

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Degrees for poly grads launched

Admission process begins today for 8 courses from 5 top foreign institutions

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THE Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) will start running foreign university degree programmes for polytechnic graduates in August, earlier than originally planned.

SIT initially planned to start offering the courses next year.

But Education Minister Ng Eng Hen said yesterday "good progress" had been made and as a result, SIT can start its degree programmes ahead of time.

The admission process for eight degree programmes from five top institutions ranging from culinary arts to video game design will now start today.

The Government will provide a roughly 75 per cent fee subsidy for the two-year degree courses – the same as the subsidies it provides for undergraduates at the three local

universities. Fees will be about \$18,000 over the two years.

The SIT's five partner institutions are top-notch in their fields of specialisation. They include the Technical University of Munich, the German science and engineering institution which has produced 15 Nobel prize winners; the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), consistently ranked as the best culinary school in the United States; and the DigiPen Institute of Technology, dubbed the Harvard for video game developers.

The other two are the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, ranked in the top two for hospitality programmes in the US; and the University of Newcastle, part of the prestigious Russell Group of universities in Britain.

The SIT, now headquartered in North Bridge Road, says the admission process will take a student's grades, extra-curricular activities and personal qualities into account. Work experience will be key and all candidates will be subject to interviews.

Dr Ng made the announcement when he spoke about expanding university places further this year.

The SIT will add more degree programmes over the next few years and eventually offer 2,000 places to polytechnic gradu-

ates every year.

Dr Ng said that with the opening of the Singapore University of Technology and Design next year and the expansion of SIT programmes, the Government will be on track to meet the 2015 target of having 30 per cent of a cohort attend university.

Noting that SIT's partners were picked for their high academic standing and strong industry links, he said all institutes of higher learning must strive to be the best in their class globally. "This is the best way to serve Singaporean students, because they are then assured that their graduation certificates are worth something and will not diminish over time," he added.

The Education Ministry said faculty members from partner universities will be involved in teaching students.

Students will also enjoy industrial attachments, internships and exchange programmes at partner universities.

Dr Ng also revealed that his ministry will invest up to \$1 billion to increase capacity at the five polytechnics.

This means that by 2015, 45 per cent of a Primary 1 cohort can access polytechnic education, up from the 42 per cent now.

The five polytechnics took in about 25,000 students last year.

Polytechnic graduate Terence Chuah, who studied culinary management at Temasek Polytechnic, was impressed that SIT was able to bring in the renowned CIA.

The 22-year-old, who is now in national service, said: "I used to dream of going to CIA. It would have cost at least \$200,000 in fees and living expenses over four years. My parents don't have that kind of money.

"But with CIA here and the subsidy, it is within my reach. I can't wait."

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Courses offered by 5 top institutes

■ Technical University of Munich (Technische Universität München) has produced 15 Nobel Prize winners and 10 recipients of the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, the highest German research prize.

It is among nine elite schools that receive national funding for research under the German Universities Excellence Initiative.

TUM will offer three specialisations: microelectronics, integrated circuit design and automation.

■ Newcastle University is a member of the Russell Group, an association of leading research-intensive universities in Britain.

The Bachelor of Engineering in Marine Technology programme it will offer has three specialisations: naval architecture, marine engineering and offshore engineering.

■ DigiPen Institute of Technology's graduates are highly sought after by top game developers and publishers such as Nintendo, Electronic Arts, Lucas-Arts, Sony, Microsoft and Dreamworks.

The two degrees it will offer are: Bachelor of Science, specialising in real-time interactive simulation/game design and Bachelor of Arts, specialising in production animation/game design.

■ The Culinary Institute of America is among the best and its students have become leading chefs and restaurant owners as well as media personalities.

Its alumni include Anthony Bourdain (author, chef and TV host) and Roy Yamaguchi (author, restaurant owner and former TV Iron Chef).

Details of the degree course will be confirmed soon.

■ The University of Nevada, Las Vegas William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration is consistently ranked in the top two for hospitality undergraduate programmes in the United States.

Its alumni include Mr Scott Sibella, president of Mirage Hotel and Casino, and Mr George Maloof, owner and chief executive of The Palms Casino Resort.

It will offer a Bachelor of Science in hotel administration.