TERTIARY EDUCATION

Course framed as a game proves a hit with students

NUS President announces S$5m fund for faculty to redesign courses and leverage on technology

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SINGAPORE – Assignments in this National University of Singapore (NUS) computer programming class are divided into 22 smaller “missions”, framed around a storyline set in a Star Wars-like universe.

Students then embarked on a virtual quest — scoring points by answering the questions correctly, as well as participating in tutorials and the course discussion forum.

This novel teaching approach has become a hit among students, prompting students to submit their assignments earlier, from 15 hours before the deadline previously to at least two days in advance currently, according to NUS School of Computer’s Assistant Professor Ben Leong who mooted the idea of using gaming in his lessons.

The module is among six pilot initiatives started by the NUS, which uses technology to stimulate learning among students. More of such programmes could be on their way, as NUS President Tan Chorh Chuan yesterday announced a S$5 million fund for faculty members to re-design their courses, especially for those with large class-sizes. The fund will also support NUS start-ups with piloting their educational products, which will enhance learning on campus.

Addressing more than 250 faculty members and students in his annual speech to sketch out broad directions for the university in the year ahead, Prof Tan stressed a need for the varsity to leverage on technology to enhance the quality of tertiary education for its undergraduates.

This is because youth today grow up in a world inundated with technological tools, and information is becoming more pervasive and world problems increasingly complex, he added.

By tapping onto technology, it will allow lecturers to track if students have grasped the concepts and having interactive programmes can enable individuals to learn at their own pace. Eventually, this will also free up classroom time for more value-added learning where students can deliberate over more complex problems, he said.

Moving forward, Prof Tan added that the varsity will also be looking at how on-campus living can do more to contribute to the undergraduate experience.