Study missions to China and Vietnam for working adults

By AMELIA TENG

Civil servant Guan Wen Long will spend nine days in Beijing in March – but it will be no holiday. The 31-year-old student at SIM University (Uni-SIM), which caters to working adults, will visit university campuses and study historical sites after taking up one of two new overseas study missions it has set up. The other is to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

Both continued education and training (CET) courses aim to give students an insight into two of Asia’s fast-growing economies. The Nine-day China programme starts on Jan 29 and Feb 12 respectively. Enrolment closes on Jan 26. Seven students, with ages ranging from 23 to 51, have already signed up for each course. All are in full-time jobs in sectors such as government, finance, insurance, manufacturing and recreation.

Mr Guan works in heritage education and is studying for a part-time Uni-SIM degree in psychology, with a minor in sociology. He wants to gain a broader perspective of China.

"Instead of going there as a tourist, I want to learn more about its culture and history," he said.

Uni-SIM deputy director of the Centre for Chinese Studies, Dr Foo Tee Tuan, 51, said: "The trip can’t be too long as our students are working adults, so we want to make sure they learn a lot." The students will learn from professors at Beijing Normal University and visit campuses of major institutions such as Peking University and Tsinghua University. They will also visit 10 historical sites, including Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, and speak to Singaporeans living in China.

Uni-SIM is also arranging visits to factories and offices of Chinese companies. At the end of the course, students must write a 3,000-word essay on a topic of their choice on modern China, using interviews and information gathered from the trip.

Each semester, Uni-SIM offers more than 200 CET courses across its four schools – arts and social sciences, business, human development and social services, and science and technology. Some 135 people took up the courses last year, up from 62 in 2011.

Dr Teng Su Ching, Uni-SIM’s director of CET, said students who take up the two new overseas study courses "must be familiar with and have insights into the geopolitical and economic realities of the region".

She added: "There will be structural academic work involved before and after the trip to give students a strong grounding on the background of the destination countries, and to help them analyse and reflect on their learning. It is not just a tour."