The next big thing: Global degrees

Students say it gives them an edge when looking for jobs here or overseas

**BY JANE NG**

Apart from the now-familiar double degrees, global degrees are catching on with local students who see the world as their oyster.

Global degrees are conferred by both a local and foreign university, usually done within the same four years. Students say it will give them an edge when looking for a job here or overseas.

Some 600 students at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) are enrolled in such courses, a six-fold increase from five years ago. At the National University of Singapore (NUS), about 800 students are on such programmes, compared to 500 in 2003.

As for the Singapore Management University (SMU), it has one global degree, a fast-track programme with Carnegie Mellon University which eight students are on.

These SMU students will graduate with both a Bachelor of Science (Information Systems Management) degree from SMU and a master's degree from Carnegie Mellon.

Tuition fees for a global degree programme may be higher because overseas universities generally charge more.

But many of these programmes come with a grant or scholarship, so a student could end up paying almost the same amount as someone in a typical local course – about $25,000 for the entire programme.

At NUS, students get to pick from around 40 global degree courses, with at least two launched in recent weeks.

One new course is the joint Bachelor of Arts programme offered with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Singapore students will spend two to five semesters at the American campus.

The programme can be completed in the same time-frame of about four years. Classes start in July with eight to 10 students from each university.

In the pipeline is a dual law degree programme which will start in July next year with the New York University School of Law. Students will graduate with a bachelor's and master's degree.

Associate Professor Alan Tan, vice-dean for research and graduate studies at the NUS' law faculty, expects the tie-up with New York University to be popular, especially with students keen to practise law with American firms.

"US law firms typically prefer students who have studied for some time in the US... They usually interview students towards the end of the US academic year."

"It will thus be greatly advantageous for students in this programme who will be physically in New York at that time," he said.

An NTU spokesman said its global degree graduates will be able to work across cultures – just what multinational corporations want.

Third-year SMU student Shirley Leow, 22, who is now at Carnegie Mellon University, said the programme will enable her "to analyse situations from a wider perspective".

"I will be able to apply the competencies and skills I've acquired from two renowned universities."