SIT to offer specialised degree programmes when launching full-time courses

By Sharon See | Posted: 24 Oct 2013 15:01 | Updated: 25 Oct 2013 00:01

SINGAPORE: The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) is looking for a new site for its main campus as it prepares to roll out its own full-time degree programmes in 2014.

The university said it is planning to offer highly specialised degree programmes on engineering and accountancy. As Singapore’s public transport system becomes increasingly complex, there is a greater demand for specialised knowledge on how best to keep the system in shape.

SIT hopes to supply a group of specialised railway engineers through its new engineering degree on sustainable infrastructure.

SIT’s president Professor Tan Thiam Soon, said: "We start with 75 (students), and we may at most go up to 100, 125, depending on how we see the future. That number, we think, can be well absorbed by the industry.

"If you look at our ever-expanding railway system... some of these systems getting quite old, and you still have to get that system to work as harmoniously as a new system you’ve put in. Therefore, having a group (of) people who are... much more specialised in maintaining all this and ensuring that we keep on operating at a very high level will be important.

"And if you look around Singapore... many of our buildings will need to meet new energy requirements, and we cannot keep tearing them down and (building) new ones.

"You look at many of the new buildings that are built today... you’ll probably want to operate them at a very high level for many years to come, with increasingly tougher energy requirements and all of that. So how to train engineers who can anticipate all of that? We see it as an area with great demand. I think it is to suit the phase of development of Singapore.”

Unlike a broad-based education, Prof Tan said its courses will be highly specialised.

For example, its accountancy students will focus on audit and tax, while its infocomm engineering students will specialise in software engineering.

SIT said there were about 11,900 vacancies for infocomm professionals, according to an annual survey on infocomm manpower conducted by the Infocomm Development Agency.

Prof Tan elaborated: "I think one of the misconceptions about specialisation is to think of being so narrow that they only can do one job. In reality, in order to train a student to be a specialist, you’re building a pyramid scaffold, so you need a certain very basic level, you need a next level, and you need the next level. And finally at the tip, you’ll be trained to become a specialist."

He added the enrolment numbers will be kept small for each of the programmes for now.

The university is planning to take in 75 students for its sustainable infrastructure engineering programme, 50 for software engineering, and 75 for accountancy.

As one of two universities offering new applied degrees, the courses will feature an Integrated Work Study Programme, which will span eight to 12 months.

The university said it has also adopted a flexible academic structure that allows students to choose if they want to have their annual vacation.

Students with relevant background in their course of study can earn their degrees in less than three years.

Right now, SIT’s courses are conducted at satellite campuses where the five polytechnics are, and its new full-time degree programmes will be offered at the university’s Dover headquarters.

But as the university expands its course offerings and intake numbers, it is now also looking for a new site to house its main campus.