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Headline: New SMU students need overseas stint to graduate

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(From left) Mr Darius Tan, who will be entering Singapore Management University's (SMU) School of Law, Ms Terri Tan, who went on three overseas trips with SMU, and Mr Damien Choo, who will be joining SMU's School of Accountancy. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

Students joining the Singapore Management University (SMU) from August will need overseas experience to graduate, the university said yesterday.

This could include exchange programmes, internships, cultural exchanges and immersions, among other kinds of programmes.

Professor Lim Kian Guan, SMU's Vice-Provost for undergraduate matters, said: "Global traction and understanding underpins success in careers in today's globally connected environment. To have global exposure from the vantage of a university education is invaluable for international networking and global vision."

The university has an average cohort size of about 2,000 students each year.

Year 4 economics undergraduate Terri Tan, 23, went on three overseas trips with SMU, including a community service stint in Cambodia in 2015, and a four-month student exchange programme in the Netherlands last year.

She said the experience has taught her to think more critically. "I also think of ways I can improve based on what I experienced overseas... And I learnt to be independent, which has made me more confident when presenting my ideas."

Mr Darius Tan, 22, who will be entering SMU's School of Law in August, said he is keen to take part in a semester-long exchange programme. Being in a country for about six months would also allow him to make friends and experience the local culture better, he added.

To ensure that no one misses out on such opportunities due to financial constraints, SMU said it has a range of university-funded and donor-supported assistance schemes that needy students can tap.

The SMU joins the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) in making overseas experience a graduation requirement. SUSS introduced the requirement in 2014.

Meanwhile, the National Research Foundation's (NRF) Marine Science Research and Development Programme is offering undergraduates from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang

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Technological University the chance to go on fully-funded overseas programmes focusing on the marine sciences. They include exchange programmes, research opportunities and internships.

The overseas programme awards are co-funded by the NRF and the science faculties of the two universities, and will start in July, said NUS Professor Peter Ng, who is director of the programme. "We want to get students excited about marine science. The experience will then hopefully get them started on a research career in marine sciences and build national capabilities in this domain," said Prof Ng.

Singapore Human Resources Institute president Erman Tan said overseas experience could help students learn to be independent and proactive in problem-solving. It would also help them be more adept at communicating with different people.

"These are traits that employers will value, especially in our fast-paced, ever-changing economy."