It’s back to school for growing number of NUS alumni

Enrolment in Lifelong Learners programme has risen steadily; data analytics very popular

Amelia Tong
Education Correspondent

A drive to attract alumni from the National University of Singapore (NUS) to return to school means the programme is one of the most popular in the university.

For the first time since the launch of the Academic Year 2018-19 which began in August last year, 2,288 NUS alumni took up courses, nearly doubling the initial enrolment of 880 across two programmes, according to figures when the initiative was first announced.

Each programme has two batches of sign-ups accounting for the two semesters running in August and January.

In response to queries, NUS said it received 2,268 applications from all programmes in 2018-19, up from 1,870 in 2017-18.

Each programme accepted two to five courses, making the programme called NUS Lifelong Learners or L3 for short, which has alumni enrol in a total of 22 courses.
The programme is part of a push by NUS to help alumni keep up with developments and disruptions in the workplace brought about by globalisation and technology.

An NUS spokesperson said it encourages graduates to engage in lifelong learning, for individual modules and select graduate programmes, as opposed to master’s programmes which are aimed towards.

They could obtain graduate certificates after completing a certain number of courses.

In some cases, could work towards qualifications like graduate diplomas, or even master’s degrees.

They could be attending classes with postgraduate students, with certificates given by the full Master’s Programme.

The milestone launched in August last year a middle application for students and alumni to plan their education and career path, to renew their academic records and enrol in courses.

It has also added more courses for alumni, starting with 13 courses in 2018 and increasing to 15 in 2019.

There are 14 courses in the catalogue this month. The spoken word popular courses among alumni include machine learning, data structures and algorithms, data visualization and finance of things.

NUS will also be adding new mini-courses in August this year to allow students to complete courses in three months.

L3 alumni can book four modules while working in the past two years, with options about data analytics, urban transport policy, data science and intellectual property, topics related to job.

The courses were taught by professors from the University of Oxford, Harvard, MIT and Singapore Management University and NUS.

The courses are only part-time in nature and run for two to four years.

I benefited a lot from the courses. It’s interesting, I won’t deny it, but I like the rigour of the programme. The topics are directly related to my work and immediately applicable.

Mr Ng, who graduated from NUS in 2006 with a Bachelor’s degree in economics and management, said: “A lot of things have changed in the past decade, and there are new things like facial recognition technology that didn’t exist in the past.

I benefited a lot from the courses. I enjoyed it very much, but I like the rigour of the programme. The topics are directly related to my work and immediately applicable.”

Mr Ng, who also has a Master of Science in knowledge management from NUS, plans to take more courses in the future.

“Have compromised a bit of my social life for these number of weeks because of the assignments and group projects, but it’s about the experience and planning well,” he said.

“On the positive side, I am working, already, or may need to look at new careers, because my job time to do more career. There’s a lot of flexibility.”