

Google partners SMU to offer data analytics course

Lester Wong

Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduates looking to enter the data and analytics sector are getting a leg-up.

The university last Thursday signed an agreement with Google Singapore to offer the SMU-Google Squared Data & Analytics Programme.

The partnership marks the first time Google is extending its programme, launched in 2014, to undergraduates of a local university.

It had previously been run as a collaboration between Google and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) under the latter's TechSkills Accelerator initiative, and was open to fresh graduates in Singapore.

The programme will now be available only to SMU undergraduates.

Under the work-study programme, students will undergo a six-month internship at a Google partner company and earn credit. They will also return to campus for up to one day a week during term time to read up to two additional courses.

Google Singapore's country director Stephanie Davis said the tie-up made sense as Google was looking to scale up the programme due to broad trends in the digital economy and increasing demand from employers for Squared Data trainees.

“The feedback was positive over the first four years of the programme, and over time it only strengthened. We were also learning of the successful careers that graduates were embarking upon and even greater demand from employers in the marketplace,” said Ms Davis.

“The good news then was, how do we work together to scale, and that’s when with the IMDA we began looking for a partnership with a local university. SMU, with its long-time commitment to working with data and analytics, just seemed like the perfect solution.”

The inaugural batch of 25 students is in the midst of completing a 12-week digital analytics technology course prerequisite, including sessions with industry subject-matter experts from Google and its partners. In previous years, this component was a six-week full-time affair.

The students are due to start their internships with the likes of Dentsu Aegis Network, Grab and Expedia in May.

A second batch of 50 students is expected to follow later this year. This would represent a significant increase in programme graduates, of which there are more than 90 from the programme’s first four years.

SMU president Lily Kong said work-study electives and longer internships provide an optimal balance between institution-based learning and on-the-job training.

“Through the programme, our students will gain valuable experience and obtain a better understanding of the demands and opportunities in these industries,” said Professor Kong.

Google Squared Data & Analytics programme and SMU alumnus Jordon Yuen, 28, said data and analytics cut across all sectors in the business world, making such a skill set very valuable.

“You will be able to apply what you’ve learnt across a very wide range of real-world situations and I feel it’s important for business students to have some kind of data and analytics background,” said Mr Yuen, who graduated from SMU in 2016 and is now an analytics manager with advertising data agency Essence.

Infocomm professionals are in high demand in Singapore.

The economy currently employs about 200,000 infocomm and media professionals, with a 2017 IMDA survey projecting demand for infocomm professionals to rise by 28,500 between 2018 and 2020.

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