



NUS alumnus Ng Jinsheng, 35, co-founder of two start-ups, has taken modules to learn more about data analytics, urban transport policy, data science and intellectual property, topics related to his job. ST PHOTO: MARCELLIN LOPEZ

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

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

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A drive to attract alumni from the National University of Singapore (NUS) to go back to the classroom is off to a good start.

In the first semester of the latest academic year (AY) which began in August last year, 238 NUS alumni took up courses, nearly triple the initial enrolment of 83 across two semesters in 2018, when the initiative first started.

Each AY has two batches of sign-ups according to the two semesters starting in August and January.

In response to queries, NUS said it received 1,980 applications from alumni in AY2019, up from 550 in AY2018.

Each applicant can apply for up to five courses, under the programme called NUS Lifelong Learners or L³ for short, which lets alumni enrol in publicly available continuing education and training courses.

The programme is part of a push by NUS to help its alumni keep up with developments and disruptions in the workplace brought about by globalisation and technology.

An NUS spokesman said it expects more working adults to look for individual modules and shorter graduate programmes, as opposed to master's programmes which are at least 12 months.

They could obtain graduate certificates after completing a certain combination of credit-bearing modules and, in some cases, could work towards qualifications like graduate diplomas, or even master's degrees.

They could be attending classes with postgraduate students, without having to join the full master's programme.

The university launched in August last year a mobile application for students and alumni to plan their education and career path, retrieve their academic records and match jobs to skill sets.

It has also added more courses for

alumni, starting with 534 courses in 2018 and increasing to 650 in August last year.

There are 760 courses in the catalogue this month. The spokesman said popular courses among alumni are mainly in data analytics. Topics include machine learning, data structures and algorithms, data visualisation and Internet of Things.

NUS will also be rolling out mini-semester courses in August this year to allow students to complete courses in a shorter period of time.

NUS alumnus Ng Jinsheng took four modules while working, in the past two years, to learn more about data analytics, urban transport policy, data science and intellectual property, topics related to his job.

The 35-year-old is the co-founder of two start-ups – AnaVantage Management Consultancy and The New Norma – which provide consultancy services in data analytics.

Mr Ng, who graduated from NUS in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in statistics and applied probability, 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."

He added: "I benefited a lot from the courses. It's tiring, I won't deny it, but I like the rigour of the programmes. The topics are directly related to my work and immediately applicable."

Mr Ng, who also has a Master of Science in knowledge management from Nanyang Technological University, plans to take more courses this year.

"I have to compromise a bit on my social life for those number of weeks because of the assignments and group projects, but it's about time management and planning well," he said.

"The professors know we are working adults, or may need to travel at times, so they extend deadlines for assignments. There's a lot of flexibility."

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Number of applications from alumni in academic year 2019, according to NUS.

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