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Two masters for first law grads from NYU@NUS

By April Chong

THE first batch of law graduates to do the National University of Singapore's (NUS) and New York University's (NYU) dual master's degree programme graduated yesterday, and another 60 have been slated for this year's programme, which kicks off in May.

The 39 inaugural graduates of the NYU@NUS programme have each picked up two masters' degrees over the course of 10 months.

The only Singaporean among them is 31-year-old Lee Jwee Nguan, who capitalised on the opportunity to get both a regional and an international perspective on law, since the course is jointly taught by NYU and NUS faculty members, he explained.

He will now join the Legal Service Commission.

Education and Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, guest of honour at yesterday's convocation ceremony, applauded the programme for its 'unique content and multinational composition'. Over 20 countries are represented in the graduating class, including Rwanda and Uganda.

He added that he hoped the graduates would consider joining Singapore's growing law sector.

'We're a place with an expanding legal hub and an expanding legal education... It provides a useful home for people from all over the world to do their research and add to the body of law as it's emerging,' said Mr Tharman.

And about a third of the students plan to do just that, estimates Professor Simon Chesterman, NYU@NUS programme director.

There has been strong demand for the course, he added, with about 200 applying each year.

It reflects the need for lawyers, and the legal education system, to go global and not just focus on one jurisdiction, said Professor Tan Cheng Han, dean of the NUS law faculty.

'Hardly any law school dean whom I speak to is not, in some way or other, preoccupied with how to cope with the increasing globalisation of legal practice and education.

'Law schools will increasingly have to find ways to ensure that their students develop a working knowledge of other legal systems while continuing to remain grounded in domestic law,' he said.