

Understanding High School Curricula in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania: Insights for Global Higher Education Recruitment



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Agenda

- **China**

- Bruce Hammond, Tsinglan School

- **Hong Kong S.A.R.**

- Beth Contreras, Hong Kong International School

- **Indonesia**

- Angeline Ang, Sekolah Pelita Harapan Lippo Village

- **Singapore**

- Tannaz Daver, Saint Joseph's Institution International

- **Thailand**

- James Russel, NIST International School



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

China

Understanding High School Curricula



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024



Headwinds for International Education

- Tightening Regulation
- Contraction in 2nd and 3d Tier Cities
- Expat Brain Drain
- Geopolitical Tensions
- Economic Downturn



More Students Remain in the National Curriculum



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

US Dominance Replaced By Mult-Destination

- AP Impacted
- More Schools Implement A Level
- Appetite for US Highly Selectives Remains
- Rise of Alternate Destinations in Europe and Asia



Hong Kong S.A.R.

Understanding High School Curricula



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024



Hong Kong, SAR

Beth Contreras
Counselor Department Lead
Hong Kong International School



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Hong Kong Education: Overview

Families are guaranteed 12 years free tuition for all students

- Kindergarten: not free
- Primary: 6 years
- Secondary: 6 years – three years junior secondary & three years senior secondary

Cantonese is the language of instruction in many of the local schools with courses being taught in both English and Putonghua.

Education expenditure has increased by over 48% in the past decade



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Hong Kong Education: Types of Schools

Unique Institutions (Student Count)	Type of Secondary School	Definition	
31 (18,882)	Government	Funded and operated by the government, no fees	Hong Kong Government Schools
358 (233,896)	Aided	Funded by the government, Run by a voluntary body (religious or charitable organization), minimal fees	
2 (1,337)	Caput	Receives government assistance on a per student grant, minimal fees	
59 (45,870)	Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS)	Private, subsidized by the government; Increased flexibility in governance, curriculum & admission fees charged	
62 (9,052)	Other Private	Privately run, admittance based on educational performance, fees charged	
54 (19,464)	International	Recognized by the EDB, primarily for non-local students, fees charged	

Total 521 Secondary Schools (328,474 Students)



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Hong Kong: Exam

Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Exam

- Taken in spring of secondary year 6
- 4 Core Subjects + 2-3 Electives
- Electives: (Category A)
 - **Language:** Chinese Lit, Lit in English
 - **Pers/Soc & Hum:** Chinese Hist, Economics, Ethics & Religion Studies, Geography, History, Tourism & Hospitality,
 - **Science:** Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Science (integrated),
 - **Technology:** Business/Accounting/Financial, Design & Tech, Health Management & Social Care, Info & Communication Tech, Tech & Living
 - **Arts:** Music, Visual Art
 - **Physical Education**
- Electives Category B: Applied Learning
- C: Other Language subjects

Component of the SS Student Programme		% of Time Allocation
Core Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chinese Language• English Language• Mathematics• Citizenship and Social Development (in lieu of Liberal Studies)	≤50%
Elective Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subjects from KLAs• Applied Learning• Other Languages	≥20%
Other Learning Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moral and Civic Education• Community Service• Career-related Experiences• Aesthetic Development• Physical Development	≥10%

Exams receive a 1-5 score with top marks earning 5* and 5**



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Hong Kong Education: International Schools

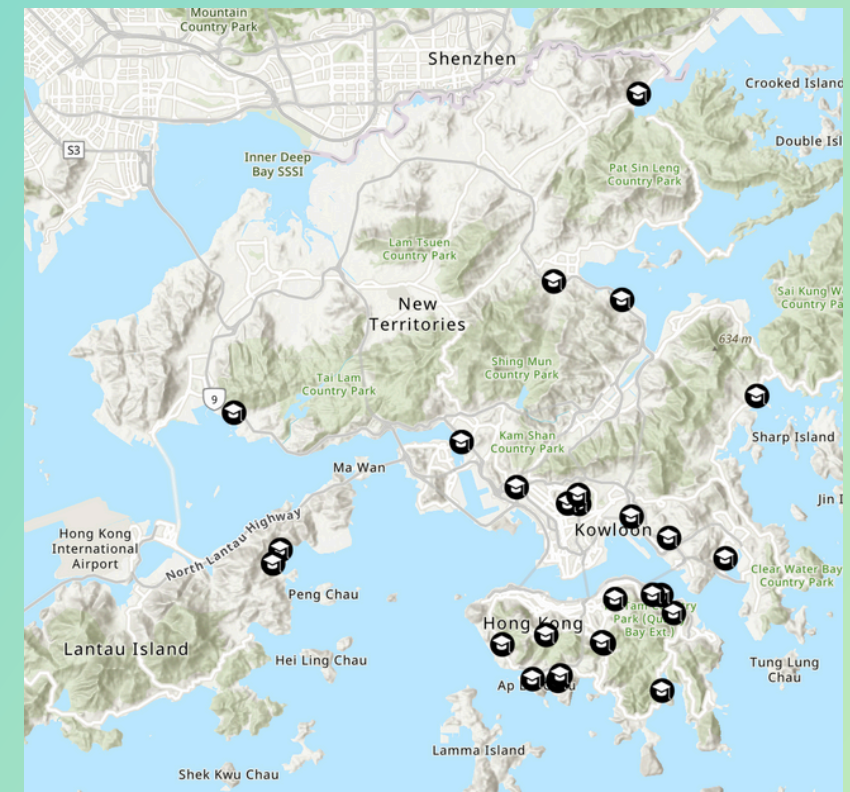
54 International Schools offer non-local curricula

Offering non-local curricula from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Singapore, United Kingdom, United States, and International Baccalaureate.

Citizenship: 65% non-local; 35% local enrolment (overall)

20,000 Secondary School spaces

Strong HK network of High School Counselors and University Counselors

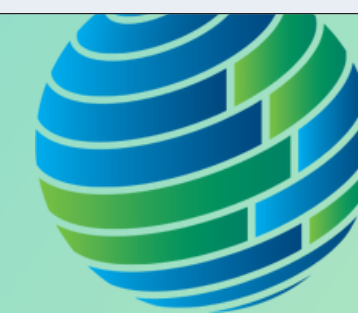


REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Hong Kong Education: Post-Secondary

Publicly Funded University	Undergrad Enrollment
University of Hong Kong (HKU)	18,131
Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)	17,744
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)	10,520
City University of Hong Kong (CityU)	11,868
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)	16,275
Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)	7,442
Lingnan University	3,015
The Education University of Hong Kong	5,790

Courses at all universities are primarily taught in English with some exceptions.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024



Indonesia

Understanding High School Curricula



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Curriculum Overview

Indonesia



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Education System in Indonesia

- Primary – 6 years (Sekolah Dasar/SD)
- Junior High School – 3 years (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP)
- Senior High School – 3 years (Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA)

Total study years – 12

Some schools with international curriculum may split and refer the years slightly differently.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Schools in Indonesia are divided into three categories based on the types of curriculum they offer:

1. National Schools (Sekolah Nasional)

- Strictly adopt and follow the national curriculum (“Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar”) mandated by the Ministry of Education.
- Standards and accreditations by the government
- Language of instructions: Indonesian language
- No international elements and minimal English language

exposure



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Schools in Indonesia are divided into three categories based on the types of curriculum they offer:

2. National Plus Schools (Sekolah Nasional Plus)

- National curriculum (“Merdeka Belajar”) integrated with extra curriculars and few international elements on learning activities.
- Standards and accreditations by the government
- Language of instructions: mostly Indonesian and English language on only few learning activities



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Schools in Indonesia are divided into three categories based on the types of curriculum they offer:

3. SPK (Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama – Joint Educational Unit) Schools

- International curriculum with national element
- Standards and accreditation by international bodies like Cambridge and/or IB + government mandated accreditation.
- Language of instructions: English with Indonesian Language required by the government for accreditation.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Curriculum Focus

National Curriculum

- “Merdeka Curriculum”, started in 2020
- Core subjects + elective subject choice (e.g. arts) + passion project
- Competency Assessment and Character Survey
- Allows school units flexibilities in implementing the curricula to meet their needs.

International Curriculum

- Most popular and trending: IB (Full or Partial), Cambridge, some schools adopt AP
- Adopting schools mostly located in big cities spread across Indonesia



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Trends among the Indonesian Schools

- Growing number of SPK schools now in Indonesia since there is an increasing demand of international education models
- SPK School students often aim to go overseas for post-secondary studies. Some competitive national school students may aim the same.
- List of SPK Schools

<https://layananspk.pauddikdasmen.kemdikbud.go.id/sekolah/spk-sma>



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024



Singapore

Understanding High School Curricula



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Singapore in context

Countries in South-Eastern Asia

Country	Population (2024)
Indonesia	283,487,931
Philippines	115,843,670
Vietnam	100,987,686
Thailand	71,668,011
Myanmar	54,500,091
Malaysia	35,557,673
Cambodia	17,638,801
Laos	7,769,819
Singapore	5,832,387
Timor-Leste	1,400,638
Brunei Darussalam	462,721

Students by country

Over 170 countries and territories are represented among the Oxford student body. The largest groups of international students are those from:

1. China - 2,035
2. USA - 2,025
3. Germany - 665
4. India - 550
5. Canada - 530
6. Australia - 425
7. Singapore - 405
8. Hong Kong (SAR) - 395
9. France - 280
10. Italy - 250

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/student-numbers>

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-eastern-asia-population/>



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Are you a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident? (MOE: Singapore Ministry of Education)

Yes – go to an MOE school. Also fulfill the Mother Tongue Language Requirement

No – go to a private international school or an MOE school

Exceptions:

Yes but have been granted an exemption from the MOE to attend a particular school

Yes but from Grade 7 (Sec 1) you can choose to apply to one of the three Privately Funded Schools

Yes and Male – you will have to serve 18 months of National Service after finishing school



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Private International Schools

Curriculum

IB Diploma

IB Careers

UK A-Levels

Singapore A-Levels

US High School Diploma with

APs

Indian

HSC

A mix of the above

Calendar

August to June/July with May/June final exams (with exceptions)

- K – 12 schools; some are primary only
- Fee paying
- Singaporeans/PRs can only attend if they have an exemption from the Ministry of Education

Some examples:

UWCSEA, Singapore American School, Global Indian International School, Dulwich College, Tanglin Trust, Australian International School...



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Privately Funded Schools (hybrid)

- ACS International
- Hwa Chong International
- SJI International

1. *Privately-Funded Schools (PFS)* offer education at the secondary and/or junior college levels and are aimed primarily at Singapore residents who may prefer an alternative curriculum and qualification. [Source](#)

Calendar

January to November

Sit October/November IB Exams

- Grades 7 – 12 (Sec1/Grade 7 to IB2/Grade 12)
- All three are IB Diploma schools
- Fee paying
- Singaporeans/PRs can apply directly to the schools



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

MOE Schools

If you like data see [this](#)

Primary School (P1 to P6)

- The school year runs from January to November.
- Students start P1 in the calendar year they will turn 7.
- Culminates in the *Primary School Leaving Exam* in October of P6
- All P6 students, including home schooled, etc. must sit the PSLE.
- Which secondary school you attend could be based on Direct Entry or based on your PSLE result.
- The lower the PSLE score, the better.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

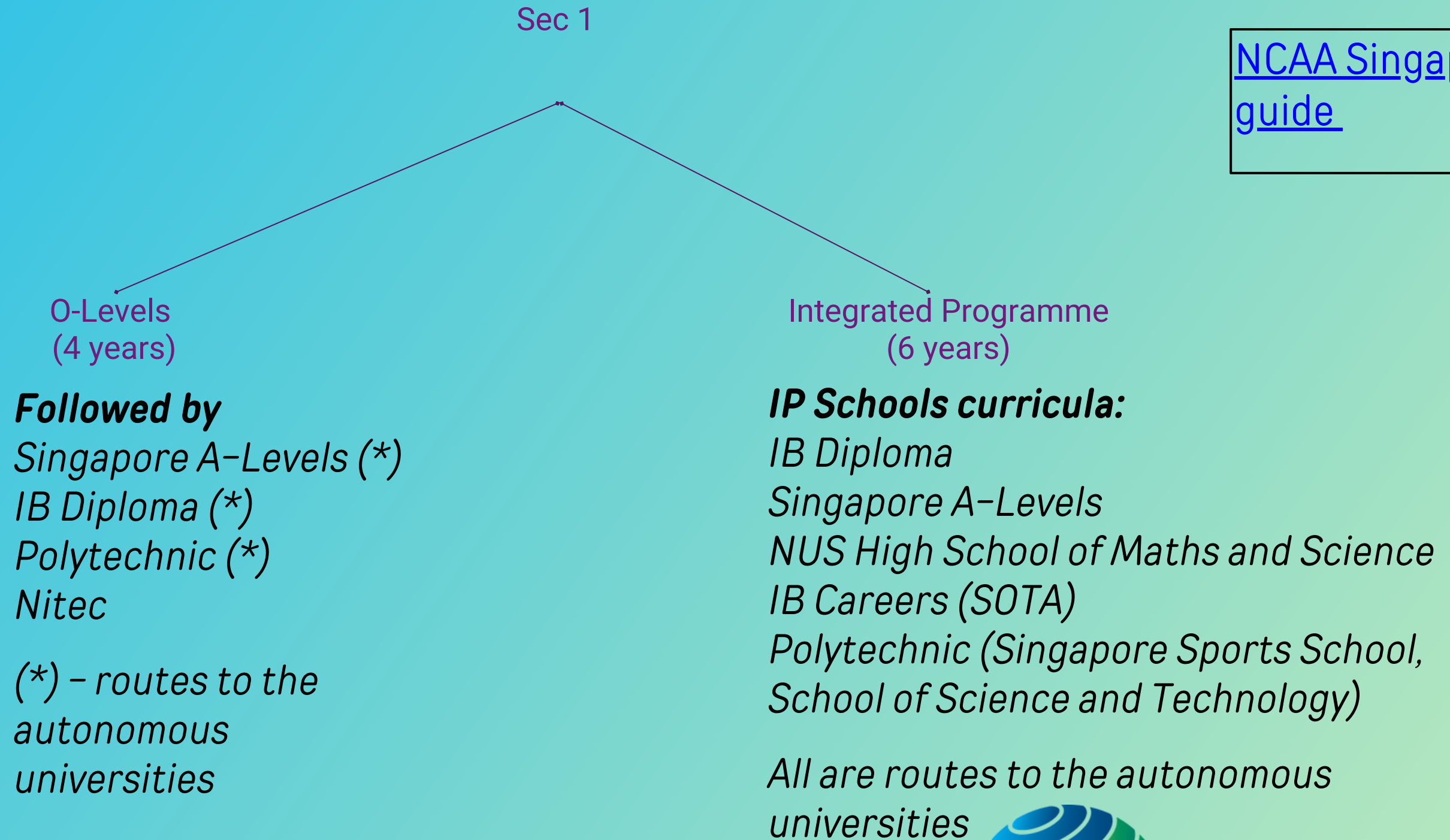
MOE Schools – Secondary

As of January 2024 there are significant changes to the structure of these 4 years. There is a move away from streaming to banding by subject, not overall.

There are also changes to the A-Levels.

See the next two slides.

[NCAA Singapore guide](#)

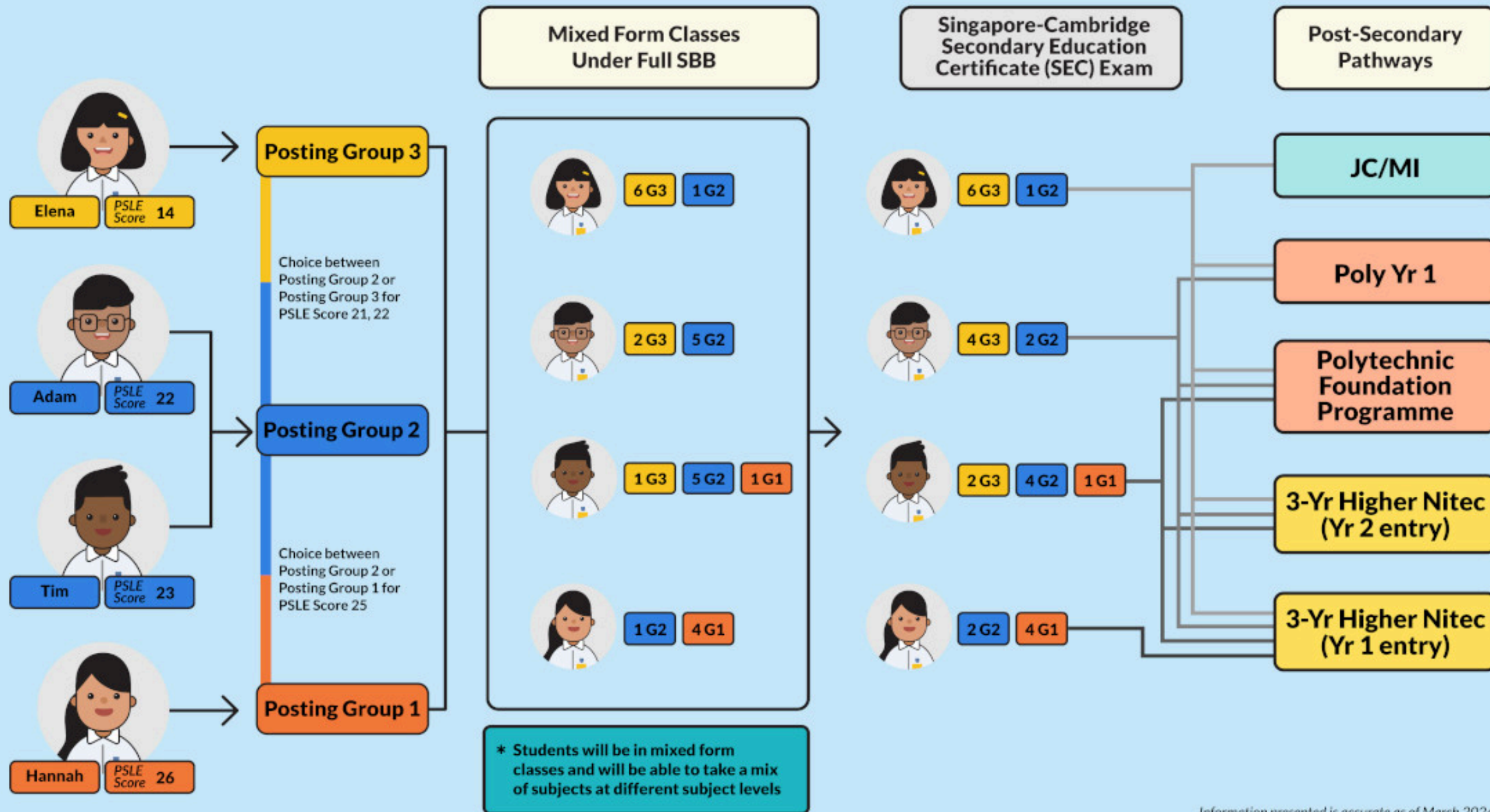


REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Secondary School Experience and Post-Secondary Pathways Under Full SBB



From 2024, you can take subjects at different levels, eg. G1, G2 or G3, which suit your strengths, interests and learning needs. Along the way, your teachers will guide you to make adjustments as needed. At the end of Secondary Four, all students will take the Singapore-Cambridge Secondary Education Certificate examinations. There will be more options for your post-secondary pathways, and many more opportunities to excel in the pathway you choose. The future is yours to make!



Information presented is accurate as of March 2024

[Source](#)

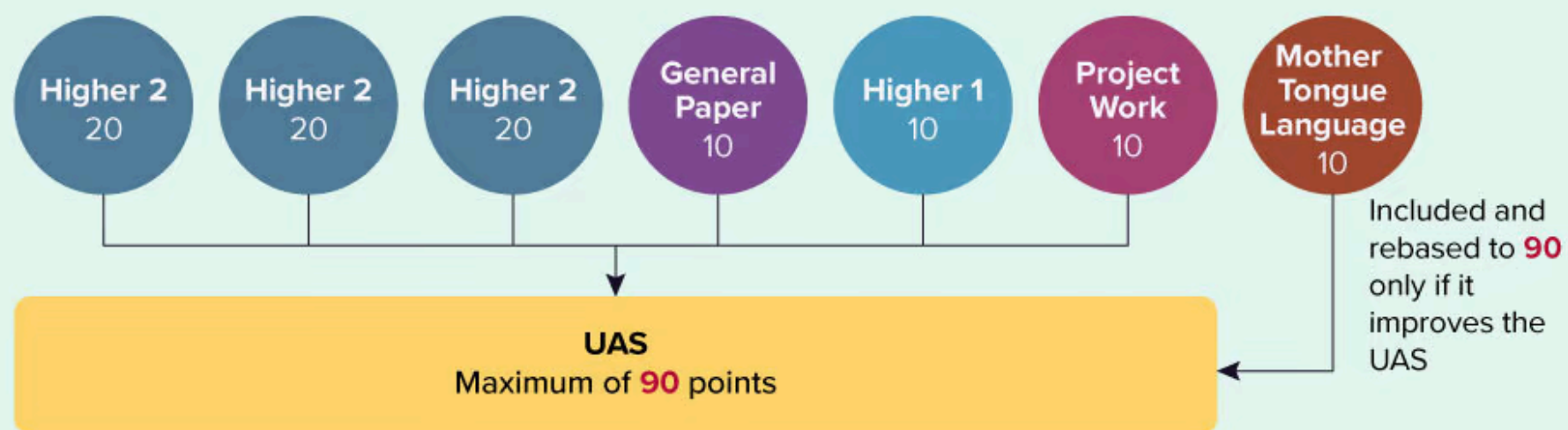


REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

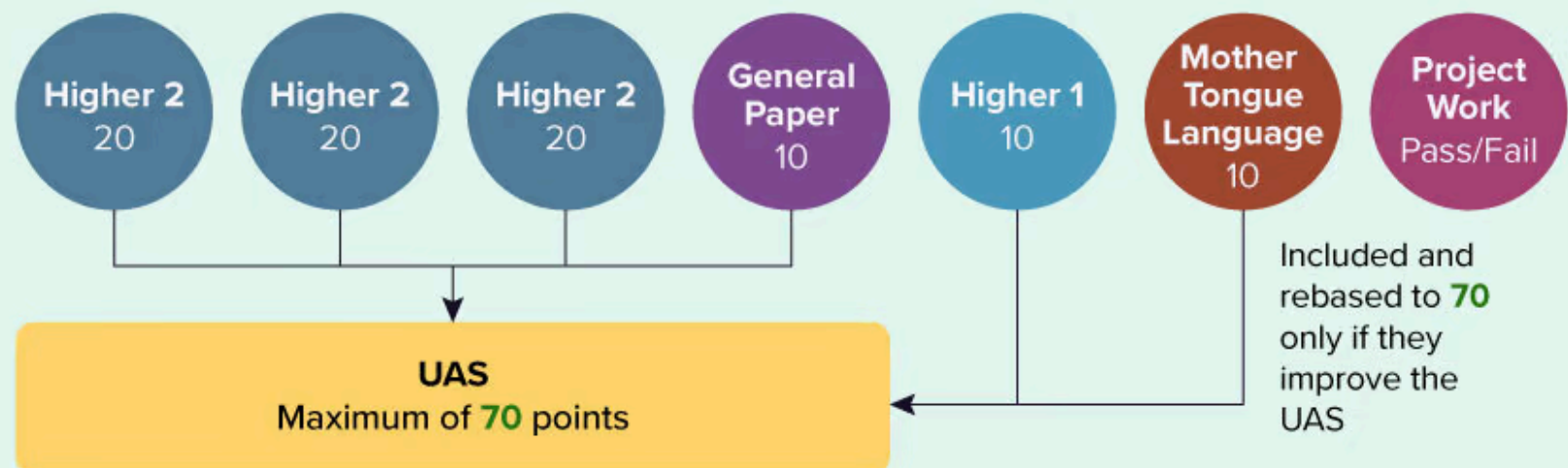
CHANGES TO A-LEVEL CURRICULUM AND AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

University Admission Score (UAS) computation

Current UAS computation



UAS computation from 2026



Source: Ministry of Education

[Source](#)



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Calendars

MOE 2025 Dates

Primary/Secondary schools/Junior Colleges run from January to November

- Singapore O-Level results are released in early January
- Singapore A-Level results are released in late February/early March
- IB results are released in mid-December (starting from this cycle)

Polytechnics run from April to March (admissions after release of O-level results)

Autonomous Universities run from August to May/June

Foreign international schools run from August to June (some exceptions)

Lorem Ipsum



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Singapore Autonomous Universities

1. Nanyang Technological University (NTU)
2. National University of Singapore (NUS)
3. Singapore Institute of Management (SIM)
4. Singapore Management University (SMU)
5. Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)
6. Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)
7. University of the Arts (UAS)



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Key Points

University Admissions Teams – why don't we get applications from Singapore citizens?

The traditional fall visit time is not a good time for the local calendar.

You must try to reach the MOE schools or fairs.

And...

If you are familiar with Singapore O- and A-levels, start to expect different transcripts from 2026 (A-Levels) and 2029 (O-Levels)

School Counsellors – why are the autonomous universities so competitive?

They are highly ranked and Singapore is sought after as a study destination.

They are public and like public universities globally, they have quotas for non-local students.

The term starts in August. There is not enough time often to turn around an application after results are released in July-August.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Thailand

Understanding High School Curricula



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Overview of Thailand's Education System and Post Secondary Matriculation- Strengths and Challenges



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

High School Students in Thailand (Gr 10–12)

Overview of Schools in Thailand:

- **Public High Schools:** 2,500–3,000 across the country.
- **Private International Schools (mostly English language based):** 200–250, mostly located in major urban centers such as:
 - Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, Pattaya
- **International Schools:**
 - both Thai and expat families.
 - Offer globally recognized curricula, including:
 - International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge IGCSE and A-Levels, American High School Diploma and other national curricula (Singaporean, Australian, French Baccalaureate, German)

<https://www.international-schools-database.com/country/thailand>, Retrieved 29 September 2024



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Structure of Thai High School Education

- **Compulsory Education:** Up to Mathayom 3 (Grade 9)
- **Upper Secondary Education (Mathayom 4-6):** 80 % of students continue this track aged 16-18 and are then divided into 2 streams:
 - **General Academic Program (Traditional University focused) -70 %**
 - **Vocational Program (Co-op/Work Experience Education) -30 %**



Overview of the General Academic Program (Grades 10-12)

General Academic Program (Mathayom 4-6)

This is the most popular path for students aiming to pursue higher education, both locally and internationally.

1. Core Subjects (Compulsory for All Students):

- **Thai Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science** (Biology, Physics, Chemistry), **Social Studies** (Thai history, world history, geography), **English, Physical Education, Art and Music**

2. Specialization Tracks:

- **Science-Math Track:** Focus on advanced mathematics and sciences. This track is ideal for students pursuing STEM-related fields.
- **Arts-Language Track:** Emphasis on humanities, languages (e.g., English, Chinese, Japanese), and social studies. Suitable for students interested in law, social sciences, and humanities.
- **Arts-Math Track:** A combination of social sciences, economics, and business studies, with a moderate focus on mathematics.



Overview of the Vocational Program (Grades 10–12)

Vocational Education (Mathayom 4-6)

Vocational schools offer students practical, skill-based training in areas such as engineering, business, agriculture, and tourism.

1. Core Subjects (Shared with General Program):

- Thai, Mathematics, English, and Social Studies

2. Specialized Vocational Training:

- Automotive, Electrical Engineering, Hospitality, others

3. Emphasis on Practical Skills:

- Internships and hands-on learning experiences form a significant part of the vocational track.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Thailand Public School Transcript Example- Academic Track

Educational Service Area Office: Songkhla Primary 3 Identification No.:
 Date of admission: May 5, 2020 Date of birth:
 Previous School: Sex: Male Nationality: Thai Religion: Islam
 Province: Father's name-surname:
 Last Education: Graduated Compulsory Education Mother's name-surname:

School Record

Code/Course	Credit	Grade	Code/Course	Credit	Grade	Code/Course	Credit	Grade
Academic Year 2020, Semester 1			Academic Year 2021, Semester 1			Academic Year 2022, Semester 1		
TH01101 Thai I	1	2	TH02101 Thai II	1	2	TH03101 Thai V	1	2.5
MA01101 Mathematics I	1	1.5	MA02101 Mathematics III	1	3	MA03101 Mathematics V	1	2.5
SC01101 Science I	1	2	SC02101 Science III	1	2.5	SC03101 Science V	1	1.5
SO01101 Social Studies I	1	3	SO02101 Social Studies III	1	3	SO03101 Social Studies V	1	2.5
SO01103 History I	0.5	2.5	SO02103 History III	0.5	3	SO03103 ASEAN Studies I	0.5	4
PE01101 Health and Physical Education I	0.5	3.5	PE02101 Health and Physical Education III	0.5	3	PE03101 Health and Physical Education V	0.5	4
AR01101 Arts I	0.5	2.5	AR02101 Arts III	0.5	4	AR03101 Arts V	0.5	2
OT01101 Housework I	0.5	3	OT02101 Housework III	0.5	3	OT03101 Housework V	0.5	3
EN01101 English I	1	1	EN02101 English III	1	3	EN03101 English V	1	1
MA01201 Supplementary Mathematics I	1.5	1.5	MA02201 Supplementary Mathematics III	1.5	2	MA03201 Supplementary Mathematics V	1.5	2.5
SC01201 Physics I	2	1.5	SC02201 Physics III	2	2	SC03201 Physics V	2	1.5
SC01201 Chemistry I	1.5	1.5	SC02201 Chemistry III	1.5	1.5	SC03201 Chemistry V	1.5	1.5
SC01201 Biology I	1.5	2	SC02201 Biology III	1.5	3	SC03201 Biology V	1.5	1
OT01201 Computer I	0.5	4	OT02201 Computer III	0.5	4	OT03201 Computer V	0.5	4
EN01201 English for Communication I	1	1.5	EN02201 English for Communication III	1	3	EN03201 English for Communication V	1	1
SO0211 Civics I	0.5	2	SO0223 Civics III	0.5	3	Semester 2		
Semester 2			Semester 2			TH03102 Thai VI	1	1.5
TH01102 Thai II	1	2	TH02102 Thai IV	1	2	MA03102 Mathematics VI	1	1.5
MA01102 Mathematics II	1	1	MA02102 Mathematics IV	1	2.5	SC03102 Science VI	1	1.5
SC01102 Science II	1	1.5	SC02102 Science IV	1	2.5	SO03102 Social Studies VI	1	2
SO01102 Social Studies II	1	2	SO02102 Social Studies IV	1	2	SO03104 ASEAN Studies II	0.5	3
SO01104 History II	0.5	2	SO02104 History IV	0.5	2.5	PE03102 Health and Physical Education VI	0.5	4
PE01102 Health and Physical Education II	0.5	3	PE02102 Health and Physical Education IV	0.5	3	AR03102 Arts VI	0.5	4
AR01102 Arts II	0.5	2	AR02102 Arts IV	0.5	4	OT03102 Housework VI	0.5	2
OT01102 Housework II	0.5	2	OT02102 Housework IV	0.5	2.5	EN03102 English VI	1	1.5



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
 East Asia, Southeast Asia,
 and Oceania 2024

End of Grade 12 – Mathayom 6 Exams

Assessment and Examinations

- **O-NET (Ordinary National Educational Test):**

Administered at the end of Mathayom 6, covering core subjects such as Thai, English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. These scores are crucial for university entrance in Thailand.

- **University Entrance Exams:**

Some students take additional exams such as the **GAT/PAT** (General Aptitude Test and Professional Aptitude Test) for admission to Thai universities.



Top Performing Public Schools in Thailand

[Mahidol Wittayanusorn School](#)

(Science Focused school est. 1990)

[Triam Udom Suksa School](#)

(All Around Academic Excellence)

[Princess Chulabhorn Science High Schools](#)

(Rural STEM-focused boarding schools est 1999)



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

International Recruitment for Thai Students

- Educational Prestige:** Parents value foreign education as prestigious and of higher quality.
- Career Opportunities:** International education is seen as providing better job prospects with global skills.
- Global Awareness and Cultural Immersion:** Studying abroad is viewed as a way to develop independence and global perspective.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Higher Education Choices for Thai Students

Top Universities in Thailand

- Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Mahidol are considered top schools.

International English Based University Programs

- English-taught programs attract both local and international students from Asia and beyond.

Study Abroad Aspirations

- Many Thai students seek study opportunities in the US, UK, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Japan.



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Challenges in Recruitment for Overseas Universities

Costs:

- High tuition fees, living expenses, and travel costs

Family Ties/Connections:

- Strong cultural emphasis on family, with students often reluctant to leave home

Safety Concerns:

- Political instability or safety concerns in certain countries can deter parents

Value of an Education:

- Thailand offers excellent English-language universities, such as Chulalongkorn and Mahidol.

Lack of Confidence in English Skills:

- Many students, particularly from local schools, may feel unprepared for the English proficiency requirements



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Q & A



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024

Thank you!



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
East Asia, Southeast Asia,
and Oceania 2024