

AI literacy mandatory for all NTU students from August as school rolls out free Google AI tools

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NTU's initiative aims to democratise AI across all disciplines, ensuring that even beginners can experiment with the technology.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

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- NTU will mandate AI lessons for all students by August 2026, providing free access to premium Google AI tools.
- The initiative aims to democratise AI, address the "AI divide", and integrate AI into 40% of courses by 2030.
- NTU will instil ethical AI use, ensure data security with tools like NALA, and prepare students for an AI-driven workforce.

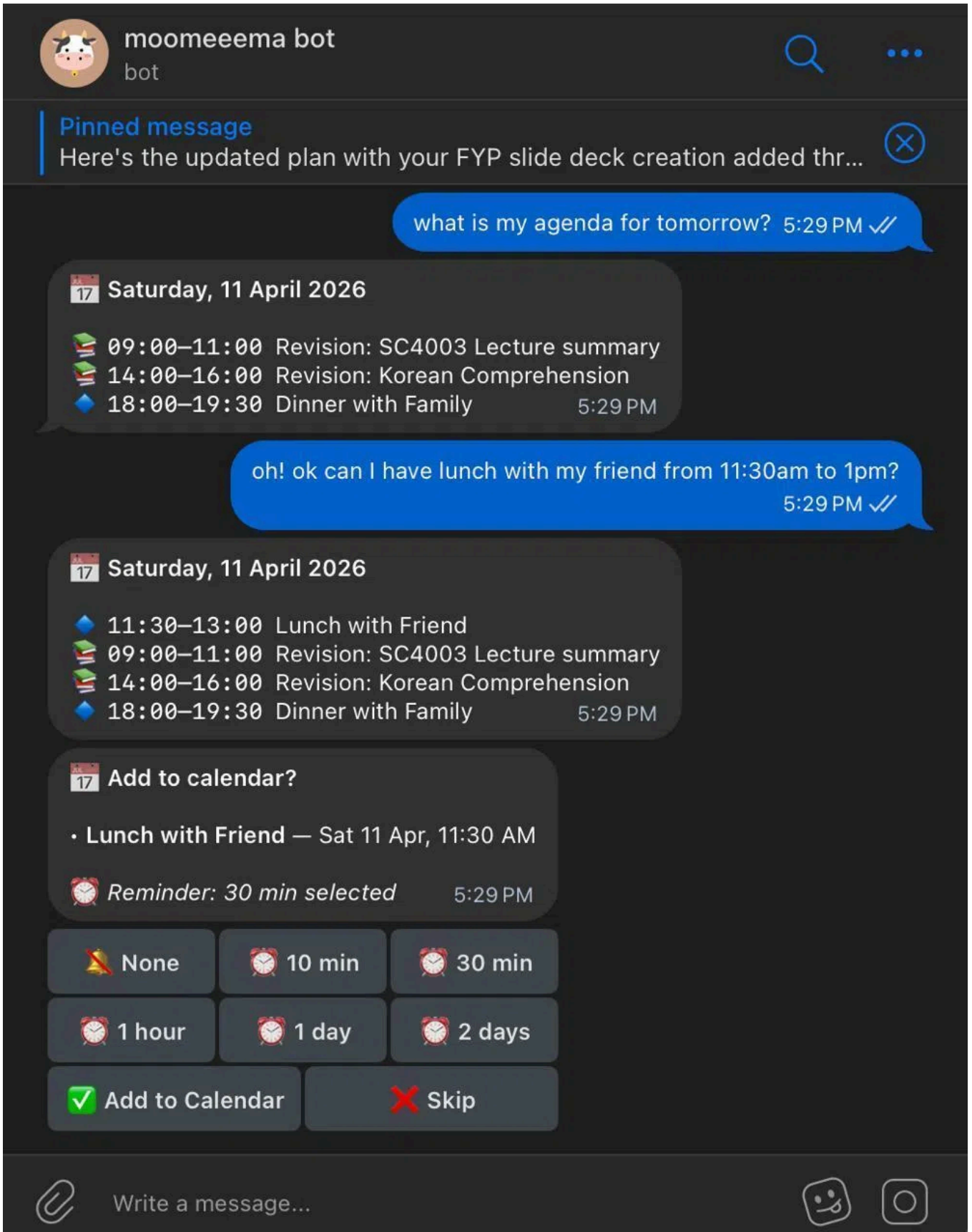
SINGAPORE – “What do I have on today?” Mr Caleb Yung asks his [artificial intelligence-powered chatbot](#) on Telegram, which replies within a second with his full schedule for the day.

The 25-year-old tells the chatbot to add a lunch with his friend at 1.30pm, which it does in seconds, and then asks if he wants the event added to his calendar.

This AI-powered personal assistant was created by Mr Yung, who studies computer and data science at Nanyang Technological University (NTU). He said it can also help him create study plans and give him a snapshot of the week ahead.

Mr Yung recognises that while his AI assistant may not be revolutionary, its true value lies in how it reduces his mental load.

For students just starting out, he said the bots do not need to be sophisticated. Rather, the goal is to build simple tools that meet their specific needs, allowing them to delegate repetitive tasks and concentrate on more critical responsibilities.



Mr Caleb Yung recognises that while his AI assistant may not be revolutionary, its true value lies in how it reduces his mental load.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CALEB YUNG

To develop the AI agent, Mr Yung drew on skills picked up from his various classes on AI tools, including their ethical use.

From August, the AI literacy lessons, currently taught only to computing students, will be mandatory for all NTU students. Students will also receive free access to a suite of [premium Google AI tools](#), including Gemini Enterprise for workplace automation, AI Studio for rapid app prototyping, and Vertex AI for managing large-scale AI systems.

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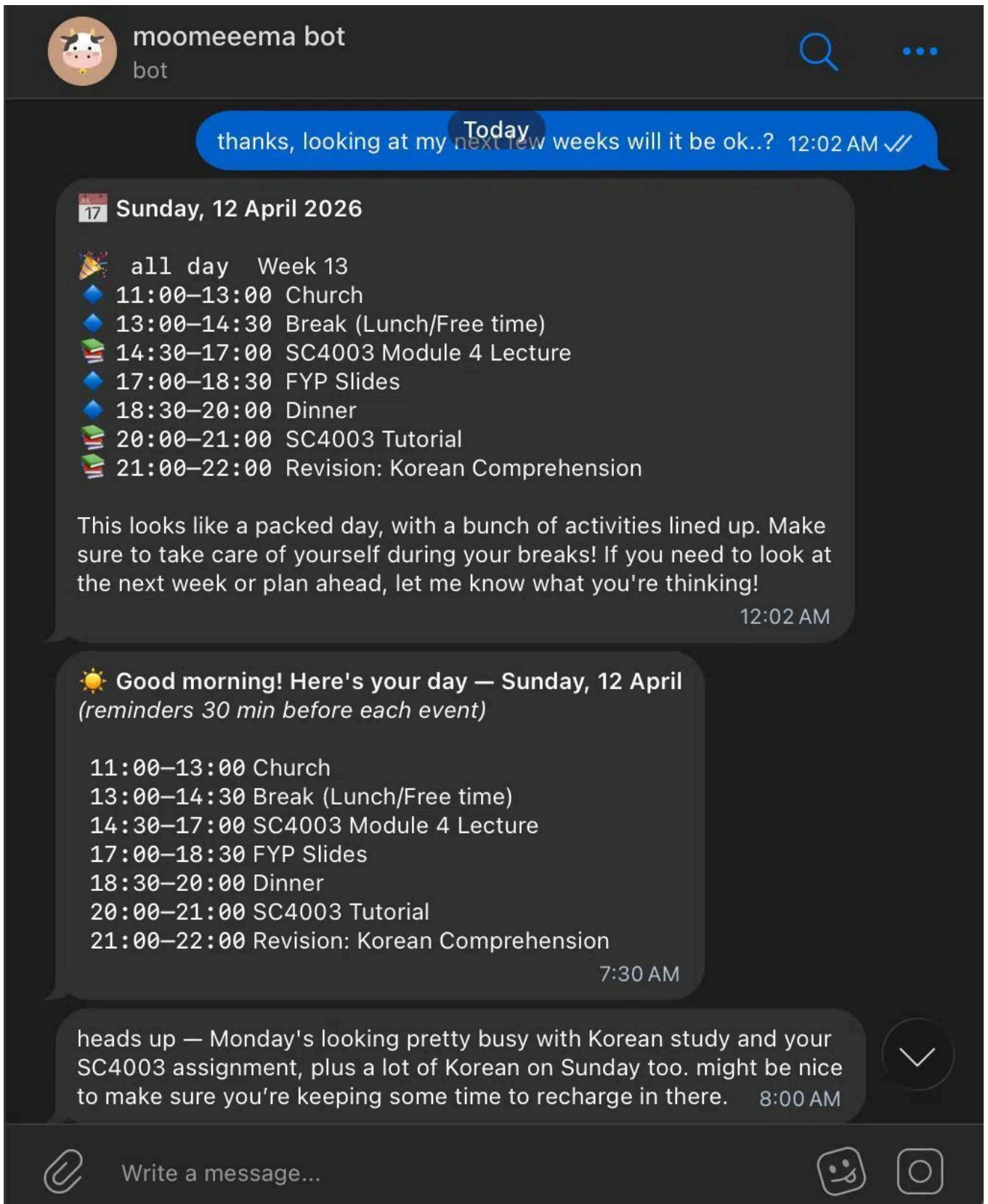
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[Professor Christian Wolfrum, NTU's deputy president and provost, who oversees the initiative's academic strategy, said the tools allow students to do almost anything – from creating their own personal assistant, such as Mr Yung's, to building a research assistant that helps to synthesise academic papers.](#)

["AI will be used as a tool – one that improves learning outcomes," Prof Wolfrum said, adding that students will be given computing credits to continually build their AI agents throughout their university life. "It can be for personalised learning, knowledge transfer or skills improvement."](#)



The AI-powered personal assistant created by Mr Yung helps him create study plans and gives him a snapshot of his week ahead.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CALEB YUNG

The initiative aims to democratise AI across all disciplines, ensuring that even beginners can experiment with the technology. “This is the foundation where everyone will be exposed to the basics,” Prof Wolfrum said.

He added that the driving force behind the move was the students themselves, who highlighted a growing “AI divide” between those who could afford premium subscriptions and those who could not, and between those who could use these tools and those who could not.

“Maybe 10 per cent of students know how to build agents already... but what about the other 90 per cent? They must learn this as well,” he said.

The lessons will be built into the curriculum of a core course that all students already have to take – Science and Technology for Humanity – in their first year.

“It doesn’t have to be a perfect product; it is more about students learning the process and understanding both the limitations and possibilities,” Prof Wolfrum said.

The roll-out is part of a larger push to integrate AI into 40 per cent of NTU’s courses across all 52 undergraduate programmes by 2030. Currently, excluding computing-specific degrees, only 5 per cent of courses incorporate AI as a teaching tool or in assignments.

Its use will be expanded and intentionally worked into how courses are taught and assessed, said the university. Students will learn with AI tools designed by educators for specific learning outcomes, develop skills progressively across courses and be taught to use the technology responsibly and critically.

One example is NALA, NTU’s AI learning assistant. The platform lets educators create AI tutors trained on specific course materials, giving students immediate, tailored support.

Students will also get to work on real-world problems, using their very own AI agents to tackle them.

But as the use of AI presents certain risks, Prof Wolfrum noted that the university has carefully assessed everything from data security to potential abuse.

Regarding the risk of a student abusing the system, Prof Wolfrum said that while there is always potential for misuse, such a risk existed even before the university’s initiative.

Previously, students could buy their own licences and use AI without any institutional “guard rails”. By bringing the technology into the classroom, NTU can now work on teaching students to use it responsibly, he added.

NTU’s vice-provost, Professor Gan Chee Lip, said the university has its own set of guidelines and will ensure students learn 21st-century skills alongside the technology.

“At the end of the day, we know AI is still a tool, and that is important for us to remember. And in fact, we want to tell the students that they are the ones in control,” he said.

“Ultimately, we are trying to ensure our graduates are developed holistically, but also equipped with the AI skills for the world that they will be going to.”

Prof Wolfrum said certain examinations will also remain offline, and in classrooms, lecturers are able to give or prohibit access to these tools at various points.

Regarding data privacy, which he cited as the most severe risk, Prof Wolfrum said NTU chose to partner with “hyperscalers” such as Google because their established infrastructure offers superior security.

By deploying these tools within a controlled, university-managed environment, NTU can ensure that data remains private and secure while focusing efforts on educating students to navigate the technology ethically, he said.

Ultimately, the introduction of AI levels the playing field for students across all disciplines and ensures they are workforce-ready, he added.

“It’s not optional anymore to just let them develop AI skills on their own,” Prof Wolfrum said. “I want this integrated into the curriculum (so) that when they exit, the employer doesn’t have to teach them how to interact with an AI agent to solve the problems that they have encountered in the workplace,” he added.

“We also want to really instil the ethics of using the tool,” Prof Wolfrum said. “A lot of effort will be spent on this so students become responsible users, and we will teach them this over four years.”

Mr Yung said it was heartening to hear that more students outside computing will learn how to use these tools, especially since they will enter a workforce embedded with AI and requiring its use.

Not everyone can afford to pay for a premium subscription to AI tools every month, he added. “This can be a limitation, which leads to unequal access to AI models.”

The standard Gemini Enterprise tier starts at US\$30 (S\$38) a month.

“AI will never truly replace anybody, but someone who knows how to use it well just might,” Mr Yung said.

“So now, it’s never really a question of whether you want to adopt AI. It’s whether you learn to wield it before it becomes the standard you’re measured against.”