

ACADEMIC CREDIT TO BE GIVEN FOR THE UNITS

SMU to let students propose modules related to their CCAs

School to launch one or two of such modules in 2015 for about 15 to 20 students per class

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SINGAPORE – A student's pursuits outside the classroom could become part of his academic experience at Singapore Management University (SMU) in the form of modules relevant to his co-curricular activities (CCAs), come next year.

This is among the changes to come for SMU undergraduates following a curriculum review that began in 2012 with the aim of placing greater emphasis on out-of-classroom experiences.

Sharing the details of initiatives to come in an interview with TODAY, SMU vice-provost (undergraduate) Pang Yang Hoong said students will be able to propose what they wish to learn based on their CCA involvement. This can include classes on theatre studies or sports science for those involved in the arts and sports CCAs, or a history of music module for those in the university choir. Academic credit will be given for these modules.

"Because our students spend so much time on CCAs, we feel that sometimes they do that at the expense



of their studies," said Professor Pang. "But if we can help them integrate CCAs into studies, then they can see that whatever they are doing in their CCAs is also developing them holistically... We call that experiential learning."

Nonetheless, the number of students affected by this change is expected to be small — SMU is aiming to launch one or two of such modules next year for about 15 to 20 students per class. This is because any proposed module will still be subjected to approval depending on its academic rigour and whether there are suitable faculty members to teach them, Prof Pang said.

Currently, about 30 per cent of each SMU cohort takes part in CCAs and Prof Pang also hopes that this change will also encourage more CCA participation among students.

At the National University of Singapore (NUS), undergraduates can provide feedback on modules offerings and help to design new classes. A NUS spokesperson, in response to media queries, shared that the State-Minorities Relations In Southeast Asia module offered during semester breaks under the University Scholars Programme, was created by students who went on a field trip.

Also part of SMU's plans to enhance the undergraduate experience is a pilot for a short-stay residential

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SMU VICE-PROVOST (UNDERGRADUATE)

college to be launched by the end of this year. The university will be using the nearby Vanguard Building on Stamford Road and activities include inter-disciplinary classes taught by faculty members and students developing their own projects.

The idea was first revealed by SMU's governing board chairman Ho Kwon Ping in January, with the possibility of locating it at the car park behind the Peranakan Museum at Armenian Street.

Prof Pang said of the concept: "What we want are learning spaces ... that will allow (students) to work on projects together, which will make the student experience more meaningful".

Modifications to the curriculum are also on the cards in the coming years, such a compulsory Asian Studies module for undergraduates, aimed at helping them seize opportunities in the booming Asian economies.

The university also hopes to better prepare its graduates for a volatile work environment in the future. A new Modes Of Thinking module will be introduced next year, where students will use case studies to analyse unpredictability in businesses, among other things. "This is to prepare their mindsets ... even if it is just to anticipate such a thing would happen, I think they will be better prepared than to enter a situation totally unprepared," Prof Pang said.