterclasses

The Masterclasses conducted by SSS Professors on Kickstart Day aim to shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by the four vulnerable demographics and research skills and best practices that will be useful for the deliverables. Participants will be allowed to look into these issues from the lens of different social science disciplines such as Economics, Sociology, Psychology, and Public Policy and Global Affairs (PPGA) and be exposed to the interdisciplinary pedagogy that serves to enrich the student's competition experience.

Competition Deliverables

1) Policy Memo (due 30 June 2024 2359H): Participants are to research and evaluate a pre-existing policy affecting a chosen target demographic, and provide policy recommendations according to their research and data collection. Word count of 2500-3000 words are to be followed, excluding citations.

2) Final group presentation (on 13 July 2024): Participants are to present their research and policy recommendations to the judging panel, with the use of visual resources (eg. slides, skits, videos). The presentation should be no more than 8 minutes.

Before the final submission, participants can propose a comprehensive outline or draft of their policy memo and submit it to Dr Kwa Kai Xiang by 19 June 2024 at 2359H. He will give feedback within 5 working days so that the students can improve on their policy memo before their final submission on 30 June 2024.

Policy Memo Questions

Students are to choose one out of four of the following questions targeting different demographics in Singapore:

1. According to the Minimum Income Standard 2023 Report, a study by NTU and the LKY School of Public Policy, researchers contest that "around 30% of working households still earn less than the amount required to meet basic needs". (Ng, K.H. et al, 2023) Though a heavily contended notion, what are our society's current policies and have they helped low-income families? How can we further improve them to alleviate financial burdens and allow for upward mobility in the future?

2. According to statistics published by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), the number of single-parent families in Singapore stood at 6% in 2020, a decreasing trend. Slightly more were due to separation rather than being widowed or never married, and a large predominance of them were women. (MSF, 2022) According to the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), single parents often struggle with housing, employment, finances, childcare, and social inclusion. (AWARE, 2024) With regards to this, what policies have been crafted by the Singaporean government to address these issues, and how can we make them more effective?

3. COVID-19 highlighted many structural problems faced by migrant workers in Singapore, including restricted job mobility, poor workers' safety, ostracism, and weak wage protection. (Fordyce and Kathiravelu, 2022) How should the government address these challenges, promote their social and economic inclusion, and enhance their well-being?

4. "Youth at-risk typically refers to those who may be seriously anti-social, homeless, who may have dropped out of school, taken to substance abuse or engaged in illegal activities. The factors that place these young people at risk in the first place, such as poverty, family dysfunction and disturbed neighbourhoods, are often not factored into the equation." (Nagpaul, 2019) With that said, how efficient are our current policies at supporting at-risk youth, and how would you recommend lending them a greater hand?

Participants are to analyse the issues affecting the four demographics and recommend enhancements to the existing policies to address policy gaps.

The aforementioned questions are subject to change, and the finalised ones will be shared officially after sign-ups.

Organisation of Policy Memo

The total word count for the policy memo is 2500 to 3000 words. The word count for references and acknowledgement segments will not be counted. The participants' policy memo is recommended to have the following segments and to follow the suggested word count for each of them:

Title

This should be centred on the topic and not be an advertising slogan.

Introduction (200 words)

- What are the identified problems affecting the demographic?
- What is the urgency in addressing them?
- How significant are they?

Explanation of problems faced by demographic (200-300 words)

- What are the possible root causes of the problems faced by the demographic?
- Are their problems short-term or long-term?
- Is their situation getting better, or is it worsening?

Gathering of secondary data (400-500 words)

- What kind of data are you collecting?
- Where is the secondary data being extracted from?
- Are the sources reliable and credible? If yes, how so? Otherwise, what are some biases and do they pose a problem for your research?
- How would you present and organise your findings?

Secondary data interpretation and analysis (400-500 words)

- What trends do you observe based on the compiled data?
- What do they suggest?
- Was the analysis as expected, or was it surprising and how so?

Analysis of current policy and insights on the gaps (700 words)
- What are the pros and cons of current policies?
- Why are current policies not working?
- What are the gaps in current policies?

Policy recommendation and explanation of how it addresses the aforementioned gaps (700 words)
- What are some new policies or improvements to current policies that you would propose to alleviate the situation of the demographic?
- How do they differ from current policies?
- How do they improve the situation?

Conclusion (200 words)
- What are your closing arguments?

References
- List your references in alphabetical order of last names of the author.
- Each reference should follow APA 7th edition format: include the author's name, year of publication, title of publication, relevant chapters and pages (if applicable), and journal/newspaper/website URL.
    - Eg. Kwanda, T. (2013). *Rethinking Conservation: the Notion of Manage Change in Conservation Theory and Practice in Singapore.* In: 2nd International Conference on Urban Heritage and Sustainable Infrastructure Development. https://repository.petra.ac.id/id/eprint/16464

Acknowledgement
List the names of those who have assisted the team in one way or another while writing the policy memo. The more significant persons should be listed first.

Presentation Guidelines

Participants are to present their research and policy recommendations to the judging panel consisting of SSS Professors on Finale Day, 13 July 2024, using visual resources. Examples of visual resources include but are not limited to slides, skits, and videos. The presentation should be no longer than 8 minutes. When 8 minutes is up, there will be no extension of time and the team will be signalled by the judging panel to end their presentation with a closing statement.

Award Prizes and Categories

Prizes will be awarded to the top-performing teams, recognizing their exemplary contributions to policy innovation and analysis. In addition to cash prizes, participants will receive certificates of achievement.

Groups performance	Awards/Certificate Tiers
Top 5 teams	Top 1 ($1000, Certificates, Medals) Top 2 ($750, Certificates, Medals) Top 3 ($500, Certificates, Medals) Top 4 (Certificate, Medals) Top 5 (Certificate, Medals)
Most innovative policy proposal team	Certificates, Medals
Most creative presentation team	Certificates, Medals
Best Policy Memo team	Certificates, Medals
Top 15 teams	Certificate of Distinction

Judging Criteria

Policy Memo Grading Rubrics (50%):

	Judging Criteria		Approximate Weightage (%)
1	**Analysis of Current Policy**		**25**
	Exhibits a comprehensive understanding and thorough analysis of the current policy.		
2	**Understanding of Demographic Circumstances**		**25**
	Exhibits a comprehensive understanding, integrates relevant statistics, data, and effectively addresses unique challenges.		
3	**Clarity and Innovation of Ideas**		**20**
	Presents a clear, well-articulated proposal with innovative goals and solutions.		
4	**Integration of Social Sciences Concepts**		**15**
	Effectively integrates relevant social sciences concepts, demonstrating a deep understanding.		
5	**Research and Evidence-Based Approach**		**15**
	Demonstrates a robust research foundation, references credible sources, and provides strong support for arguments.		
	TOTAL		**100**

Presentation Grading Rubrics (50%):

	Judging Criteria		Approximate Weightage (%)
1	**Analysis of Current Policy**		**30**
	Exhibits a comprehensive understanding and thorough analysis of the current policy.		
2	**Communication Style**		**30**
	Delivers a clear and compelling presentation that leaves a lasting impression on the audience.		
3	**Audience Engagement**		**20**
	Exhibits the ability to connect to the audience on an emotional and intellectual level.		
4	**Presentation Innovation and Creativity**		**20**
	Uniquely presents ideas and concepts through the innovative use of visual aids.		
	TOTAL		**100**

Registration Details

1. Participants should sign up in groups of **five**, with a maximum of **three** groups per school.

2. Schools are to sign up through the registration link https://forms.office.com/r/DMYmEXBEAd.

3. Schools are required to fill out the forms on behalf of their students to ensure compliance with the limit of 3 groups per school.

> 3.1. Only 1 response should be submitted per school by the teacher representative.

4. Registration will close on **20 April 2024 at 2359H.**

5. The Organising Committee will be in touch to confirm your school's participation.

Acceptance of Rules and Regulations

By registering their interest in the NTU Social Science Challenge 2024, all institutions and participants agree to the following competition rules and regulations.

1. Teams are not allowed to change their team members after the registration has been confirmed by the Organising Committee.
2. Teams are encouraged to complete the Challenge independently and refrain from seeking help from friends and teachers. To maximise their learning, teams should refrain from discussing with one another.
3. To qualify for the finals, all teams must retain all their team members who registered from the start.
4. Teams must attend both the Kickstart Day and Finale Day held in NTU.
5. As this is a physical event held, SSS will not be held responsible for the loss or damage to personal belongings. Students are required to look out for each of their team members and their personal belongings. Any incidents of concern are to be reported immediately.
6. If a team or team member decides to withdraw from the competition, the Teacher Representative should inform the organisers immediately.
7. There will be picture/video taking for publicity purposes during the conduct of workshops and events. Participants in the Challenge automatically agree to this.
8. Any materials and information used or shared with participants are solely for the event. Any reproduction and reuse of materials is not allowed unless otherwise permitted.

The organisers reserve the right to decide on the issues pertaining to the NTU Social Science Challenge 2024 that are not explicitly stated in the rules and regulations.

Information and Contact Details

For more information, kindly refer to <website> and our official Instagram page @ntu_sss.

Should you have any other queries, feel free to email us at ssclub-ssc@e.ntu.edu.sg.

FAQs

Q: What is the role of the Mentors?

A: The Mentor's role is to ensure that the group is on schedule and act as an advisor to the group. The Mentors can provide guidance for the group's projects by assisting with academic or admin enquiries.

Q: Is it compulsory to attend all of the stipulated days?

A: Yes. Attending the programmes in person will provide you with some insights regarding policymaking and equip you with the necessary skillsets to navigate this competition.

Q: What is the purpose of having a Virtual Check-In Session?

A: It provides SSS Mentors with the platform to provide feedback on the students' work and track their progress in preparation for the submission deadline on 30 June 2024. Moreover, Participants are encouraged to seek advice on presentation slides and scripts in preparation for Finale Day on 13 July 2024.

Q: How will the Mentors be assigned?

A: The NTU SSS Club will assign the Mentors to the Participants. Prior to selection, mentors are screened and trained to ensure that they are competent in rendering assistance to the students. The Assigned Mentors will be conveyed before Kickstart Day.

Q: Are meals provided?

A: Food will be provided on both Kickstart Day and Finale Day. Teacher Representatives are to indicate it in the sign-up forms for students with food allergies or dietary requirements.

Q: How many participants are in a group, and what number of groups can each school send?

A: Each group should consist of 5 participants. The maximum number of groups that each school may send is 3. Once registered, teams are not to withdraw from the competition.

Q: How long is the registration period?

A: Forms will close on 20th April 2024. Schools should fill up the forms on their students' behalf to ensure no more than 3 groups from each school sign up.

Q: What if I cannot make it on one of the days?

A: Participants are expected to inform their assigned Mentors, and Mentors will follow up with the organisers on the required course of action.

Q: Can I send multiple Policy Memo drafts to Dr. Kwa Kai Xiang for vetting?

A: No. Students are only allowed to send in one draft before 19th June 2024. Subsequent feedback and advice on the Memo can be sought from Mentors.

Q: Will there be more support in terms of resources?

A: Once sign-ups close, students will be sent a resource package that will help with research and understanding of Singapore's public administration and policy-making processes.