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**Headline: SMU makes overseas experience compulsory for all new undergraduates**

## **SMU makes overseas experience compulsory for all new undergraduates**



The Singapore Management University will be ramping up opportunities and support for its undergraduates so that they will enter the workforce with overseas experience. TODAY file photo

SINGAPORE — From August, all undergraduates enrolling at the Singapore Management University (SMU) will need to attain some form of overseas exposure before they can graduate.

Announcing the new requirement in a media release on Thursday (March 22), the SMU said: “In view of the strong competitive edge that its undergraduates stand to gain from global exposure, the SMU will ramp up opportunities and support for its students, and ensure that every single one of them enters the workforce with overseas experience.”

And to ensure that no student misses out on the compulsory overseas experience due to financial difficulties, the university said it will expand its existing global opportunities, introduce “new forms of global exposure activities”, as well as enhance its support for such students.

Explaining the rationale for the change, SMU’s vice provost (Undergraduate Matters) Professor Lim Kian Guan said “global traction and understanding underpins success in careers in today’s globally connected environment”.

Adding that the experience is not just “invaluable for international networking and global vision”, but also “opens doors to bigger opportunities”, Prof Lim said going forward, the university “wants to make sure no SMU student graduates without this precious global experience”.

Among the 1,775 graduates from the Class of 2017, 87 per cent had at least one form of global exposure activity during their time at the university, and 55 per cent graduated with at least two types of global exposure programme.

They participated in international exchange programmes (64 per cent), overseas community projects (55 per cent), overseas study missions (24 per cent), and represented the university in international co-curricular activity competitions or performances (14 per cent). Some 6 per cent were involved in overseas internships.

SMU currently collaborates with 255 universities in more than 170 cities across some 50 countries on a range of student mobility programmes for semester exchanges and short-term study.

As international exchange is the “most popular form of global exposure” taken up by its students, the university said it will be working on offering more global opportunities to undergraduates.

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For instance, to secure more placements for overseas internships, its career centre has “intensified talks” with Singapore companies that operate overseas subsidiaries, as well as with multinational corporations headquartered here.

The university’s various schools also offer modules which give undergraduates a chance to study business, legal and/or socio-political aspects of a particular region or country. As these “Study Mission” modules culminate with a study trip, undergraduates are able to gain a first-hand perspective of the issues.

“We are looking to increase the number of such study missions, particularly to Asia,” said Prof Lim. He added that with Singapore taking over as chair of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean) this year, it is especially important that the students are given more opportunities to gain a good grasp and understanding of the grouping, learn about the opportunities and challenges, as well as network and engage with their counterparts and with organisations in the region.

Prof Lim also said it will leverage on its SMU-X pedagogy, where students work in team projects to tackle real challenges faced by organisations, to offer undergraduates more overseas exposure.

SMU has expanded its partnerships to give undergraduates the opportunity to engage in SMU-X projects with companies, non-governmental organisations and partner universities out of Singapore.

“These SMU-X Overseas projects will give students a realistic experience working with partners abroad, and/or managing regional and global projects in the future workplace,” the university added.

In the next two years, it plans to offer SMU-X Overseas modules in Laos, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

There are also plans to organise cultural exchanges and immersion programme such as overseas expedition trips by its student clubs.

Undergraduates looking to enrol in SMU this year told TODAY they welcome the move.

Mr Damien Choo, who will be joining SMU’s School of Accountancy in August said making overseas exposure mandatory gives “students who are afraid to step out of their comfort zone” that “final nudge”.

“Overseas study missions and internships will also allow us to meet companies from outside of Singapore. All in all, I just feel that it’s great to learn from a different perspective and get to know people from all around the world,” said the 21-year-old who graduated from Anglo-Chinese Junior College.

Mr Darius Tan — who will be reading law at SMU later this year — said he is “excited” by the new requirement.

“I’ve never had the opportunity to travel when I was in primary and secondary school or in junior college even though there were certain opportunities were due to financial reasons,” said the 22-year-old.

“I believe that by making it compulsory for all SMU students to gain global exposure, SMU would be providing financial help or assistance in terms of loans or subsidies which is necessary and ideal for students in my situation”.

Meanwhile, final-year undergraduate Terri Tan, who went for three overseas stints during her time at SMU, said the experience has helped her in her learning.

“I have developed critical thinking in terms of learning as I get to learn from other people (from various nationalities) when I studied abroad,” said the 23-year-old, who is studying at SMU School of

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Economics. "I get to also interact and hear their opinions which helped me to broaden my mindset in learning."