SINGAPORE: The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) said it will reserve at least 80 per cent of the 150 vacancies at Singapore's third medical school for local students.

NTU formally inked an agreement with London's Imperial College to set up Singapore's third medical school on Friday.

At the signing ceremony, the school says it will keep the ratio of faculty to student at 1:7 which is similar to that at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

A Pro-Tem Governing Board headed by A*STAR Chairman Lim Chuan Poh has been set up to guide the establishment of the school and will be overseeing issues related to setting up the new school, such as recruitment, the curriculum and the physical infrastructure.

Students will commute between the NTU campus and its clinical campus which will be near Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

"The curriculum itself is ready, I mean, Imperial College has been doing this, but they have to adapt this to Singapore's context and one important part of that is how that dovetail with that kind of clinical opportunities and the kind of clinical arrangements that we have in Singapore, and we want to help them get this right," said Mr Lim.

Professor Martyn Partridge, the Deputy Director of Education at the Imperial College's Faculty of Medicine, said that they will be bringing in a "good" and "well-respected" curriculum.

"We will be adapting it, but I'm not going to change something which is already good. I think we are recognised as having a medical undergraduate course which is very well-respected, so we will be bringing that curriculum and some of the ways which we deliver it to Singapore."

"We have to make sure that the standards of learning and the uniformity of learning experience are good and we will bring to Singapore our very strict standards of governance to make sure the students we produce here are absolutely equivalent to those which we produce for the Imperial degree alone back in London," he added.

Professor Partridge also said that they have been working out the admission criteria for the new school and will be releasing it very soon. The school, which will offer a five-year joint degree programme, will start in 2013 with 50 students in its first batch.

"The first year, at least, they'll be on this campus but what we're going to structure is initially there'll be one day a week, they will be on a clinical campus so that they feel as though they're beginning to be doctors - they're student doctors - and they understand the relevance of what we're teaching. But instead of students going backwards and forwards for a half day here and an hour there, this will all be structured so they'll be spending four days a week here and one day in the clinical facilities," he said.
Professor Partridge and Professor Stephen Smith, who is the Principal of the Faculty of Medicine, have been appointed Senior Vice-Dean and Founding Dean respectively at the Imperial College London-Nanyang Technological University Medical School (ICNMS).

With three medical schools in Singapore, Professor Partridge said they will be working with the current two medical schools on a common understanding of the curriculum.

The Ministries of Education and Health and the Singapore Medical Council realised that we can't all use different curricula, we're going to share facilities inevitably...so we need to have a common understanding about the curriculum whilst we may have different emphasis and different ethos in the way we teach that. It will be quite unfair on the individual hospitals if we were to ask their staff to teach each of three different sets of students in a different way."