

NUS launching 18-month internships

Students to be graded under scheme; it will start in August for those from 3 computing courses

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Recognising the value of internships, the National University of Singapore is restructuring its curriculum to allow some of its students to go on work attachments for as long as 18 months, starting from the new

academic year in August.

For a start, students from three computing courses – information security, business analytics and data science – will go on the 18-month internships from the end of their second year.

Besides using both years' long holiday breaks – from May to July – students will spend the whole of their third year working in a company. They will be given an allowance.

In the fourth year, they can take on research and projects that are related to the company's work.

NUS provost Tan Eng Chye said university officials had studied work-study schemes, called cooper-

ative education at several American and Canadian universities. This included the one run by Canada's University of Waterloo, which is known for boosting the job prospects of its graduates.

Professor Tan said the NUS scheme will start with students in three computing courses, where industry is hungry for talent and where the time taken from research outcomes to application is short.

Students can go out to work and apply what they have learnt from their professors and see how it can be applied to solve real-world problems in the industry.

Students' progress will be monitored by their professors and supervisors in the companies to which they are attached.

"We will set out clear learning outcomes at various stages... so that students will get the most out of it," Prof Tan said.

Adding that students will be graded, he said: "This is to signal the importance we place on it. Besides acquiring work skills, it is an opportunity for students to try out jobs and learn more about the industry they will be entering. For employers, it is a good way to recruit talent."

Work attachments, of up to six months, have been made compulsory for NUS engineering and computing students since 2014.

Medical, nursing, pharmacy, social work, food science, new

media and accountancy students are also required to undertake work attachments.

Prof Tan said that although 70 per cent of NUS undergraduates undertake some form of internship, the university has yet to collate figures on how many of them end up working with the companies where they served as an intern.

Anecdotally, many students do end up receiving offers at the end of their work stints.

NUS final-year student Luqman B. Lukman, who is majoring in quantitative finance, said he benefited from the three internships he went on – one in a government agency, another in an accounting firm and the third in global financial services firm J.P. Morgan Singapore, which offered him a permanent job as a technology analyst.

Said the 25-year-old, who took the job: "It meant giving up a chunk of my holidays, but it was well worth it as the work stints helped me discover where my strengths lie and what sort of job would suit me."

NUS computer science graduate Rey Neo Zhi Lei, 25, also landed his job as a software engineer at PayPal after interning there in his final year. "The six months were invaluable. I got a better understanding of what the work entails and what skills are important for work."

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CAREER JUMP-START

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NUS STUDENT LUQMAN B. LUKMAN,
on his internships.