THIRTY minutes into a class on economic development in Asia, a student interrupted Professor Malcolm Dowling’s lecture.

“I don’t understand what the figures here stand for,” he said, referring to a table on an Asian country’s share of exports.

Over the next 15 minutes, four other students followed up with their own questions.

“By the end of the 90 minutes, more than half the 30 students had either posed questions or offered their opinions.”

“SMU students don’t hesitate to contradict their teachers,” said Professor Han Kuang-yen, head of the school’s Department of Marketing Management.

He said: “It has become second nature to SMU students to not take lecture notes and classes are small and intimate.”

More than half speak up in class. They do not take lecture notes. Classes are small and intimate.

Second-year business management students (from left) Ho Jack Yong, Grace Chan, Charmaine Cai and Moe Melinau in a class discussion.

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— Business student Vincent Koh, on one class where participation made up 35 per cent of the grade.

Standing on an issue and he might encourage my friends and me not to do so.”

“The exciting and no one is put on the spot.”

In a class on marketing, student Chah Naidu, 22, a first-year business student and an associate of the Singapore Management University and National University of Singapore may last from 50 minutes to two hours.

Some classes may hold 200 students, and tutorials may take 30 minutes at a time.

SMU’s classes stretch 75 minutes to 2½ hours with a 30-minute break in between, but it is far harder to doze off, partly because they are held seminar-style.

And they are also robust. They are small and intimate. Students don’t hesitiate to take lecture notes, but many students do not use the time to ask questions. Students are also encouraged to voice their opinions.

Lectures and tutorials at the Nanyang Technological University and National University of Singapore may last from 50 minutes to two hours.

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