

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
SINGAPORE

Annual Report 2020



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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW



CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

COVID-19 Defined 2020

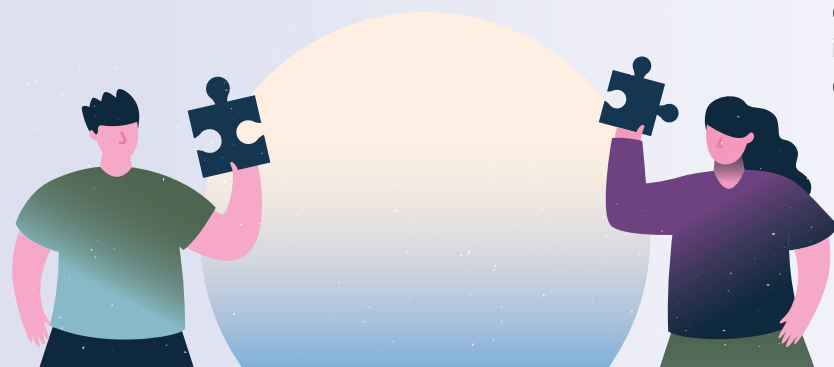
During the early days of the pandemic, the public mood in Singapore was volatile, beginning with uncertainty as to the extent of viral transmission, bouts of panic buying of essential goods, and a mix of adjustments to daily routines, leading to the imposition of clearer measures for “circuit breaker”. These measures, which involved the sharp curtailing of entertainment, shopping and movement plans, had differing degrees of impact on daily life; on how families went about their education, work and business. The most severe impact was felt by the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and by those whose work required physical presence at a given location. Front line workers, often taken for granted, became better appreciated for their roles serving Singaporeans.

Singapore saw our supply chains disrupted by border closures and lockdowns. Having long thrived on trade and in being connected to the global economy, we faced the sharpest threat to our value to others in enabling travel and the movement of goods, and providing services. Markets for our manufacturing activities were impacted. Our economy contracted



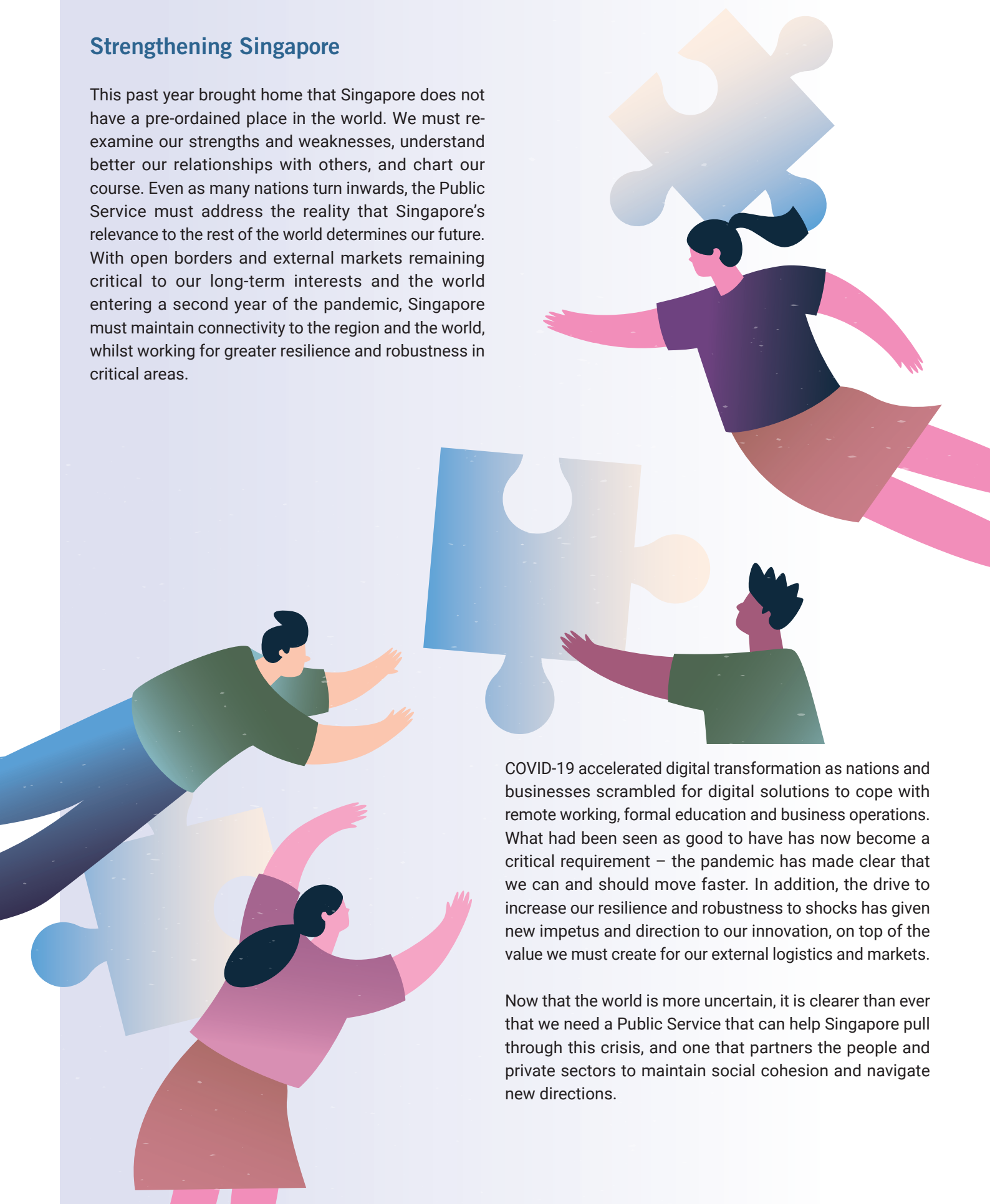
and we went into our worst recession since independence. Geopolitical tensions in the world were heightened by the pandemic as a result of domestic as well as border issues, with ugly suspicions and attribution of blame. Tensions between the desire for personal freedoms and the need for collective action to safeguard public health arose in many countries. Fault lines and underlying socio-economic inequalities in all societies were accentuated.

Our Public Service played a key role in meeting these challenges in Singapore. Resources were mobilised across the public, private and people sectors. Pro-active public communications, on both traditional and social media platforms, were key in addressing anxieties, countering rumours and misinformation and in building trust and psychological resilience. Numerous complex issues and challenges emerged over the course of the pandemic, from border and quarantine policy, securing supply chains for food and essential goods, controlling the outbreaks in the foreign worker dormitories, to ensuring that Singapore would have sufficient supply of vaccines when available. Where mistakes and oversights happened, they were acknowledged, and efforts made to address them. Each risk was managed as it was identified. Public sector competence and professionalism were crucial in helping to maintain social cohesion and confidence in Singapore amid a prolonged crisis.



Strengthening Singapore

This past year brought home that Singapore does not have a pre-ordained place in the world. We must re-examine our strengths and weaknesses, understand better our relationships with others, and chart our course. Even as many nations turn inwards, the Public Service must address the reality that Singapore's relevance to the rest of the world determines our future. With open borders and external markets remaining critical to our long-term interests and the world entering a second year of the pandemic, Singapore must maintain connectivity to the region and the world, whilst working for greater resilience and robustness in critical areas.



COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation as nations and businesses scrambled for digital solutions to cope with remote working, formal education and business operations. What had been seen as good to have has now become a critical requirement – the pandemic has made clear that we can and should move faster. In addition, the drive to increase our resilience and robustness to shocks has given new impetus and direction to our innovation, on top of the value we must create for our external logistics and markets.

Now that the world is more uncertain, it is clearer than ever that we need a Public Service that can help Singapore pull through this crisis, and one that partners the people and private sectors to maintain social cohesion and navigate new directions.

Public Service Priorities

Emerging stronger will not come from repeating what we did previously. In the emerging environment, new waves of innovation, entrepreneurship and risk will surface. Public officers will have to be bold and curious, because we will increasingly have to enable, facilitate and regulate at the leading edge. Public officers will have to grow knowledge and new skills, acting swiftly to address where we are lacking, and develop confidence in new domains.

It is not possible for the public sector to achieve this on our own, so building trust and collaboration with both the people and private sectors is needed. The people sector provides insights and channels for the Service to reach various segments of society to address their needs and concerns, which is key to social cohesion. The private sector is an engine of growth and where we build our skills and capacity to grow value and jobs.

Increasingly, our Public Service will need to engage in the international arena, to maintain and build anew the relationships that will serve Singapore well. The Singapore brand must be strengthened, not only for inward investment, but also for our external investments and our ability to influence areas that are key to our interests, whether in business, multilateral discussions or bilateral relations.



What the PSC will do

In a complex and increasingly educated Singapore, the Public Service leadership will benefit from diversity of backgrounds, experience, skills and thinking. The Commission will continue to purposefully reach out to a broader group from diverse backgrounds and attract talent at different stages of life. We will continue to provide young scholarship holders with opportunities to learn and build connections, develop skills and gain enriching experience, and take advantage of local and international opportunities for professional growth and leadership development. In the appointment of leaders, the Commission will recognise and give due weight to both policy development and operational execution.

The pandemic has revitalised the values that are the foundation of our Public Service. Integrity – manifested in the data-driven and science-based approach taken to understand the nature of the pandemic and what is needed to safeguard the health and safety of people. Service – by putting citizens at the centre of various care and support initiatives and the implementation of measures. Excellence – in addressing the myriad challenges and in our relentless drive for better outcomes as the situation evolves and new issues emerge.

Key to emerging stronger together is strengthening our social support system to ensure no one is left behind. How Singaporeans co-create solutions to seize opportunities and make Singapore a better place will aid inclusive growth. The pace of transformation will pick up from providing the private sector the support and room to try out new approaches and models.

We continue to look for those with a heart to serve Singapore and our community, people who demonstrate the values of the Public Service, regardless of race, religion or family background, who can earn public trust, and who can build relationships for successful collaboration. The scope of our outreach will continue to widen to search for suitable candidates, and in parallel, our selection will go beyond intellectual capacity to identify, in a robust and quantifiable manner, those aspects of character and personality that make a Public Service Leader.

Mr Lee Tzu Yang
Chairman
Public Service Commission





THE SINGAPORE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC)

THE SINGAPORE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC)

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is constituted under Part IX of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore.

The functions of the PSC under the Constitution are as follows:

- A. Appoint,
- B. Confirm,
- C. Emplace on the permanent or pensionable establishment,
- D. Promote,
- E. Transfer, and
- F. Dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over public officers*.

**These categories of officers do not fall under the PSC's purview: Singapore Armed Forces personnel, officers in the Judicial and Legal Services, Police Officers below the rank of Inspector, and daily-rated employees.*

Under the Public Sector (Governance) Act 2018, which came into effect on 1 Apr 2018, the PSC's concurrence is required for the appointment, promotion and discipline of Chief Executive Officers of Statutory Boards.

With effect from 1 January 1995, the following personnel functions were devolved to the Personnel Boards in the Ministries:

- A. Recruitment and appointment to the Civil Service except the Administrative Service and Auditing Service,
- B. Confirmation and emplacement of officers on the permanent or pensionable establishment,
- C. Appointment and promotion of officers up to Superscale E1/Grade 8 (except for the Auditing Service), and
- D. Transfer of service among services other than transfers to the Administrative Service.

Following the devolution, the PSC serves as the final appellate body to consider appeals against decisions of the Special Personnel Board.

The PSC also retains the following key non-constitutional roles:

To recruit and develop talent for the Singapore Public Service through PSC Scholarships, as well as coordinate the efforts of scholarship-awarding public sector agencies.

Members of the PSC

The Constitution provides for the PSC to have a Chairman and not less than five and not more than fourteen other Members. In 2020, the PSC comprised the Chairman, two Deputy Chairmen and nine other Members.



Mr Lee Tzu Yang
Chairman



Mr Kwa Chong Seng
Deputy Chairman



Ms Chua Sock Koong
Deputy Chairman



Mr Michael Lim



Mr Po'ad Mattar



Mr Edward D'Silva



Professor Lily Kong



Mr Philip Jeyaretnam
(retired on 23 November 2020)



Mr Alan Chan



Professor Tan Ser Kiat
(retired on 20 February 2021)



Dr. Sudha Nair



Associate Professor Benjamin Ong
(appointed on 1 December 2020)

APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS, APPEALS AND DISCIPLINARY CASES



APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS, APPEALS AND DISCIPLINARY CASES

Appointments and Promotions

The PSC is the approving authority for the appointment of candidates to the Administrative Service and the promotion of these officers to Superscale D/Grade 7 and above in the Civil Service. The PSC also appoints/promotes officers to Superscale Grade 9 and above in the Auditing Service, and to Superscale D/Grade 7 and above in the rest of the Civil Service.

In 2020, the PSC considered 36 candidates and found 21 suitable for appointment to the Administrative Service.

The PSC considered 33 officers for promotion to Superscale D/Grade 7 and above, including those in the Administrative Service. Of these, 26 officers were promoted.

The PSC considered and appointed two officers at Superscale Grade 9 and above in the Auditing Service. The PSC considered three officers and found them suitable for promotion to Superscale Grade 9 and above in the Auditing Service.



Appointment and Promotion of Chief Executive Officers of Statutory Boards

The PSC considers the suitability of candidates for appointment as Chief Executive Officers of Statutory Boards and subsequent renewals. The PSC also considers the suitability of the Chief Executive Officers for promotion to Superscale D/Grade 7 and above.

In 2020, the PSC considered and concurred with the agencies' recommendation to:

- a) appoint 11 officers as new Chief Executive Officers;
- b) renew the term of 17 existing Chief Executive Officers;
- c) appoint 46 officers (4 of the officers were appointed twice within the year) as Acting Chief Executive Officers; and
- d) promote one Chief Executive Officer to Superscale D/Grade 7 and above.

Appeals

In 2020, the PSC saw two further appeals for promotion/against termination under the Public Service (Personnel Boards and Appeals Board) Regulations. The appeals were turned down by the Commission.



Discipline

The PSC is vested with the disciplinary control of civil servants under Article 110(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. Civil servants who misconduct themselves are dealt with under one of the three disciplinary procedures¹ listed below:

- a) The Public Service (Disciplinary Proceedings) Regulations (“the Regulations”).
- b) The Public Service Commission (Delegation of Disciplinary Functions) Directions (“the Directions”).
The PSC has delegated to the Permanent Secretaries, part of its functions pertaining to the discipline of officers for minor misconduct, and
- c) The Public Service Commission (Prison Officers) (Disciplinary Proceedings – Delegation of Functions) Directions (“the Prisons Directions”).
The PSC has delegated to the Commissioner of Prisons, part of its functions pertaining to the discipline of junior Prisons Officers for minor misconduct.

¹Officers may be disciplined under the Regulations when it involves serious misconducts; where the possible penalties include a dismissal or a reduction in rank. For less serious misconducts, officers may be disciplined under the Directions or Prison Directions, as appropriate.

Cases under the latter two categories are collectively known as being under “the Directions”. The disciplinary process ensures that officers are treated fairly, regardless of rank or seniority.

In 2020, 145 new disciplinary cases were reported to the PSC. Together with 110 cases that were brought forward from 2019, the PSC processed a total of 255 cases in the year. Of these cases, 127 were completed, including 51 cases which were completed under the Regulations and 61 cases which were completed under the Directions. Formal disciplinary action was not instituted against the officers in the remaining 15 cases.

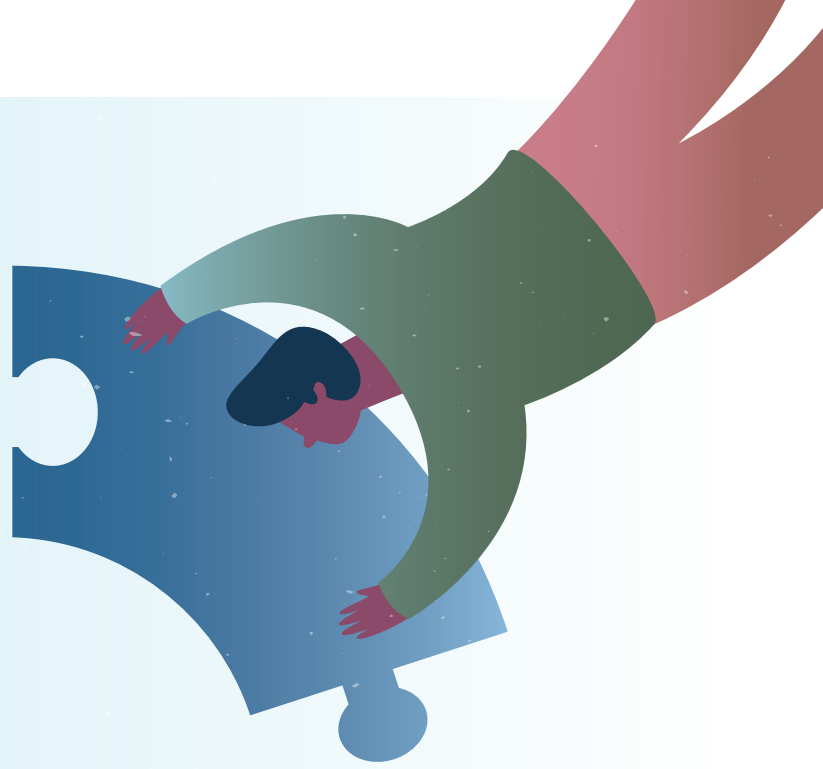
The most common types of misconduct for cases completed in 2020 under the Regulations were Sexual Offences / Inappropriate Behaviour, Dishonesty / Embezzlement / Criminal Breach of Trust, Indebtedness, and Negligence. Almost two-thirds of all officers disciplined under the Regulations were dismissed or retired in the public interest at the conclusion of the disciplinary proceedings against them. Details of the 51 cases completed under the Regulations in 2020 are in [Table 1](#).



Table 1 Breakdown by Outcome of Cases Completed under the Regulations in 2020

Misconduct \ Outcome	Dismissal	Retirement in the Public Interest	Reduction in Rank	Pecuniary Penalties	Reprimand	Not Proceeded Against	Total
Dishonesty / Embezzlement / Criminal Breach of Trust	8	-	-	-	1	-	9
Drug Offence	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
Indebtedness	-	4	-	2	-	-	6
Insubordination / Non-Compliance of Orders	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Negligence	-	-	-	6	-	-	6
Outside Employment / Business	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Sexual Offences / Inappropriate Behaviour	9	2	-	1	-	1	13
Theft	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Others	6	-	1	-	2	-	9
TOTAL	26	7	1	12	4	1	51





RECRUITING TALENT, DEVELOPING LEADERS



RECRUITING TALENT, DEVELOPING LEADERS

The PSC awards fully-funded scholarships to outstanding young men and women who are committed to serving Singapore through a career in the Public Service. PSC scholarship holders study various disciplines at established local and overseas universities, adding to the diversity of the Public Service when they commence their careers.

In 2020, the PSC played its part in adapting to respond to the pandemic. Beyond shifting scholarship interviews to a virtual format and coordinating efforts across the Public Service to bring overseas scholarship holders home in a short span of time, the PSC also offered alternative options to scholarship holders, ensuring they continue with their education and development while prioritising their health and safety.



Identifying Talent

The PSC adopts a rigorous process to select scholarship holders. The Commission considers a range of information from multiple sources. These include the candidate's personal statement, school report, psychological interview report, Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) achievements, community involvement records, academic results and other notable achievements. The holistic assessment brings out key factors the PSC seeks in candidates, including leadership potential, resilience, diversity of experience, aptitude and passion and fit for a Public Service career. In the 2020 scholarships selection exercise, the PSC piloted game-based assessment (GBA), with plans for

incorporating this into the range of selection tools in 2021. The GBA identifies behavioural traits in applicants such as risk propensity and learning orientation, allowing the selection panel an insight into some of the non-intellectual traits of scholarship applicants.

The PSC also undertakes a broad outreach and communications plan each year to provide updated information on PSC Scholarships and Public Service careers to our stakeholders through regular meetings with school teams, as well as information sessions for students and their parents. In 2020, the PSC held a virtual information session for pre-university and university students. The virtual format provided a convenient and informative platform, allowing for a wide reach, while prioritising health and safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

PSC Scholarships - A Gateway to Public Service Careers

The PSC Scholarships offer three main career paths – Public Administration, Professional Service and Uniformed Service.

Public Administration

Recipients of the PSC Scholarship or PSC Master's Scholarship will take up a role in Public Administration. These recipients are not tied to a specific Ministry at the start of their scholarship journey and their deployment is decided upon their graduation. The Public Administration pathway provides scholarship holders the opportunity to develop as a leader and gain experience in multiple sectors of the Public Service.



Professional Service

Some candidates have a clear focus and interest in the career path they wish to pursue. For them, the PSC offers career tracks such as Engineering, Foreign Service, Legal Service, Medicine, Public Finance, or Teaching Service under the Professional Service career pathway. Recipients on these schemes will return to serve in the respective agencies linked to their scholarships and are guided and developed in line with their professional tracks.

Uniformed Service

Recipients who respond to the call of security and defence of the nation will set off on the pathway of the Uniformed Services. The PSC awards The Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship (SAFS) and The Singapore Police Force Scholarship (SPFS) to outstanding young men and women who make the commitment to maintain peace and stability in our country.

SAFS holders will be systematically trained and developed to assume key command and staff appointments in the SAF while SPFS holders will be groomed to be leaders in upholding law, maintaining order and keeping peace in Singapore.



PSC Scholarship Recipients who Proceeded for Studies in Academic Year 2020 / 2021

34 scholarship recipients proceeded for studies in the academic year 2020/2021; 4 for Public Administration, 23 for Professional Service and 7 for Uniformed Service ([Table 2](#)). Details of the course of studies and country of studies are in [Table 3](#) and [Table 4](#) respectively.



Table 2 Breakdown of PSC Scholarships Recipients who Proceeded for Studies in Academic Year 2020/2021 by Career Path and Award Scheme

Career Paths and Award Schemes	Number who proceeded for studies in Academic Year 2020/2021
Public Administration	4
Public Service Commission Scholarship	4
Professional Service	23
PSC Scholarship (Engineering)	14
PSC Scholarship (Foreign Service)	2
PSC Scholarship (Legal Service)	1
PSC Scholarship (Medicine)*	4
PSC Scholarship (Teaching Service)	2
Uniformed Service	7
The Singapore Armed Force (SAF) Scholarship	5
The Singapore Police Force (SPF) Scholarship	2
Total	34

*Mid-Term Awards

Information correct as at 31 December 2020

Table 3 Breakdown of PSC Scholarships Recipients who Proceeded for Studies in Academic Year 2020/2021 by Course of Study

Course of Study	Number who proceeded for studies in Academic Year 2020/2021
Economics/Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)	2
Engineering & Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	15
Humanities & Social Sciences	8
Law	2
Liberal Arts	2
Medicine	4
Science/Mathematics	1
Total	34

Information correct as at 31 December 2020

Table 4 Breakdown of PSC Scholarships Recipients who Proceeded for Studies in Academic Year 2020/2021 by Country of Study

Country of Study	Number who proceeded for studies in Academic Year 2020/2021
Australia	1
France	1
Germany	1
Singapore	15
United Kingdom	6
United States of America	10
Total	34

Information correct as at 31 December 2020

President's Scholarship

The PSC also awards the President's Scholarship – widely regarded as Singapore's most prestigious undergraduate scholarship. The President's Scholarship is awarded on top of another public sector scholarship. It recognises individuals who have stood out among their cohort, demonstrating excellence in various pursuits. Recipients of the President's Scholarship are dedicated to improving the lives of Singaporeans and exemplify the ethos of the Public Service.

In 2020, there was one recipient of the President's Scholarship ([Table 5](#)).

Table 5 President's Scholarship Recipient

No.	Name	Pre-university Institution	Course of Study	University
1.	Alyssa Marie Loo Li Ann	Raffles Institution	Linguistics	Brown University

Information correct as at 31 December 2020



Photo Credit: Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI), LH Goh

Moulding Tomorrow's Leaders

The PSC Scholarships provide a developmental pathway to leadership roles in the Public Service. Scholarship holders are involved in a series of milestone programmes and other developmental opportunities during their studies, to develop a diverse set of experiences and contribute better to Singapore.

2020 Preparatory Course

The Preparatory Course aims to prepare newly awarded PSC scholarship holders for their studies and set the expectation on their roles as ambassadors of the Singapore Public Service. In 2020, the programme was held virtually from 19 June to 3 July.

2020 PSC Scholarship Holders' Mid-Course Programme (PSMP)

The PSMP, held midway through a scholarship holder's undergraduate studies, builds on the foundations laid in the Preparatory Course and the scholarship holders' undergraduate experiences. The programme provides greater context on the realities of governance and highlights developments that have taken place since the scholarship holders commenced their studies. The PSMP also consists of a six-to-eight-week internship component with a government agency where scholarship holders gain first-hand experience in the Public Service. The 2020 PSMP was attended by 86 scholarship holders.



Gap Year Programme

Scholarship holders have the option of taking up a year-long attachment in non-public sector organisations, locally or overseas. These include International Organisations, reputable Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or private companies. The Gap Year programme takes place upon completion of studies, after completion of National Service (where applicable) and before deployment to the Public Service. The experience from these stints help to introduce diversity into the talent pipeline and bring with them networks useful for the Public Service.

In 2020, scholarship holders proceeded for their Gap Year programmes with the following organisations: 4D Molecular Therapeutics; Big Idea Ventures; Camphora Pte. Ltd., Singapore; Elixir Pte. Ltd., Singapore; Interpol, Singapore; Lovelytics; Singtel; Social Policy, NTUC Administration and Research Unit; The Thought Collective; UNESCO (France, Thailand), UNCDF (Thailand) and YoungPlanet.



2020 OFFICIAL VISITS AND MEETINGS



2020 OFFICIAL VISITS AND MEETINGS

The PSC values ongoing engagement with our partners and stakeholders. Through such meaningful engagement, the PSC keeps abreast of governance matters both locally and overseas. Besides hosting visits by representatives of foreign universities, local school leaders, thought leaders in different fields and other distinguished guests, the PSC also ventures out to engage stakeholders in other countries.

On 2 November 2020, Chairman, PSC met with the Ambassador of France to the Republic of Singapore, Mr Marc Abensour. The meeting exchanged views on the education landscape in France, Singapore-France relations and possible opportunities for work or education in France.



