

Publication: Channel News Asia Online

Date: 22 March 2018

Headline: SMU to make global exposure a requirement for graduating students

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Singapore Management University. (File Photo: Calvin Oh)

SINGAPORE: Students who join the Singapore Management University (SMU) from August this year will have to participate in at least one overseas programme in order to graduate, the school announced on Thursday (Mar 22).

In a media release, the school said that undergraduates stand to gain a "strong competitive edge" from global exposure.

In view of this, the university will "ramp up opportunities and support for its students, and ensure that every single one of them enters the workforce with overseas experience", it said.

This will involve augmenting its existing opportunities, introducing new forms of global exposure activities and enhancing its support to make sure no student will miss out on global exposure opportunities due to financial difficulties, it added.

The school said it currently has a range of university-funded and donor-supported financial assistance schemes at SMU that needy students can tap on for their overseas activities and programmes. It also offers a loan for overseas student programmes, with no income criterion.

SMU's global exposure programmes include international exchange programmes, overseas internships, study mission modules that include overseas trips, participating in international competitions or performances for co-curricular activities as well as overseas community service projects.

SMU Vice-Provost (Undergraduate Matters) Lim Kian Guan said that having global exposure from the vantage of a university education is "invaluable" for international networking and also open doors to bigger opportunities.

"When students approach their global exposure opportunities with an enthusiastic and open mind, the benefits are immense. Academically, gaining a first-hand, real-world perspective of issues learnt in the classroom serves to deepen students' learning and knowledge application. More importantly, the journey builds independence, empathy, open-mindedness, not to mention soft-skills like communication and teamwork."

Professor Lim said that close to 90 per cent of the university's graduates are already using at least one of SMU's opportunities to experience the world.

"Many are often so enriched that they opt to go on a second type of global exposure activity or programme. Going forward, we want to make sure no SMU student graduates without this precious global experience," he added.

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According to SMU, 87 per cent of the schools' graduates last year participated in at least one global exposure activity during their university education, with 55 per cent having participated in at least two.

About 64 per cent participated in an international exchange programme, 55 per cent went abroad for overseas community service projects, 24 per cent went on study missions, 14 per cent represented the university in international competitions or performances and 6 per cent were involved in overseas internships.

The university said its efforts to augment its programmes include establishing new university partnerships for exchange programmes, intensifying talks with companies for overseas internships and organising cultural exchange and immersion programmes.

It is also looking to increase the number of study missions, especially to Asia, it said.

"With Singapore's ASEAN Chairmanship this year, it is especially important that our young undergraduates are given more opportunities to gain a good grasp and understanding of ASEAN, learn about the opportunities and challenges, as well as network and engage with their counterparts and with organisations in the region," Prof Lim said.

Source: CNA/mz