MOE to fund 300-400 places in foreign arts programmes locally

SINGAPORE’S third medical school will take in its first 50 students in 2013, Education Minister Ng Eng Hen said on Tuesday, sharing details on the partnership between Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Imperial College London.

It is one of two new developments in the tertiary education sector slated to better meet industry demand, the other being the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) plans to fund 300-400 places in foreign arts, design and media degree programmes offered at arts institutions here, to groom professionals for Singapore’s creative industries.

The new medical school will offer a five-year undergraduate degree jointly awarded by NTU and Imperial, and grow to take in 150 students a year eventually. Dr Ng said the figure was based on the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) long-term projections of demographic changes and healthcare demands of Singapore’s ageing population.

Already, rising demand for doctors has led to stepped-up recruitment of 200 foreign-trained doctors this year. National University of Singapore’s (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine annual intake will rise to its maximum of 300 students next year, and the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School took in 56 students last year.

While details on investments in this new school have not been announced yet, MOE said it will be “adequately resourced to provide a world-class medical education”.

The partnership agreement between NTU and Imperial lasts an initial 18 years and the school will be governed by a board with representatives from the two universities, MOE, MOH and the National Healthcare Group (NHG), the school’s primary clinical training partner.

Leading the medical school are founding dean Stephen Smith, principal of Imperial’s Faculty of Medicine, and senior vice-dean Martyn Partridge, Imperial’s Chair in Respiratory Medicine, who will work on the project full-time in London and Singapore.

NTU president Su Guaning said the new medical school will “not just train the best clinicians but also make a deep impact on the innovation of medical systems and the healthcare system as a whole”. Provost Bertil Andersson added that the autonomous school of NTU will not duplicate NUS’s offering but train excellent doctors in an interdisciplinary way, to “learn the engineering behind new medical devices, as well as health economics and management skills at the Nanyang Business School”.

A separate move in the tertiary education sector intends to produce graduates to meet skilled labour demand from Singapore’s growing film and animation clusters, integrated resorts and the new National Gallery, and MOE’s own need for art and music teachers.

Dr Ng said MOE will fund 300-400 places a year in new degree courses that Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) and Lasalle College of the Arts will offer in partnership with reputable foreign universities.

Only students who meet high standards will be eligible. NAFA and Lasalle will submit proposals on partners for these degree programmes, which MOE will evaluate for quality, rigour and their alignment to the economy’s needs.