



Choosing a Private Education Institution (PEI):

What Prospective Students Must Ask

Dear Students,

Thinking of continuing your studies with a private school in Singapore?

If you are, you really have to plan before deciding on your choice of school to study with, and your choice of the course of study. Do not accept wholesale what has been told to you. You have to spend time to check out the school and its partner universities, and ask questions of these institutions. This way, you can differentiate between what is clever marketing and the facts. Your further education will require you to invest not just your money, but your time, in completing the course of study. You would want the best return on your investment, whether it is for better employment, or better qualifications and higher knowledge.

To help you engage private schools to provide the relevant information, the Council for Private Education (CPE) has penned a few questions which you can ask the PEIs, before making your considered decision:

1. Is the PEI registered under the new Private Education act? If it is, how many years of registration has it obtained?

The reason for asking this is to ascertain legitimacy of the PEI, and its baseline quality. A PEI that has obtained a 4-year registration from the CPE, has demonstrated that it has fulfilled most of the Private Education Act's requirements for proper information disclosure, academic processes, and governance. You should also ask for the registration number of the school, and check it against their listing in the CPE website at www.cpe.gov.sg.

2. Is the PEI also Edutrust Certified?

This is to check if the PEI has also undergone the **additional** tier of quality assurance assessment by the CPE. Ask to see the certification number as well, and check this against the published information in the CPE website.

3. Who does the school use as the teaching faculty?

It is important to understand who your potential lecturers are. If you are enrolled in a degree programme, check that all the lecturers are accredited by the partner university. Ask to see the accreditation letter/confirmation from the partner university. If you are enrolled in a diploma or certificate programme awarded by the PEI, ask whether CPE have been notified of the deployment of the teachers.

4. What is the graduation rate and the employment prospects of graduates from the course of study that you wish to pursue with the private school?

This is another important question which you need adequate answers to. If you are enrolled in a degree programme, find out from the school, how many batches of students have graduated, and what their employment record is like. A school with a sound academic process would invariably have systems to track their graduates, and find out how well they have been doing, in order to improve on their courses. You should ask to speak to some of the graduates from the course which you are interested in, to find out more from them. This type of reference is important, as you will be investing a substantial sum in your intended study.

5. Do the PEIs promise you in their published information and in their conversations with you, that you will have industry work attachment, (especially if you are enrolled in a programme of a vocational or technical nature)? If so, ask the following questions:

Any PEI that offers work or training attachments, as part of its certificate/diploma or degree programme should be able to tell you, exactly which organisation you would be attached to during your course of study, and for how long. You should also verify this with the attachment organisation.

6. If you intend to study a degree course, navigate the web to check the ranking tables.

Countries like the UK, and the USA, all have their respective ranking tables. There are also some international ones, like the Academic Ranking of World Universities (<http://www.arwu.org/>, commonly known the Shanghai Ranking). Look at these, to have a feel/idea of where your choice course of study stands. You have to be satisfied with its position in the rankings.

7. Ask to see the Student Contract.

Every PEI registered with the CPE, must have a student contract for each course that it offers. Ask to see this student contract, for the course that you are interested in. Go through it thoroughly, and sign only when you are finally satisfied with it, and when you have decided on the course of study with the particular PEI.

Certain information must be provided in the contract offered to you. They are:

- I. The duration of the course, whether offered on a full-time or part-time basis;
- II. The start date and end date of the course;
- III. The scheduled holidays, if any;
- IV. The dates of all examinations, and major assessments and assignments;
- V. The expected date of the release of the final examination results, which should not be more than 3 months after the completion of the final examination unless otherwise permitted by the Council;
- VI. The expected date of the conferment of the award;

- VII. The full names of the developer or proprietor of the course, and the person or organisation or institution conferring the award;
- VIII. All fees which students need to pay;
- IX. The fee collection schedule, including any late fee payment policy; and
- X. The fee refund policy of the school.

Check that the compulsory information is in the contract, and that there is a clear re-fund policy stated in there, which you are satisfied with.

You can also check out the CPE website for more information.

8. Ask if the PEI has a grievance handling procedure/process.

Ask the PEI to explain to you, what this process involves, whether the PEI has a panel to handle such matters, and who sits on the panel, and the procedures that the panel will follow.

Finally, it is always useful to look around, and plan well ahead of your intended study period, to make a considered decision. Again, if you need to seek clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact the CPE Student Services Centre. We can help you to ask the right questions.

We wish you success in your studies.

About Us:

Established under the Private Education Act, the Council for Private Education (CPE) is a statutory board empowered with the legislative power to regulate the private education sector.

Contact Us:

Come and talk to us anytime to discuss your choice of studies, or seek more information. We are conveniently located at No. 1, Orchard Road (YMCA building, opposite SMU). Alternatively visit our website, or correspondent with us via email, or call us.

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