

# NUS to offer free course modules to alumni

## 770 places in 140 mostly postgraduate courses; free for first year of 3-year scheme

**Aaron Chan and Annabeth Leow**

Alumni of the National University of Singapore (NUS) will be able to attend some classes for free at their alma mater, the first time a campus here is offering modules to be audited at no charge by its graduates.

There will be around 770 places in 140 courses – mostly at the postgraduate level – across eight schools and faculties, starting from the academic year this August.

The first year of the three-year scheme is free. An administrative fee of about \$260 will be charged each semester thereafter.

Human resources industry watchers praised the scheme, billed as

being in line with the SkillsFuture initiative, but said jobseekers still need on-the-job training to stand out, while some alumni found the scope of the initiative restrictive.

Priority will be given to enrolled NUS students, with no more than one-tenth of places in each class for alumni. Participation in the initiative is capped at two courses in all.

Other local varsities offer alumni discounts on selected postgraduate and professional development courses. Nanyang Technological University knocks tuition down by one-fifth on unsubsidised courses, while the Singapore Management University has a 30 per cent alumni discount for certain programmes.

At NUS, alumni can choose be-

tween auditing courses for personal enrichment or taking them for credit to apply towards other qualifications offered by NUS.

Classes are in areas such as literature, financial risk management, human-computer interaction and stem cell biology.

Ms Wynne Yeo, who graduated from NUS in 1985 with a bachelor's in business administration, is keen on taking up a module.

The 54-year-old smoking cessation counsellor for youth said: "Taking just one module is a gateway to finding out more about a particular course and allows me to meet people with similar interests. Besides, it's free."

Ms Trillion So, human capital leader at PwC Singapore, said this programme allows working adults to engage in structured training

Youth counsellor Wynne Yeo, who graduated from NUS in 1985, is keen on taking up a module to find out more about a particular course and meet people with similar interests.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF WYNNE YEO



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# ‘Apply skills in real world to stay relevant’

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and be updated on trends and developments in the marketplace.

She said: “Jobseekers should go beyond merely staying up to date with future-focused skills. They must also know how to apply them to remain relevant.”

Ms Linda Teo, country manager of HR consultancy Manpower-Group Singapore, said that post-graduate courses may favour those who already have basic knowledge of a subject and could pose a barrier to jobseekers looking to switch careers. “As the economy changes, career switches will be common. It is important that learning programmes are able to facilitate this,” she added.

Ms Denise Phua, who chairs the Government Parliamentary Committee for Education, applauded this “bold and innovative” move.

But she suggested: “Knowing how busy adult learners often are, it would have been more appealing if courses were offered in a blended mix of both online coupled with some face-to-face interactions.”

Last week, at polytechnic graduation ceremonies, Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say, Trade and Industry (Industry) Minister S. Iswaran, and Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Chan Chun Sing stressed the need to be adaptable in the changing economy.

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