

# New NTU master's in psychology offers study of dying, death and bereavement

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As part of efforts to strengthen Singapore's mental healthcare capacity, a new programme at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will be the first in Asia to offer a master's-level specialisation in thanatology – the study of dying, death and bereavement.

The specialisation will allow Master of Science in Psychology students to learn how to provide bereavement support and grief intervention to individuals, families and communities facing mortality and loss.

They will also be trained in providing psychological, social and spiritual care.

The new programme will begin in August, with an expected intake of up to 40 students.

Graduates will be able to work in hospices, hospitals and palliative care settings, as well as in services offering bereavement care or crisis counselling.

Death remains a taboo topic in many Asian societies, even though conversations about the subject have opened up in recent years amid a greater emphasis on end-of-life care planning, said NTU provost's chair in psychology Andy Ho.

While there are people providing grief counselling and therapy in Singapore, a lack of regulation means that those offering such services may not have received sufficient training, Professor Ho noted.

The master's-level thanatology specialisation, which has been offered at universities in North America and Europe, will be available in Asia for the first time, Prof Ho said.

It will help build Singapore's ca-

pability in this area, he added.

The other specialisations under the new NTU programme are community health psychology, neuropsychology and forensic psychology.

Under the community health psychology track, students will be trained to develop and implement interventions addressing systemic issues at a community level, positioning them to work in community mental health centres and public health agencies, or to pursue roles in programme development and policy advocacy.

As part of the neuropsychology specialisation, students will study the cognitive and neurological underpinnings of human development and mental health.

One area of study under the track, school neuropsychology, focuses on supporting the neurodevelopmental and cognitive needs of school-aged children, preparing



NTU provost's chair in psychology Andy Ho, seen here with Master of Science in Psychology programme director Rebecca Nichols, said the school will be the first in Asia to offer master's-level thanatology specialisation. ST PHOTO: JASEL POH

students to work in educational organisations, research institutions and rehabilitation centres.

Meanwhile, those pursuing the forensic psychology track will study how psychological principles apply in legal and criminal justice settings, as well as in law enforcement and cybersecurity.

These specialisations were chosen because, beyond just treating people with mental health disor-

ders, there is also a need for training to address psychological interventions at a community level, said Dr Rebecca Nichols, programme director for the Master of Science in Psychology at NTU.

"We're looking to train individuals who are able to serve in these capacities by the time they graduate," she said.

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