

SMU takes individualised learning to the next level with the launch of its College of Integrative Studies

- *SMU College of Integrative Studies will unveil a new approach in education, cultivating deep, integrative interdisciplinarity in graduates*
- *Students enrolled in the College's flagship Individualised Major will be guided through a customised major that leverages their strengths, areas of interest and allows them to respond to the dynamic needs of industry and society*
- *Another innovation the College brings is the Deferred Declaration of Degree Programme, which allows students to defer the declaration of their degree programmes, giving students an invaluable window of opportunity to explore across disciplines in their first year*

20 May 2022 (Friday), Singapore – [Singapore Management University \(SMU\)](#) today announced the formation of the College of Integrative Studies (CIS). First of its kind in Singapore, the CIS will take individualised learning to the next level and is a strategic element of the University's [Vision 2025](#) of growing impact and transforming education. The CIS will serve as an incubator of interdisciplinary learning where future graduates will be equipped to look beyond the boundaries of a single discipline, enabling them to make a bold pivot to the new realities of an ever-changing world.

SMU President Prof [Lily Kong](#) explains, "The integration of disciplines and domains is how new knowledge is produced. We have set out to develop a new generation of graduates who will be able to combine knowledge domains, who can respond to industry disruption in multi-dimensional and non-linear ways. The College of Integrative Studies is ultimately about connecting ideas and perspectives across disciplines to derive new solutions in new areas. By removing institutional limits on how students can combine disciplines and courses, we offer an extraordinary level of flexibility and range of permutations that makes this degree experience responsive to the needs of government, business and society, and exciting for students and partners alike."

The SMU [Vision 2025](#), which identified three strategic priorities of Digital Transformation, Growth in Asia, and Sustainable Living, sets the University in line with the future needs of Singapore as well as Asia. With the CIS, SMU deepens its commitment to tackling the fundamental challenges and opportunities of the future, in these three priority areas, in an integrative, multi-approach manner.

SMU has been a path-leader in the area of interdisciplinary education. This has been exemplified in the reimagined [SMU Core Curriculum](#), rolled out since 2019, and the variety of interdisciplinary majors and joint degree programmes offered by the University over the years. As industries transform, new and often unusual combinations of domain knowledge and skill sets are required. Employers increasingly seek graduates who can cross disciplinary boundaries with ease to attend to the complexities of modern economies and societies.

The CIS is the next step in SMU's effort to address these realities, by transforming education and cultivating adaptive problem solvers for the future through flexible and integrative educational pathways. The College will nurture graduates who will find solutions beyond a single discipline or traditional paradigms and who will contribute to industry and society in impactful ways.

1. Key elements of CIS

The College will welcome its first intake of up to 100 students in Academic Year 2023/24 and will be open to all students applying for admission to undergraduate degree programmes at SMU.

i. Deferred Declaration of Degree Programme (D3)

A key innovation that the College brings is the Deferred Declaration of Degree Programme (D3), which allows students to defer the declaration of their degree programmes, giving students an invaluable window of opportunity over their first year to explore the range of disciplines available to them at SMU, enabling them to make a more intentional and informed decision.

Under the D3 programme, students enrol directly into the CIS but can also reserve places in up to two SMU Schools. By the end of their first year, a student on the D3 programme may opt for one of three options: (a) apply to the CIS's Individualised Major programme; (b) exercise one of their two reserved places; or (c) apply to transfer to another SMU programme other than the two indicated at admission (subject to destination School's approval).

ii. Individualised Major (IM)

This is the College's flagship programme. The CIS is the only institution in Singapore giving students the option to individualise their majors with a selection from across the University's entire suite of courses. Students will graduate with a Bachelor of Integrative Studies degree upon the successful completion of the degree requirements. Allowing each student to customise and design their major according to their own strengths as well as the dynamic needs of industry and society, the CIS provides an avenue for students to configure their own unique path that is aligned with their past experiences, current interests and future ambitions.

The IM allows for students to select a professional track or a research track:

- The professional track envisages close exposure to industry and real-world problems, enabling students on this track to better bridge the gap between their university studies and future employment.
- The research track has a more academic focus and is particularly suitable for students with an interest in a research, government, or policy-making career.
- In both tracks, the CIS will leverage on SMU's industry partnerships, our trademark in excellent partner-focused work-study, and our SMU-X pedagogy which puts industry and real-world engagement at the centre of an experiential learning experience to help our students curate a programme fit for the needs of modern economies and societies.

Each student enrolled in the IM will be fully guided and supported by a faculty advisor drawn from the CIS faculty or from the larger SMU faculty to curate a unique and robust curriculum. Students on the professional track will also be assigned an industry mentor, and will be guided by their advisors and mentors to individualise a major in response to an industry or societal challenge (e.g. digital transformations in society, or sustainable living in the age of environmental disruption). Students on the academic track will also be supervised through a dissertation which will hone their research skills and prepare the student for future work in academic inquiry.

The CIS will admit its first class of about 100 students in Academic Year 2023/24. They will all be admitted to the D3 programme in their first year. Thereafter, around 40 students from the first 100 will be admitted into its flagship Individualised Major programme in their second year.

Similar to degree programmes offered at SMU, students enrolled in the IM can pursue international student exchange programmes, second majors, as well as will be allowed to pursue double degree programmes. The typical total course duration for students on the IM programme is 4 years, inclusive of the first year during which the student would be on the D3 programme.

iii. Individualised Second Major (ISM)

The CIS will also offer an Individualised Second Major. All students at SMU may opt to read a Second Major, which has a smaller set of requirements than a First Major. Like the IM, the ISM will also have a professional and research track. The CIS will admit its first batch of ISM students in Academic Year 2022/23.

Students currently enrolled in the university may apply for the ISM for enrollment from Academic Year 2022/23. Students admitted to the university from Academic Year 2022/23 may apply for the ISM for enrolment from Academic Year 2023/24 onwards.

iv. The CIS Faculty

Students of the College will benefit from the pedagogy and expertise of a world-class faculty renown for cutting-edge interdisciplinary research. The CIS faculty of around two dozen respected scholar-teachers come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. They include colleagues with expertise in computer science, economics, environmental science, history, geography, law, literature, and political science; many of whom work across disciplines and are experts in some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for Singapore and Asia's future. In time, SMU anticipates an even more diverse faculty with interests that intersect with and complement the expertise of faculty from its six Schools.

The CIS builds on the strengths of the SMU Core Curriculum, a programme with interdisciplinarity at its very heart, and the CIS teaching faculty have been instrumental in delivering the well-received SMU Core Curriculum. Launched in 2019, the Core Curriculum offers all SMU students courses under the Capabilities pillar to enable them to navigate the modern workplace, to develop intercultural sensitivity in the courses under the Communities pillar, and on the big questions that cut across time and space in courses delivered under the Civilisations pillar.

Putting current challenges, such as environment/climate, science and technology and digitalisation at the forefront of research agendas, our faculty bring their distinct disciplinary perspectives together to address modern challenges in an integrative fashion.

2. Feedback on the CIS from industry practitioners

“We clearly see the benefits in our industry of enabling students to better understand the challenges of integrative learning with a deferred major declaration, as well as providing strong mentorship from academic and industry perspectives in the Individualised Major programme.” — **Mr Edmund Lin, Chairman of Southeast Asia, Bain & Company**

“I hope to see future students at the College graduating with a holistic and deeper appreciation for innovation, technology, and urban sustainability, similar to SMU students whom CDL has supported over the years under the CDL Young SDG Leaders Fund and Create4Good Challenge. I am confident that the curriculum developed will equip students with the necessary skillsets and proficiencies to excel not only in the sustainability industry, but in the wider society where every individual is poised to make a difference.” — **Ms Esther An, Chief Sustainability Officer, City Developments Limited**

“Just like how Lazada offers custom solutions empowering all our merchants for success, SMU’s new Individualised Major has a similar vision – to help students combine knowledge and skillsets across domains, and come up with unique solutions that only an integrative approach can bring. This programme speaks to the dynamic needs of the future, and would be suitable for solving complex problems in the eCommerce industry which cuts across retail, technology, logistics and payment services. I’m excited to see the programme’s cadre of graduates.” — **Mr Loh Wee Lee, CEO, Lazada Singapore**

“To be a changemaker in the world, you need to think differently. And the only way to innovate and disrupt is to synergise different ideas and concepts, thus creating new ways of doing things. I’ve been working with SMU and its graduates for a while, and I’ve been consistently impressed with their energy and drive to succeed. The College of Integrative Studies, I believe, is a game changer for creating trailblazers who will help define the future and create a better world in the years to come.” — **Mr Hian Goh, Founder & General Partner, Openspace Ventures**

“Business and society are changing, and the workforce needs to be well prepared to anticipate and respond nimbly to new skill demands in the future of work. The curriculum offered by the College of Integrative Studies at SMU will support inter-disciplinary learning and build capabilities that address industry needs. This is a welcome initiative to equip young graduates with important skills that can help them kickstart a successful career in a new global economy.” — **Mr Dennis Tan, CEO, Prudential Singapore**

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About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that address issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 12,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools - Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing, Law and Social Sciences. It also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policy makers and academic institutions.

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