

Singapore Management University

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### SMU enhances its undergraduate curriculum to nurture graduates who can deliver meaningful impact globally

Singapore Management University

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## Media Release

### **SMU enhances its undergraduate curriculum to nurture graduates who can deliver meaningful impact globally**

*Recommendations of SMU Blue Ribbon Commission on Undergraduate Education  
being launched progressively from current academic year*

6 September 2018 (Thursday), Singapore – Singapore Management University (SMU) announced today that it is enhancing its undergraduate curriculum, following a one-year study by its Blue Ribbon Commission on Undergraduate Education. Besides redesigning its undergraduate Core Curriculum into three inter-related pillars of learning – Capabilities, Communities and Civilisations, SMU will integrate internship and community service into its new Core Curriculum as credit-bearing programmes. As an extension of its current approach to encourage multi-disciplinary learning, SMU will also introduce a new Exploratory Course scheme to encourage students to experiment with classes outside their major or their usual sphere of interest. The University also plans to pilot a credit-bearing work-study option that will allow students to take on up to six months of internship while concurrently studying on campus.

These enhancements are part of the recommendations made by the SMU Blue Ribbon Commission on Undergraduate Education, which SMU Provost, Professor Lily Kong, appointed in April 2017 with the objective of reviewing the University's undergraduate education to enhance the academic experience and holistic development of SMU undergraduate students. The Commission, which comprised SMU faculty members and administrative personnel, had sought the views of key stakeholders of the university, including students, alumni, employers; and also studied the practices of other local and overseas universities.

Professor Lily Kong, who chaired the Commission, said, "SMU aspires to deliver transformative education for a new generation of students that empowers them to create meaningful impact at home and abroad. We have reimagined our Core Curriculum, enhanced our co-curricular opportunities, developed a philosophical basis for our pedagogical approaches with a clear sense of why we approach our pedagogies as we do, and continue to develop learning spaces to support and facilitate the educational experience. These enhancements are designed to generate an educational milieu that is conducive and directed towards nurturing graduates with identities which are distinctively SMU."

#### New SMU Core Curriculum

The reimagined Core Curriculum is intended to nurture distinctive identities in SMU graduates as identified by the Commission, that is, graduates who have an *independent* mind while being *dependable* in deeds; and graduates who *think* deeply and broadly and at the same time, *act* to create value at home and abroad. (Please see illustration at Annex 1A.)

The new SMU Core Curriculum, which will be implemented from Academic Year 2019-2020, will comprise 12 course units (CU) grouped under three inter-related pillars of learning, namely Capabilities (6 CUs), Communities (4 CUs) and Civilisations (2 CUs). Collectively, the Core Curriculum

will initiate undergraduates into their journey to become well-rounded SMU graduates. *(Please see illustration at Annex 1B.)*

- **The *Capabilities pillar*** aims to tool up a student with specific competencies and skills which are necessary to dexterously operate in an increasingly complex, digitised and data-driven working environment. In addition to courses such as ‘Critical Thinking’, ‘Innovation & Creative Thinking’, ‘Business Modelling & Analytics’; the pillar also incorporates an enhanced credit-bearing Internship learning programme.
- **The *Communities pillar*** aims to help students understand the economic, technological, and cultural systems that structure our interactions with our communities. It also examines more closely Singapore society, as well as Asia, Singapore’s continental context, so that students can better appreciate the communities in which SMU is embedded. Courses include, for example, ‘Economics & Society’, ‘Artificial Intelligence & Society’, ‘Digital Cultures’ and ‘Urban Cultures’ (launched in August 2018), as well as a selection of foreign languages. An enhanced credit-bearing Community Service learning programme is also incorporated within.
- **The *Civilisations pillar*** aims to immerse students in fundamental and perennial debates that cut across time and space, and to encourage a critical dialogue between multiple and competing traditions of thought and problem-solving. This pillar comprises a ‘Ethics & Social Responsibility’ course and a new ‘Big Questions’ course (also launched in August 2018), which immerses students in fundamental and perennial debates that confront humanity at the highest level and cut across time and space, such as Happiness and Suffering; Wealth and Poverty; War and Peace; and Global and Local. Students will also experience the world through global exposure opportunities.

With the above enhancements, the SMU Core Curriculum will account for 12 CUs for every undergraduate, two of which are activity-based, namely Internship and Community Service, which remain as graduate requirements for all SMU undergraduates.

#### New Exploratory Course scheme

To promote multi-disciplinary learning and to allow students to pursue their interests and passions, SMU already offers significant flexibility through the double degree and second major programmes. With six undergraduate degree programmes and more than 40 majors and tracks being offered at SMU, there are about 300 possible major combinations and 15 double degree combinations that students can consider.

Starting from the current academic year, SMU will introduce an Exploratory Course scheme to further encourage students to experiment with classes outside their major or their usual sphere of interest, without being unduly concerned about the impact on their cumulative Grade Point Average (cGPA). Under the new scheme, students have the option to declare up to two of their passed letter grades to be excluded from the cGPA computation.

#### New Work-study Option

Recognising the value of longer internship durations, which enable students to better interlace institution-based learning with structured on-the-job training, and also facilitate more substantial and impactful work opportunities within the attachment company, SMU will begin pilot-testing a work-study option for selected programmes.

Students who are on the work-study option will alternate between working at least four days at the host company and studying on campus for up to one day each week, for a period of six months during the academic term. In this way, students will be able to take up to two courses during the work-study period. To ensure that the students deepen their disciplinary knowledge through the work-study experience, they will need to fulfil pre-determined deliverables and key milestones during the period, and will be mentored by a faculty advisor. This option will be piloted through selected programmes, such as the recently-launched Health Economics and Management second major, a collaboration with SingHealth.

#### Other recommendations by the Commission

Since its inception, interactive seminars have been a hallmark of SMU's distinctive pedagogy. They provide a supportive environment for faculty-student interaction, and foster open discussions and the exchange of ideas among peers. From 2015, SMU has also strengthened the development of experiential learning, particularly through its innovative SMU-X pedagogy, which is characterised by inter-disciplinary content; project-based learning; tackling of actual problems faced by organisations; and active student-mentoring by faculty members and industry partners.

Moving forward, SMU will continue to hold fast to its distinctive *interactive pedagogy*, while further developing *experiential learning* through expanded SMU-X offerings, including SMU-X Overseas courses. SMU will also place emphasis on *personalised learning*, which will enable faculty members to be more responsive to students' individual needs.

The University will leverage technology to enhance each of these three key pedagogical approaches. To this end, it has developed a three-year technology-enhanced learning (TEL) roadmap to drive TEL projects across the university and encourage innovative TEL projects that have a strong impact on teaching and learning, and desired student outcomes.

An Implementation Committee has been appointed and is in the process of developing a holistic evaluation framework to measure desired learning outcomes in SMU students. The University plans to augment existing assessment methods, develop new ways to chart students' learning and establish a consolidated system to evaluate the delivery of student outcomes. It is also developing and leveraging tools to collect, analyse and interpret data on students' learning.

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#### Enclosures:

- Annex 1 – SMU Graduate Identities and SMU Core Curriculum illustrations
- Annex 2 – Fact sheet on new Exploratory Course scheme
- Annex 3 – Fact sheet on new Work-Study option

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#### **About Singapore Management University**

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning

Home to over 10,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and post-graduate research programmes, SMU, is comprised of six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in multidisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and interdisciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. [www.smu.edu.sg](http://www.smu.edu.sg)

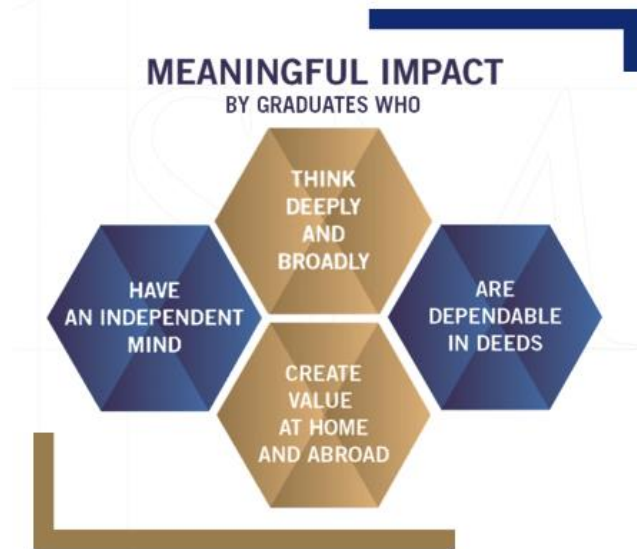
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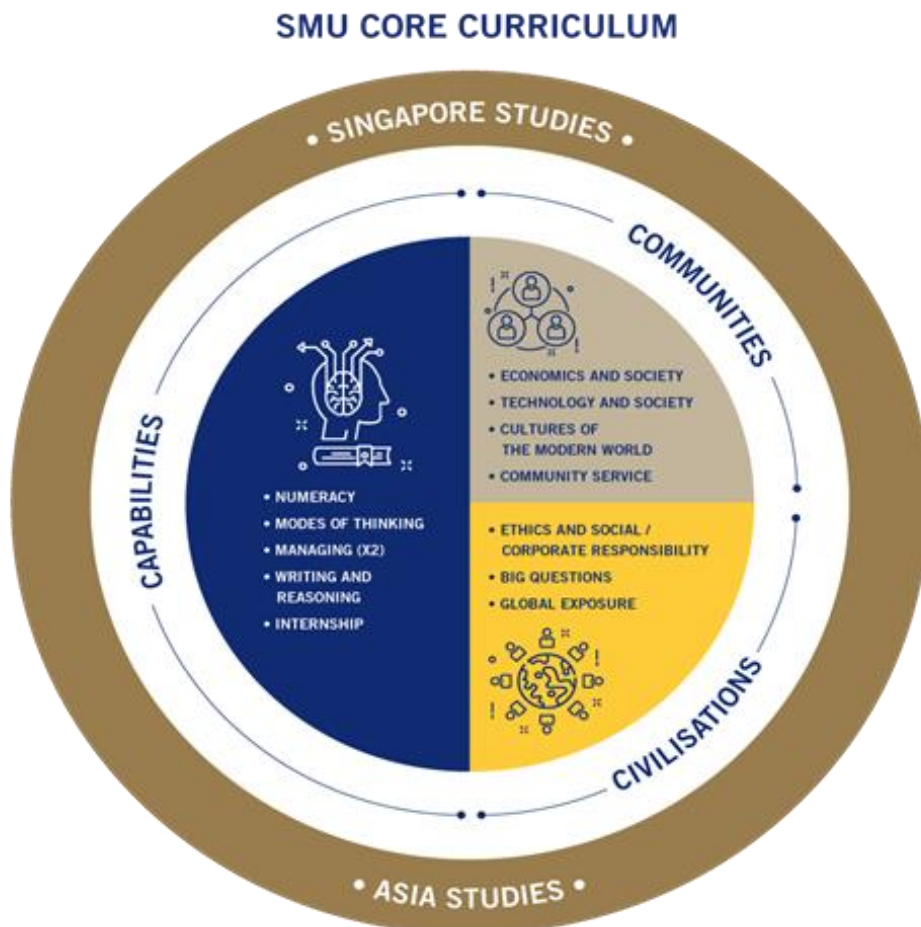
**Annex 1A**

The enhanced undergraduate Core Curriculum is intended to nurture distinctive SMU graduate identities, as illustrated below:



**Annex 1B**

The undergraduate Core Curriculum has been redesigned into three inter-related pillars of learning – Capabilities, Communities and Civilisations.



## Annex 2

### Fact sheet on new Exploratory Course scheme

#### **Why?**

- To encourage multi-disciplinary learning and to allow students to pursue their interests and passions, SMU already offers significant flexibility through the double degree and second major programmes.
  - Students can choose from more than 40 majors and tracks being offered at their own School or another SMU School, this works out to about 300 possible major combinations that students can consider;
  - Those with excellent academic results can also choose a double degree programme by combining any of two disciplines from SMU's six Schools: Accountancy, Business Management, Economics, Law, Information Systems Management or Social Sciences – a total of 15 possible combinations.
- SMU will introduce an Exploratory Course scheme to further encourage students to experiment with classes outside their major or their usual sphere of interest, without being unduly concerned about the impact on their cumulative Grade Point Average (cGPA).

#### **How does it work?**

- The Exploratory Course scheme will provide students the option to declare up to two of their passed letter grades to be excluded from the cGPA computation.
- Students will make this declaration of Exploratory Course at the point of filing for graduation.
- The scheme is subject to existing requirements that at least 21 CU taken at SMU must be counted towards the cGPA computation. Furthermore, compulsory University Core courses and compulsory major Core courses may not be declared as Exploratory Courses.

#### **Implementation**

- The new scheme will begin in the current academic year (AY2018-2019) and thus all current students will be able to benefit from it.

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## **Annex 3**

### **Fact sheet on new Work-Study Option**

#### **Why?**

- This new work-study option recognises the value of longer internship durations, which enable students to better interlace institution-based learning with structured on-the-job training; and facilitate more substantial and impactful work opportunities within the attachment company.

#### **How does it work?**

- Students alternate between working at least four days at the host company, and studying on campus for up to one day each week, for a period of six months (e.g. July to December, covering Term 1; or January to June, covering Term 2). This enables students to take up to two courses while they are on the work-study option.
- Students will work closely with a faculty advisor who will review the students' work-study proposal and determine the learning outcomes from the work-study experience. This will include scoping the final report that students must produce by the end of their work-study programme.
- By the end of this work-study period, students may be awarded 1 course unit (CU) with the satisfactory completion of a final report that will be graded (pass/fail) by the faculty advisor. Students who have not completed any credit-bearing internships before embarking on the work-study scheme may also use this experience to count towards the 1 CU for internship, provided that all the necessary internship requirements are met.
- Students may therefore earn up to 4 CUs during this work-study period through a combination of the work stint and fulfilling coursework by returning to campus for classes up to one day per week.

#### **Implementation**

- The proposed work-study option will be piloted through selected programmes, including the recently-launched Health Economics and Management second major. Based on the pilot run, SMU will review and refine the offering before rolling it out on a larger scale.

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