SINGAPORE: Two Singapore's universities, SMU and NUS, say they intend to expand their Special Terms next year to cater to NSmen who want to matriculate earlier.

They can start their courses as much as three months earlier than the regular semester.

Currently, some 1,300 students in both universities enrol in these special terms and some universities expect this figure to at least double.

Mong Yi Siang, 20, is looking forward to making full use of his ability to enter university earlier next year.

"I hope to take on the four modules because I hope to actually finish my university education earlier. I hope that by finishing earlier, I will have an early advantage in job-seeking, because I will be able to search for jobs earlier than the majority of my peers."

Still, entering university early might not be for everyone. The universities stress that it's really up to the students to decide whether they want to spend their nine months after NS working, travelling or embarking on their academic career.

NUS and SMU say they will encourage this first batch of NS men to take more basic and foundation courses during the Special Term to ease them back into academic life.

Lily Kong, Education Vice-Provost at NUS, says: "These are things that all students across the different faculties have to fulfill as part of the broadening of education and it's a good way to get students from different disciplines sitting in the same classroom and interacting and learning from on another.

"We do recognise that a very important part of getting university is not just jumping straight into classes, but in terms of getting to know other students and of being able to live with other students and so on."

Both NUS and SMU are also planning special orientation programmes to help NSmen adjust to university life.

As for the question of resources, NUS says it's just a matter of scheduling professors to teach at different times of the year.

SMU, however, says it's looking to increase its faculty population by 5 to 10 percent to cope with what it has planned - to double the number of places available during its special term.

Francis Koh, Associate Dean of Lee Kong Chian School of Business at SMU, says: "Summer is also a good time to invite visiting professors because they are available from America, from Europe to come to Singapore.

"That will be another way that we can introduce diversity and at the same time create courses for our own students and also benefit the NSmen."

Special term courses are regular courses that are compressed into four to six weeks instead of the normal 13 to 14 week semester.

This means that some NSmen will be able to graduate up to a semester earlier.

Universities say this is a win-win situation with the job market opening up more times during the year. - CNA/de