

Students can learn skills and try out jobs while employers can recruit talent, says NUS provost

NUS to start 18-month internships

✔ SANDRA DAVIE, THE STRAITS TIMES

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 firm's work.

NUS provost Tan Eng Chye

said university officials had studied work-study schemes, called cooperative education at several American and Canadian universities. These include 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 the three computing courses, where the 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 firms where 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

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— NUS computer science graduate
Rey Neo Zhi Lei on his internship

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.

Though 70 per cent of NUS undergraduates undertake some form of internship, the university has yet to collate figures on how many end up working for the companies they interned at, Prof Tan said.

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

NUS final-year student Luq-

man B. Lukman, who is majoring in quantitative finance, said he benefited from his three internships in a government agency, an accounting firm and global financial services firm J.P. Morgan Singapore – which offered him a permanent job as a technology analyst.

The 25-year-old, who took the job, said: "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, who became a software engineer at PayPal after interning there in his final year, said: "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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