It's the start of the new academic year for university students here.

It'll mark the beginning of exciting times for our three universities as they embark on new initiatives to enhance their global standing.

One of their greatest challenges, as Wu Shang Yuan finds out, is to keep the brightest local students here in Singapore.

If the line-up of programme offerings at our universities is anything to go by, prospective students will have a lot to look forward to in the near future.

The National University of Singapore will be opening its Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School this year.

On the education front, more focus will be placed on areas such as biomedical sciences and the growth of Asia.

The Nanyang Technological University will be working on more double degree courses and integrated bachelor and masters degree programmes with overseas partners.

As for the Singapore Management University, focus will be placed on developing its graduate programmes and its new law school.

The measures are designed to make their programmes more attractive to students as the universities try and draw in the best and brightest.

There's been a loss of top local students to overseas universities.

and the universities say the problem could worsen when the first batch of students taking the Integrated Programme enter university next year.

These students, exposed to a broader based curriculum and more advanced modules, are more likely to consider overseas options.

NUS Provost Tan Chorh Chuan on countering this trend.

What we've been doing is to make our programmes more innovative. Many students also want that significant overseas exposure. Here, we're able to provide them with an education that's of high quality, allows them to build up their networks here and a complementary education at a top university overseas.

Would this be enough to keep local students here?

SMU Provost Tan Chin Tiong says already, these measures ARE working.

It's cheaper when you pick up that first degree in Singapore. And network is very important when they return to Singapore to work. So having that network and the opportunity to spend time overseas, you're actually win-win on both fronts.

NTU Acting Provost Er Meng Hwa sums up the approach of the three universities.

Our role here is to create multiple pathways and give these top students opportunities to realize their potentials and pursue their passions.