More taking post-grad courses

MBA students up by 15 per cent at NUS

WHEN the economy gets gloomy, the graduates get going—to join post-graduate courses.

Mr Chow Cheok Kai, for example, is laying the groundwork for when the financial sector recovers by arming himself with a master's degree in business administration.

Mr Chow, 32, enrolled in the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School’s Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme this year, just as the global economic situation took a turn for the worse.

He said he had decided to enrol in the programme to “open up more career opportunities”.

He has an honours degree in mechanical engineering, but hopes to eventually pursue a career in consulting or financial services.

He said: “Although the outlook is bleak at the moment, I still have a year before graduation.

“Hopefully, I will be able to secure an internship in the middle of next year that I can convert into a full-time position after graduation.”

Mr Chong Wei Nian, 25, a master’s student at Singapore Management University (SMU), also said the worsening economic climate was a key consideration in his decision to pursue a post-graduate degree.

He said he had originally applied for a master’s degree as an “alternative option” to a job.

But as the global economic climate worsened, the idea of furthering his studies looked more appealing.

“I was deciding between looking for a job and accepting the offer. Since it looked more unlikely that I would be able to get the kind of job I wanted, I took the offer (to join the master’s programme),” he said.

He added that he wanted “to be trained in a field that I am passionate about”.

Mr Chong will complete his Master of Science in Management in 2010.

If the numbers are anything to go by, more students seem to be taking up post-graduate courses during this economic downturn.

A spokesman for NUS told The New Paper: “Anecdotally, we had observed an increase in the number of applications for postgraduate courses during the most recent admission exercise.

“While the cause of the increase is difficult to pin down, the economic downturn could probably be one of the main factors.”

Increase in intake

A spokesman from the NUS Business School said its MBA programme, which started classes in August, attracted 5,000 applicants in its most recent intake, a 15 per cent increase over last year’s intake.

“Traditionally, many strong applicants will take the opportunity of an economic slowdown to upgrade themselves and go back to school,” the spokesman said.

So far, more than 2,500 applications for next year’s intake have been received since the application period opened in October. Applications close next May.

Applications for post-graduate courses are also up at Nanyang Technological University, which has seen an approximate 3 per cent increase for its most recent intake, a spokesman said.

However, Ms Ence Solheim-Pao, director of SMU’s MBA programme, said it was “too early” to tell if there has been significant changes in enrolment numbers as the programme started only in January.

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-NUS spokesman