

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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NTU Singapore to award its own Chinese Medicine undergraduate degree from 2028

New four-year degree programme is designed for Singapore's healthcare needs

From 2028, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) will confer its own Chinese Medicine degree. It is the first locally conferred Chinese Medicine undergraduate degree programme accredited by the Ministry of Health's (MOH) Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board¹ (TCMPB), and has been developed for Singapore's healthcare needs.

2. The new four-year Bachelor of Chinese Medicine degree programme was launched today by Mr Ong Ye Kung, Singapore's Minister for Health. It will be offered by NTU's School of Biological Sciences and will welcome its first cohort in August 2024.

Leveraging NTU's strengths in research and academic excellence

3. The new Bachelor's degree programme in Chinese Medicine will be designed with input from local TCM institutions and the TCMPB, and draws on the expertise of NTU faculty and visiting faculty from overseas universities. A governing board comprising representatives from NTU, industry leaders, and Chinese medicine academics from other universities will oversee the programme.

4. **Professor Ling San, Deputy President and Provost of NTU** said: "NTU's new Chinese Medicine programme localises the context for students, allowing them to dive deeper into the TCM areas critical for Singapore and better equip them to tackle the nation's health challenges and help relieve the load on our national healthcare infrastructure.

5. "Having an accredited Chinese Medicine programme offered at the undergraduate level will also lay the foundation for NTU to offer continuing education courses progressively. We also hope to build up the University's TCM research capabilities, creating an ecosystem where our Chinese Medicine students can help to translate TCM knowledge into better care and improved health outcomes."

¹ The TCM Practitioners Board is a statutory board under MOH. It registers TCM practitioners (acupuncturists and TCM physicians), accredits TCM institutions and TCM courses for the purpose of registration, and regulates the professional ethics and conduct of registered TCM practitioners.

6. The School of Biological Sciences aims to leverage NTU's strengths as a leading research-intensive university, including plans to work with its Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine), to offer a refreshed curriculum that integrates modern science into a subject with ancient roots. The new programme plans to integrate technology-enabled learning tools such as virtual and augmented reality into the curriculum and introduce team-based learning – also deployed in NTU's premier Renaissance Engineering Programme and LKCMedicine – to make learning more interactive for students and promote critical and creative thinking.

7. **Professor Joseph Sung, NTU Senior Vice President (Health & Life Sciences) and Dean, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine**, said: "Integrating contemporary medical science into TCM education and emphasising the importance of clinical research could be one way to help the younger generation better appreciate TCM in the context of modern science and medicine. We are exploring this area of curriculum development."

8. Weekly three-hour clinical training sessions at the NTU Chinese Medicine Clinic are built into the curriculum to expose students to clinical settings. In addition, students are required to go for two-month internships at partner TCM institutions at the end of every semester to accumulate clinical experience and gain confidence as they assume a more significant role in caring for patients under the supervision of clinical mentors.

9. There are also plans to set up overseas clinical internships and exchange programmes for students to expose them to how TCM is practised worldwide.

10. **Associate Professor Linda Zhong, Programme Director of the new Bachelor's in Chinese Medicine programme**, said: "NTU's locally accredited degree programme in Chinese medicine aims to strengthen the foundation for TCM education in Singapore and serve as a springboard for postgraduate and continuing education in Chinese medicine, offering upskilling opportunities not just for TCM physicians, but also raising the standards of the local TCM profession. It could also be an opportunity for other health professionals to learn how to integrate TCM into their medical practice."

11. The new programme will also serve as a springboard for NTU to develop postgraduate and continuing education options in Chinese medicine and set up an interdisciplinary TCM research centre.

12. NTU's TCM graduates like **Ms Ho Chin Ee**, a registered TCM physician from NTU's inaugural batch of students on the Biomedical Sciences and Chinese Medicine double degree programme, support the launch of NTU's new Chinese Medicine degree programme. Ms Ho, a member of the NTU Chinese Medicine Alumni Association, said: "For TCM therapies to be deployed in the healthcare system, their efficacy needs to be backed by science, highlighting the need for more research in this area. A localised Chinese Medicine degree with a stronger focus on clinical research will help to move us closer to this goal and propel advancement in the TCM sector. By conferring our own Chinese Medicine degree, NTU will also be able to tailor the curriculum in response to Singapore's evolving healthcare needs."

13. The new degree programme aligns with **NTU 2025**, the University's five-year strategic plan, to address humanity's grand challenges by responding to the needs and challenges of healthy living and ageing.

14. With the introduction of this new degree, the last cohort taking the Biomedical Sciences and Chinese Medicine double degree programme jointly offered by NTU and the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine (BUCM) will graduate in 2028. NTU and BUCM plan to explore other areas of collaboration in Chinese medicine education.

15. "Over the last two decades, we have successfully nurtured bilingual TCM physicians trained in biomedical sciences through our double degree programme with BUCM. With support from Singapore's Ministry of Health, we are confident that we will design a new Chinese medicine curriculum that specifically meets Singapore's healthcare needs of the future. The new programme will use tech-enabled learning tools and innovative pedagogies, with a stronger focus on clinical research, leveraging NTU's strengths as a leading research-intensive technological university," said **Professor Ling**.

16. According to the latest graduate employment survey, 100 per cent of last year's graduates from the double degree programme found a job within six months of their final exams. NTU graduates make up more than a quarter of the newly registered TCM practitioners every year.

17. In addition to strengthening Chinese medicine education in Singapore, NTU hopes to spark interest in TCM research and development with its new degree programme, **to set up an interdisciplinary research centre in Chinese medicine**. Aside from proving the efficacy and safety of TCM treatments, one of the goals of setting up the new research centre is to look at interdisciplinary research areas such as how artificial intelligence and biomedical engineering can be used in TCM diagnosis, which relies on traditional methods such as pulse monitoring.

18. This approach builds on MOH's efforts to encourage local collaborative research in TCM through the Traditional Chinese Medicine Research Grant. As more local scientific evidence on TCM treatments is generated, TCM practitioners will be able to apply such knowledge in their clinical practice, providing more comprehensive and effective care for patients. This will ultimately lead to better health outcomes, while advancing evidence-based Chinese medicine research capabilities in Singapore.

Strengthening Singapore's TCM Training and Education

19. TCM is set to play a more prominent complementary and integrative role in Singapore's healthcare landscape and there is a need for more practitioners with a rapidly ageing population. MOH is committed to improving the professional standards of TCM practitioners (TCMPs) and working with the TCM community in strengthening their capability through enhancing continuous professional education (CPE) and a full-time one-year structured clinical training programme (CTP).

20. The CTP will be rolled out from January 2024 for newly registered TCMPs who have passed their TCM licencing examinations in 2023. The training and assessment framework for the CTP has been developed based on core competencies and

professional activities adapted from the medical Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) programme, but modified to suit the TCM practice context.

21. Selected newly registered TCMPs will go through clinical rotations at four participating TCM institutions – NTU Chinese Medicine Clinic, Public Free Clinic Society, Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution and Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution. Each rotation is for a period of three months, during which the trainees will receive a monthly training stipend.

22. At each of the four TCM institutions, the trainees will learn from clinical mentors who have recently undergone training conducted by MOH to prepare for their mentorship role. The mentor-trainee ratio will be kept at one-to-one for effective mentoring. The roles of the clinical mentors go beyond imparting clinical skills, to include identifying trainees' strengths and weaknesses, providing guidance and advice, motivating and supporting trainees.

23. The launch of the new Chinese medicine degree programme and CTP is timely in ensuring a local pipeline of young, competent and capable TCM professionals to serve the needs of our population.

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Media contact:

Foo Jie Ying
Assistant Director, Corporate Communications Office
Nanyang Technological University
Email: jieying@ntu.edu.sg

Wee Wei Ming
Manager, Corporate Communications Division
Ministry of Health
Email: WEE_Wei_Ming@moh.gov.sg

About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Engineering, Business, Science, Medicine, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and Graduate colleges.

NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Earth Observatory of Singapore, Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

Ranked amongst the world's top universities, the University's main campus is also frequently listed among the world's most beautiful. Known for its sustainability, NTU has achieved 100% Green Mark Platinum certification for all its eligible building projects. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a medical campus in Novena, Singapore's healthcare district.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg