The new SMU School of Law will be situated inside the Lee Kong Chian School of Business.

It will take in its first batch of up to 60 students next August.

The law school will leverage on SMU's edge in business.

The 15 faculty members in SMU's School of Business will form the core for the new law school, and an international search is on for more to come on board.

The course fee for SMU's School of Law degree programme is yet to be determined.

But one thing is certain.

The school is looking at a four-year degree programme, with at least 10 weeks of internship at law firms.

Students will also have to fulfil the compulsory community service requirement, just like any other SMU student.

As for the incumbent NUS law school - which turns 50 next year - there are also many plans ahead.

Its student population has grown from just 30 in 1957 to 240 this year.

Professor Tan Cheng Han, Dean of NUS Law Faculty, said: "We're not very worried about the issue of differentiating ourselves because at the end of the day, what SMU wants to be and what we're today is simply to be an excellent law school. And, to do this means we always have to adapt to changing circumstances, to reinvent ourselves.

"One of the reasons why I welcome a second law school is because I think it will give more younger Singaporeans a chance to fulfil their aspirations."

Lawyers also welcomed the other changes ahead.

Larger firms felt that being able to employ foreign lawyers would put Singapore in a better position to compete with international players.

Said Latiff Ibrahim from the Harry Elias Partnership: "How do we attract such high-quality lawyers Why would international lawyers, who're doing very well in international law firms, who've got excellent career paths in New York and London, come and join a Singapore law firm? We need to consider various strategies, one of which is we need to split control in remuneration. We need to bring these people in and pay them, sometimes beyond our current partners, to attract that talent."

Meanwhile, lawyers in smaller firms were more concerned about the competition that might come from more players in the market.

But they still felt the changes would improve Singapore's legal services sector. - CNA/ir