

Maths whiz, 15, is youngest NUS student.

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The Malaysian boy is already scoring straight As at university. Classmates treat him like a 'little brother', but ask him for help with their maths problems

NATIONAL University of Singapore freshman Wong Jiang Fung brings out the protective instincts in his classmates.

The Malaysian boy genius from Segamat, Johor, is only 15 - several years younger than his classmates. But he is used to having older classmates.

At Pekan Jabi Primary School in his home town, he went straight from Standard 1 to Standard 4, the equivalent of Primary 4 here.

He also skipped the second half of Standard 4 and the first half of Standard 5.

Then, he went to Pay Fong High School, an independent Chinese school in Malacca, and skipped a year there.

Last year, at 14, he sat for the Unified Examination for Chinese Independent Schools, the Malaysian equivalent of the A levels.

He aced it.

With distinctions in seven subjects, he applied to study science at NUS because it has a good reputation and top research facilities.

His choice of institution is also because his parents - Chinese physician Wong Her Li, 55, and Madam Chi Lok Moi, 45, a housewife - was him close to home.

NUS dean of science Lee Soo Ying said the university's admissions board recognised the teenager's mathematical-logical talent.

"His results showed clearly that he will be able to cope well with **mathematics** and physics at university level. And he has proven our hunch right," said Professor Lee.

He scored straight As in continuous assessment tests for his two maths and two physics modules, putting him among the top 10 per cent in the class.

NUS science faculty staff take special care to ensure that the teenager fits in with his classmates.

His lecturers, for example, recommended that he be moved from the off-campus College Green hostel in Dunearn Road to King Edward VII Hall on campus.

The hall's master and a block representative have been asked to look out for him. Several lecturers have also taken the shy teenager under their wing.

His classmates and hallmates said they were in awe of the 15-year-old at first, but that they now treat him like other classmates.

Computing student Teo Chiang Yen, 19, also from Pay Fong High School, said that Jiang Fung has always been her unofficial maths tutor.

She added: "He is like a little brother to us."

Mr Tung Ten Yong, a first-year student, said: "I go to him with some really difficult maths problems once in a while and he is able to solve them." The teenage genius, a computer enthusiast who assembled his own supercomputer in a day, is unfazed by all the attention.

He said: "I'm used to being with adults. From the time I was eight years old I have been with students four years older.

"My friends are all older as well."

He said he is close to his family and had spent part of the term holidays with his parents and sisters. He came back early to the university to take up a temporary job in the dean of science's office.

"It will help me pay for the extras," said the thrifty youth, who explained that his parents had taken a university loan to pay his tuition fees.

He does not think of himself as a genius. "My English is bad," he said.

"I'm just like any other student. I do my homework for three or four hours at the end of the day and then I surf the Internet, for four or five hours. "During exams, I put in eight hours a day," he added.

No prizes for guessing his favourite websites. The classical music and chess enthusiast enjoys any music and computer site. He said he also reads The New York Times online because he wants to be well-informed and likes its writing style. And while he gets his kicks playing computer games, he is clear about what he wants to do after his course at NUS. He said: "I want to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Princeton to do research in maths or physics."

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