NTU students studying abroad during holidays

BY LIAW WY-CIN

UNDERGRADUATES in Singapore tend to spend their holidays working or on overseas vacations with their parents or friends.

The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) wants them to spend this time studying abroad instead.

It launched its fifth student overseas exposure programme this year.

Called the Global Summer Studies Programme, it differs from the other overseas programmes by being offered during the holidays from May to July.

It puts NTU on track to having at least half its undergraduates get an overseas exposure by 2008 — a target all three local universities here are aspiring towards.

So far, 36 per cent of the National University of Singapore’s students have had some overseas exposure. That figure is 40 per cent for the Singapore Management University and 35 per cent for NTU.

Studying abroad during the holidays is popular in the United States and Europe but it has not yet caught on in Singapore, said the director of NTU’s International Relations Office, Mr Sonny Lim.

“It is important to push people beyond their comfort zones, to test themselves,” he said at a media conference at NTU yesterday.

Students would take more readily to an overseas stint during the holidays, knowing they would not be missing too much of school, he said.

For its new programme, NTU has tied up with universities in the US, Hong Kong, France and Germany.

Some 230 students have already gone through this programme, which allows them to earn up to eight credits. These can count towards their course at NTU — allowing them to graduate sooner.

One student who went through the programme has also begun to see the world in a new light.

Miss Rena Wong, 22, a final-year student at NTU’s School of Communication and Information, went for a University of California, Los Angeles programme in Washington, DC two months ago.

Her five-week course there opened her eyes to life as a minority, as she experienced her own share of racial insensitivity there.

She said: “Now, I’m more sensitive to the minorities here, for example, not lapsing into Mandarin in their presence.”