New NTU degree preps students for green jobs

BY KENNY CHEE

THE Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will be gearing its students to take on jobs in environment and energy-related services, a sector expected to boom in the years ahead.

As part of a varsity-wide curriculum revamp, it announced yesterday a new undergraduate degree programme called Earth and Environmental Sciences, to be offered from next year.

Career options include working as environmental geochemists and consultants.

As part of its green focus, NTU will make it mandatory for all first-year students from the next academic year – starting in August – to take a new Environmental Sustainability course.

They will learn about protecting and improving land, air and water resources. Such concepts could be applied to other areas like business management, said Professor Er Meng Hwa, NTU’s senior associate provost.

Two new environment-related minors are already being offered from the current academic year, one in Energy and the other in Environmental and Urban Studies.

The Government expects the clean-energy sector to contribute $3.4 billion to the country’s gross domestic product and employ 18,000 people by 2015, according to recent news reports.

Prof Er said the Energy minor aims to raise awareness of related issues among students as Singapore explores energy alternatives.

The minor in Environmental and Urban Studies will help students understand the environmental and urban challenges, using an interdisciplinary approach.

Prof Er told my paper that NTU is introducing these programmes as environmental and sustainability issues are a “top public-policy priority”, adding that the world faces an array of water, energy and environmental challenges now.

And with more than $830 million in its research funding in sustainability alone, he said NTU is “fast becoming a global research powerhouse in environmental technologies”.

NTU is also making its curriculum more broad-based so that students will be well-rounded and prepared for new global demands.

A new curriculum guide will be implemented for students enrolled from the next academic year: A maximum of 70 per cent of courses that a student takes can come from his core discipline, with at least 30 per cent in other disciplines.

The core and non-core courses’ tilt will vary for students from different disciplines.

For engineering students, they will typically observe the 70-30 guide, a shift from the current 75-25.

For humanities students, they could have a 55-45 set-up, instead of the current 60-40.

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