

FLEXIBILITY KEY FEATURE OF FULL-TIME PROGRAMMES

Three-part admission process for new UniSIM courses

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SINGAPORE – Securing a spot in one of SIM University's (UniSIM) new full-time degree programmes next year will mean passing a three-part admission process — watching a video and submitting an essay about it, followed by one-on-one and group interviews, and concluding with a reflection essay.

This helps the university get to know a student better, and also mirrors the school's pedagogy — requiring students to go to classes prepared with some work done, said UniSIM Provost Tsui Kai Chong yesterday as he laid out the details of the three programmes — in accountancy, marketing and finance — at a media conference.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat announced last week that UniSIM and the Singapore Institute of Technology will begin taking in 200 students each for their full-time degree programmes next year, as part of the Government's plan to provide more university places for Singaporean students.

UniSIM's inaugural batch will offer 80 places in the finance and marketing programmes, and 120 places for accountancy — courses which reflect an increasingly services-oriented economy, Professor Tsui said. Places will be split between A-Level students and diploma holders, and possibly those with other qualifications.

The provost said applicants will be first shortlisted based on grades and non-academic skills like leadership. He did not give a clear weightage to

either criterion, but noted that it will place "very serious consideration" on the latter category. "We would prefer now to assemble a class where people care not for themselves alone, but care for each other, for society at large," he added. A UniSIM spokesperson said that the entire admission procedure will take less than four weeks.

UniSIM President Cheong Hee Kiat reiterated that "flexibility" will be a key feature of its full-time courses, where students can take any time between three to six years to graduate. For instance, students can choose to speed things up by taking the evening classes that are part of the part-time courses. If they are offered a job midway through their studies, they can switch to studying part-time.

Currently, the maximum candidature for an honours degree course at the National University of Singapore is five years, while Nanyang Technological University allows students in several full-time engineering programmes to opt for part-time studies. The Singapore Management University also permits undergraduates to graduate in six years if they need more time for certain modules or to complete their double degree.

Prof Tsui noted that while other local universities also offer business degrees, UniSIM's full-time finance and marketing undergraduates will be able to minor in psychology and analytics, among other disciplines — drawing on the school's existing capabilities in the social sciences. These minor programmes also allow stu-

* UNISIM TO BEGIN STUDY TRIPS TO LAW SCHOOLS OVERSEAS

● SIM University (UniSIM) will make trips next week to schools like Queen Mary University of London and Northumbria University in the United Kingdom to study their law curricula, as it gears up to host Singapore's third law school.

Revealing this at a media conference yesterday, UniSIM President Cheong Hee Kiat also said the law school — which will offer a part-time degree course and focus on criminal and matrimonial law — will not open next year, and even opening in 2015 would be "dicey".

Unlike the other full-time degrees UniSIM is set to offer next year, there are no existing part-time law programmes for UniSIM

to leverage and build a full-time course on, and time is needed to build up staff capabilities, he explained. The new law school is also "going along a trajectory which is quite different from what the (other universities) are on now".

"We are really looking at how lawyers can be trained to have a focus on family law, criminal law and society in general. We (have) got to think through how to do it well while enabling our law graduates to be able to compete, if they wish to, effectively on the corporate side, with other kinds of organisations," Prof Cheong said.

In the meantime, UniSIM is visiting schools which have "sufficient emphasis on theory and

practice", in line with its vision of a law school that will integrate both, but focus heavily on practice.

"They prepare the students and look at how they can be integrated into the workplace, how to get to the bar, that is what we will probably model (UniSIM's curriculum on) after looking at how they do it."

For instance, at Northumbria, law students engage in clinical and experiential learning throughout the course, culminating in full case work on behalf of clients in the final year. Birkbeck, University of London, another school UniSIM is visiting, offers part-time and full-time law degrees, with evening classes for working adults.

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UNISIM PROVOST

students to interact with part-time students who are working adults, so that they can gain an industry perspective.

The school will also structure the work attachment experience with "clear learning outcomes", "such that students come away learning about subject material, (learning) how to deal with other people, about the business, (and) the student will function as an employee within the company", he said.

All students will have to complete a project centred on a work issue as well as 80 hours of service learning in order to graduate.

In the meantime, UniSIM has at least 14 auditing firms — including the Big Four: Deloitte, Ernst and Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers — and 38 other businesses on board

as work attachment partners.

Some 12 faculty members, including PhD holders from Harvard and Cambridge, have also been recruited. UniSIM eventually plans to have more than 100 faculty members for its full-time programmes.

University-bound students TODAY spoke to welcomed having more choices. Singapore Polytechnic graduate Tavence Heng, 21, felt that strong links to the workplace makes UniSIM's full-time finance courses attractive. Final-year Raffles Institution student Darren Foo, 18, said students value hands-on education opportunities, but noted that, compared to other local institutions, UniSIM's reputation is not as established, and this will be among his considerations.