SMU to broaden learning for freshmen

Those enrolling in August next year will go through revamped syllabus

By AMELIA TENG

FRESHMEN entering the Singapore Management University (SMU) in August next year will go through a revamped syllabus, in the university’s bid to broaden what students learn.

Undergraduates will take modules from a wider range of topics, and these courses will make up nearly half their degree programme.

SMU provost and deputy president Rajendra K Srivastava told The Straits Times in an interview on Tuesday that the new approach aims to help students broaden their understanding of different disciplines and issues, on top of having “depth” in their chosen majors.

Currently, students take 10 modules that fall outside their specialisation. Except for six university-wide modules on topics such as ethics and leadership, they can choose the rest from any school.

From next year, freshmen will be required to take the same number of modules — but from a wider range of topics.

They must take at least one course from eight "clusters", which combines classroom instruction with online curricula, since 2012. For instance, students choose modules they're interested in.

The existing curriculum allows students to choose more modules in a field that they are strong in, and avoid others they are unsure of. They may end up being well-versed in only one or two areas, he added.

Mr Elijah Hum, 21, who has a place to read economics at SMU this year, likes the sound of the new syllabus.

"The clusters are broad bodies of knowledge that our graduates should have, so that they have a more holistic education," he said.

One of the "clusters" is made up of foundational modules such as academic writing and calculus; another consists of existing university-wide courses.

Professor Srivastava said freshmen pursuing different degrees will then have a "common base of knowledge".

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