

SMU pilot introduces JC, IP students to programming

TODAY reports: The aim is to introduce basic coding to these students and expose them to courses they can take up if they choose to pursue the subject.

By Jordon Simpson, TODAY

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A man types on a computer keyboard. (Photo: REUTERS/Kacper Pempel/Files)

SINGAPORE: The Singapore Management University (SMU) has rolled out a programme for junior college students and Integrated Programme students from years Four to Six who have not been formally trained in programming.

The aim is to introduce basic coding to these students and expose them to courses they can take up if they choose to pursue the subject.

A three-week pilot is being conducted, in which 45 students are taught to write and run code using the Ruby language, and to solve a range of programming problems. Students take classes online and attend training sessions in person.

The students can access more than 300 hours of online lectures, as well as quizzes to test how much they have understood. The meet-ups consist of assignment critiquing and discussions, as well as programming exercises.

Some of the exercises covered in the programme, which is endorsed by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, include creating a battleship game in text format and a Sudoku puzzle generator, in response to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong posting a Sudoku solver on Facebook.

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On the functional end, the students also learn how to analyse data, such as on flights to Singapore from different countries. They then use this information to come up with statistics through coding.

Participants who pass the examination will be awarded a certificate of competency from SMU's School of Information Systems. The pilot run was free, but a nominal fee may be charged for future editions of the programme, which will be held at least once a year.

"Not many junior college students are exposed to programming, and very few junior colleges offer computing as an A-level subject," said School of Information Systems senior instructor Mok Heng Ngee.

"This means the industry is losing talent. Through this course, we hope to get more students interested in a career in programming."

Raffles Institution student Ng Yee Yan, 17, said: "The tutorials, assignments and in-class exercises encouraged me to practise what I've learnt. That contributed greatly to the understanding of what was being taught. Also, the professors and teaching assistants have been extremely helpful in clearing up any confusion."

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