

Facebook and NTU to train data center specialists in Singapore



Facebook's 170,000-square-meter data center under construction in Singapore. Source: Facebook



By **Joe Devanesan** | 8 June, 2020



- Tech giant Facebook and NTU university to launch a pilot program aimed at developing local talent in the data center sector in Singapore
- The courses intend to train local students in 4 specialist courses & 1 graduate certificate
- The aim is to grow the base of skilled data center specialists in Singapore

Across every industry today, there is a growing reliance on cloud computing. The shift to remote working – and the necessary adoption of services like Zoom to keep our business operations ticking over – has highlighted that more than ever.

In recent years, Singapore has emerged as a **leading hub for data center operations** and management services. Like other markets, this market has seen growth owed to the rise of hyper-scale cloud computing vendors who have huge data center leasing capacities and the evolution of cloud-native businesses.

These types of businesses have flocked to Singapore for its status as one of the most connected cities in the world, and stable, pro-business government, as well as other economic incentives for enterprise.

But while the data center market is certainly booming in this part of Southeast Asia, it still requires an in-flow of talented individuals to keep operations running.

A survey of 300 data center operators found that **two-thirds believe** this year will see a substantial increase in demand for data services, but 82% predict that design engineering and construction will be subject to the big shortages of skilled talent.

Meanwhile, 77 percent of data pros believe that operational functions of data centers will also suffer from a lack of skilled talent. The widening dearth of available industry people-power is the main reason that Facebook plan to launch a nine-month pilot program, offering new courses aimed at developing local data center talent in Singapore, in cahoots with Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The pilot phase by NTU's Centre for Professional and Continuing Education (PaCE@NTU) will offer four specialist certificates and one graduate certificate, from August 2020 onwards. The four specialist certificates will be in design engineering, network engineering, site operations, and facility operations, while the graduate certificate will be in international construction management.

The courses aim to train and upskill local engineering undergraduates and postgraduates to address the demand for data center specialists, ultimately meaning that Singapore's leading data center industry has the specialists it needs to help it continue to flourish.

"We are very proud to contribute towards growing local talent in the data center sector through our collaboration with Facebook," **said** Professor Ling San, NTU's deputy president and provost.

"With NTU's deep expertise in emerging technologies and Facebook's data center expertise, participants of our new certificate programs will be able to benefit from a world-class education and stand in good stead in the future job market."

Once the nine-month pilot has run its course, PaCE@NTU plans to progressively introduce more courses in phases, which "can potentially involve other data center industry players."

The crop of graduating talent will likely go to work for Facebook's or other data center operations in the island state, or overseas. Singapore has been an in-demand location for data center services owing to its existing network infrastructure, strategic central location as a Southeast Asian hub, and a stable, supportive regulatory environment.



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Facebook launched its first Asian data center in Singapore back in 2018, and the US\$1 billion center is scheduled to begin operations in 2022. “When we decided to build a data center in Singapore, local talent was an important consideration for us,” said Gavin Chua, Facebook’s head of infrastructure engagement in Asia.

The small island Singapore of is a global hub for data centers, but these are not small-footprint operations and city-state operates limits on the amount of land, water and other resources that can be used. Those constraints have required data center operators to think differently about how they build them here.

To conserve space, Facebook “went vertical”, developing the design for an 11-story building that will sit on 12 acres of land in Singapore’s Tanjong Kling Data Center Park, and claims that it will run off 100% renewable energy.