

The more internships the better for SMU students

Work stints beef up their CVs and let them try the various sectors

By **SANDRA DAVIE**
SENIOR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

SINGAPORE Management University (SMU) students are so keen to take up internships that some are going on up to six during their four years of study – even though they are required to do only one.

One in 10 goes overseas to gain experience, while some students even extend their study periods to fit in more work stints, new figures from the university show.

Although salaries are modest, SMU says many take up extra internships to boost their curriculum vitae and chances of getting a job, with one in three landing a position at the company they spent time at.

The National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have also noted that many of their students go on internships. NTU said more than 4,000 students go on internships annually. About 30 per cent are offered jobs by the companies they intern at.

In the last two years, the Education Ministry has been encouraging applied, hands-on learning and work stints so that students are better prepared for work.

This year, the Singapore Institute of Technology and SIM University have also started offering programmes in which students alternate between semesters of work and study.

SMU students, though, need no prodding according to Mr Sim Cher Young, who heads SMU's career centre.



SMU student Brandon Ong (left) has gone on four internships in various industries which have helped him decide on a career in banking. Mr Kwok Wei Jie, who graduated from SMU, had a job attachment at the Economic Development Board and is now working there on a permanent basis. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

He said: "Students get to try different types of jobs and different industries and chalk up work experience.

"It also serves to beef up their CV. Increasingly, employers are looking beyond academic grades but at soft skills and work experience."

SMU students heading overseas are choosing emerging economies such as India, China, the Middle East and Mexico – partly influenced by their professors who lead study missions there.

Mr Sim said employers also gain from internships by using them as a recruitment tool. They are offering more structured internships and assigning supervisors and mentors to guide the in-

FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE

You can listen to the different accounts of people in various industries and jobs but really there's nothing like trying it for yourself. Only then do you have a better understanding of what the job is like.

– SMU student Brandon Ong, who has gone on four work stints so far

terns. Ms Yukiko Hiizumi, who heads campus recruitment for Barclays in Asia, said the bank offers a structured programme in which each intern is assigned a

line manager. About 70 per cent of interns go on to secure full-time jobs there.

Mr Max Loh, Asean and Singapore Managing Partner at EY – the accounting firm formerly known as Ernst & Young – said: "It's a good opportunity to see interns in action and assess their skills for entry-level graduate positions."

About 60 per cent of the 250 EY interns a year go on to take up jobs there.

SMU student Brandon Ong, 24, has gone on four work stints to date; at a cocoa trading company, an energy research consultancy, an energy company and an investment bank. The different firms have helped him to figure

out where his interests and strengths lie and he is now seeking a career in banking.

He said: "You can listen to the different accounts of people in various industries and jobs but really there's nothing like trying it for yourself. Only then do you have a better understanding of what the job is like."

Mr Kwok Wei Jie, 25, who recently graduated with an economics degree from SMU, said his work attachment at the Economic Development Board (EDB) helped him land a job there.

He said: "I was given a challenging project, but it made me realise how meaningful the work can be at EDB."

sandra@sph.com.sg