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New nursing school and more vocational courses at MDIS



The courses offered here must remain relevant locally, says Dr R. Theyvendran. "For example, for our culinary classes, students learn about local and Asian dishes despite the curriculum following closely to the one in the United Kingdom."

Besides offering more skills-based training, private school is looking to further its international expansion efforts

Lim Min Zhang

A school of nursing and more vocational courses are in the pipeline at a major private school here.

The Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) would be the first private school to have a dedicated nursing school when this officially opens in January next year. Other private schools offer nursing courses but do not have a school focused on this.

"We follow government policies very closely, in the demand for nurses that is upcoming. We see a big potential market in terms of offering nursing degrees, especially for those who want to have a better career path after getting their diplomas," Dr R. Theyvendran, 70, secretary-general of MDIS, told The Straits Times two weeks ago.

MDIS started a partnership with Edinburgh Napier University for post-registered nurses this year, taking in its first batch of 70 students in March for the two-year Bachelor of Science Nursing degree course. MDIS, which will have two intakes for its nursing school a year, enrolled its second batch last month. It plans to roll out a programme for pre-registered nurses next year and hopes to train 1,000 students by 2025.

Dr Theyvendran said MDIS is also looking into expanding into other healthcare support programmes to help support the ageing population here, including physiotherapy support, geriatrics care, and healthcare management and clinical research.

Some of its other plans include having dedicated classrooms and lecture theatres, and basic and speciality nursing equipment.

Also on the cards are degrees in fashion promotion and diplomas in tourism and hospitality.

MDIS, a 61-year-old not-for-profit institute for lifelong learning, has added 27 programmes since August, bringing the total to 75 across its nine schools.

More of these vocational courses will also be available to Singaporeans, not just its 8,000 students at its three-hectare campus in Queenstown. Three in five of them are international students.

In the next three years, up to 20 per cent of new courses rolled out at MDIS will be courses which Singaporeans can pay for using their SkillsFuture credits. All Singaporeans aged 25 and above are given an initial \$500 in credits to take courses, under the SkillsFuture scheme to encourage lifelong learning.

Some of the 107 programmes Singaporeans will be able to take at Management Development & Consultancy, the corporate training arm of MDIS, are in financial management and business management. Other programmes include those in baking and cooking, pattern making, draping, sewing, as well as communications.

MDIS, which provides part- and full-time programmes for courses ranging from short-term seminars to master's degrees, is embracing the move to offer more skills-based and vocational training.

In the next three years, it is looking to tie up with universities that are strong in providing vocational programmes, such as Teesside University in Middlesbrough, England, and the City of Glasgow College in Scotland, which is known for its focus on developing students' practical skills. MDIS will offer the National Certifi-

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cate in Professional Cookery from Glasgow next month.

MDIS has existing tie-ups with overseas universities, such as the bachelor's degree course in fashion product and promotion, awarded by the University of Sunderland in England.

While MDIS has brought in many international university partners, Dr Theyvendran emphasises that the courses offered here must remain relevant locally.

"For example, for our culinary classes, students learn about local and Asian dishes despite the curriculum following closely to the one in the United Kingdom. When we opened our culinary studios, we invited not only a master chef from UK, but also local chefs to have cook-off sessions," he said.

MDIS is also looking to further its international expansion efforts.

On top of its overseas campuses in Uzbekistan, Malaysia and India now, it plans to expand into places such as Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Philippines over the next five years.

"Eventually, we hope to be an Asean campus - a globally connected institute, and be a regional player in the educational landscape," said Dr Theyvendran.

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