

SMU's Class of 2025 to get transcript listing skills gained during CCAs

Initiative shows university's commitment to developing holistic graduates, says don

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In a first among universities here, Singapore Management University's (SMU) graduating class of 2025 will receive in July a transcript recording their co-curricular activities (CCAs) on top of their academic transcript.

The co-curricular transcript will go beyond a simple listing of activities that the student has participated in. It will indicate the skill sets the student has developed in the process, and the extent to which he has developed these skill sets through three progressive levels.

At the highest level, a student's involvement in the activity has led to profound growth or a major shift in values, beliefs and perspectives. Information for the transcript is drawn from an online platform where students document their learning experiences through their CCAs, and reflect on their learning and growth.

Their instructors provide further guidance and feedback.

Speaking to The Straits Times, Professor Paulin Straughan, SMU's dean of students, said the initiative is a first in Singapore and shows SMU's commitment to developing holistic graduates with career and life-ready skills.

"The job market is evolving, and employers are now placing a greater emphasis on skills acquired outside the classroom, skills such as intercultural understanding, problem-solving ability and leadership skills," she added.

Prof Straughan noted that SMU was the first local university to introduce both internship and com-

munity service as graduation requirements – 25 years ago at its inception.

All its undergraduates are required to complete at least 10 weeks of internship and a minimum of 80 hours of community service, and the vast majority do more than that.

SMU students can also choose from global exposure programmes or project-based learning, or join student organisations that span areas including the arts and sports.

Mr Alvin Sim, head of co-curriculum development at SMU, said: "When we started on this, we felt strongly that learning from these experiences should not be incidental, left to chance. Rather, these experiences can be intentionally curated to bring about the development of certain skills."

He added that SMU has involved employers right from the start – in identifying the skill sets that matter in the workplace.

More recently, the university has also made efforts to familiarise employers with the co-curricular transcript and encouraged them to use it in their hiring process.

Skills-based hiring has gained traction globally.

According to LinkedIn's Future of Recruiting report in 2024, 73 per cent of recruiters worldwide prioritise competencies over degrees.

In Singapore, 70 per cent of employers place greater value on soft skills like communication and critical thinking than hard credentials.

Among the 10 most sought-after skills in LinkedIn's list, six are soft skills, including communication, relationship-building and adaptability.

Ms Elsie Ng, head of talent solutions at LinkedIn Singapore,



SMU students Timothy Lua Wei Sheng and Sivakami Arunachalam will be graduating at the end of the month. Ms Sivakami said recruiters have been referring to her co-curricular transcript to ask her about what she has learnt outside the classroom. PHOTOS: SMU

Mr Chan Chun Sing, guest of honour at SMU's co-curricular symposium on April 15, commended SMU for pioneering the CCA transcript but cautioned against it becoming yet another yardstick to chase.



FINDING YOURSELF AND MAKING AN IMPACT

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EDUCATION MINISTER CHAN CHUN SING

said: "Employers are looking beyond traditional credentials to assess a candidate's adaptability, leadership and problem-solving abilities. SMU's co-curricular transcript is highly effective in giving graduates a tangible way to showcase their competencies and stand out in an increasingly competitive

job market."

With mid-career job transitions on the rise in Singapore and alumni expressing interest in career coaching services, SMU announced on April 15 at a symposium that it would offer its alumni lifelong career support.

From May 1, which is Labour Day,

all SMU degree holders, including postgraduates, will have lifetime access to structured career support from the university.

SMU said the move aligns with national efforts such as SkillsFuture to strengthen career resilience and lifelong learning in an ever-evolving job market.

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing, who was the guest of honour at the co-curricular symposium at SMU's campus in Bras Basah, commended the university for pioneering the CCA transcript, but cautioned against it becoming "yet another yardstick for students to chase".

He said: "The CCA transcript, in its rightful spirit, is for our people to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, to know how to use those strengths to make a positive contribution. That's what we hope to see. University is not about trying to surpass others. University is about finding yourself and, in time, making an impact."

SMU students completing their degree studies at the end of April and who are already on a job hunt said recruiters are already referring to their interim co-curricular transcripts.

Sociology graduate Sivakami Arunachalam, 23, who joined regional and local programmes related to environmental sustainability, said the CCA initiative encouraged her to be more intentional in selecting activities and to reflect on the skills she was acquiring through the process.

"I am passionate about sustainability and have been so since my secondary school days, but it was useful to think of my CCAs in terms of the skills that I was acquiring and how they can add to my growth as a person."

Keen to pursue a career in policy-making around smart cities and sustainability, she said that recruiters during her job interviews have been referring to the CCA transcript to ask her about what she has learnt outside the classroom.

Mr Timothy Lua Wei Sheng, 28, who studied information systems and served as deputy president of SMU Students' Association, agreed that the CCA transcript should not become another credential to chase.

"I was involved in organising events, including the freshmen orientation, and I picked up a lot of personal skills and communication skills in the process, which I am sure will count in my job."

"But, at the end of the day, it was also very fun and I made a lot of friends."

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