SMU undergrads see good prospects

FOR the students who signed up for the newly launched international trading track at SMU, it was a leap of faith.

One of those students, third-year business management undergraduate Joy Ng, says: "Like many students, my knowledge about trading is extremely limited. Compared to banking and consultancy, trading is a relatively un-profiled industry."

Another, economics and business management student James He, says: "My initial perception of trading is akin to playing poker cards."

But already they seem to have a calling for the profession. The students cite an awareness that international trade is gaining in prominence and the opportunities that will inherently arise from that development as reasons for choosing to take up the track.

"I signed up for very practical reasons," says Ms Ng. "By enrolling in the track, I will be equipped with a foundation in international trading and hence, in a better position to fill the need in the market — it was really about seeing an opportunity and grabbing it."

The instinct to suss out opportunities and seize them appears to be quite strongly developed already in this young student, who hopes to work for a trading company when she graduates.

Mr He meanwhile is developing a good understanding of other aspects of international trading critical to becoming a good trader, like courses in law, the shipping business, trade finance and risk management. "Each provided me with an understanding of the diverse demands of trading," he says.

However, what is clear is that they see good prospects all round. Ms Ng for example sees herself in a better position to get a good job after having gone through the track.

She believes the multi-disciplinary nature of the courses as well as additional value-added elements like the oil trading course and internships and study trips all enhance her career prospects.

"I hope to be a physical trader in commodities, hopefully oil, which requires the understanding of a huge range of subjects and going through this programme would definitely help to shorten the learning curve," says Mr Ee.

While under no illusion that it will be an easy route, going on the track has reinforced his goal of wanting to be a trader.

Among the highlights of the track for the students so far has been a recent study trip to China. The seven-day mission to Shanghai and Dalian not only gave Mr Ee a better understanding of the processing and transportation chain of commodities at its source but also impressed upon him the vast development of the two Chinese cities which are increasingly important markets for trading firms.

The track’s support from its industry partners was very important in this respect. The students were able to visit companies and get a first-hand experience of their operations.

"It definitely helped to give me an understanding of the trading business beyond the scope and knowledge of the textbooks and what was taught outside class," remarks Ms Ng.