



Mr Jonathan Lee, 23, is a chef at Artichoke cafe in Middle Road. He will be applying to join the degree course developed by SIT in partnership with the Culinary Institute of America – ranked the No. 1 culinary school in the US. He had previously enquired about joining the institute here and was disappointed when told it was for only polytechnic upgraders. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

SIT to admit A-level holders next year

Students told by SIT's overseas partners to apply then

By SANDRA DAVIE
 SENIOR WRITER

A-LEVEL holders desperate to join courses run by prestigious overseas universities in partnership with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) have been told they will be able to apply next year.

SIT began the Singapore-based scheme for polytechnic graduates in August but those with A levels were disappointed to learn they could not apply.

Now, A-level holders who recently approached SIT's university partners such as DigiPen and the Culinary Institute of America for places on their courses here

have been told to apply next year, although there has been no official announcement.

In response to queries from The Straits Times, the Ministry of Education confirmed that, although SIT was established primarily to provide upgrading opportunities for polytechnic graduates, it may in

consultation with its partners admit a small number of A-level holders.

It added that they would receive government subsidies similar to those offered to polytechnic upgraders. SIT was unable to say how many places would be given to A-level holders and to which courses, as details are still being worked out.

SIT's overseas universities degree courses proved a hit when admissions began in March. About 1,500 polytechnic diploma holders applied for the 500 places the institute was offering this year.

Its partners such as DigiPen, dubbed the Harvard for games developers, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), which runs hospitality programmes, are highly-ranked institutions.

Others include the Technical University of Munich, the German science and engineering institution which has produced 15 Nobel Prize winners, and the University of Newcastle, part of the prestigious Russell Group of universities in Britain.

The Government foots 75 per cent of the tuition fee bill, meaning students would need to pay only between \$20,000 and \$27,000 over two years, depending on the course.

A-level holders told how they had been disappointed to be turned away by SIT admissions staff, who informed them that only polytechnic graduates need apply.

One of them was Mr Samuel Tan, 20, who scored three As in his A levels and had all the requisite qualifications for the DigiPen course for video game developers.

Mr Tan, whose parents run a small shop selling clothes, said: "I am really keen on becoming a games developer but there's no way my parents could afford the \$200,000 I would need if I wanted to go to DigiPen in the US."

"I was so excited when I heard that DigiPen will run courses through SIT. So imagine my disappointment when I was told in March this year that it is only for poly grads."

But he said that after hearing SIT will admit A-level holders from next year, he is looking forward to sending in his application. "I can't wait. I hope to start on the DigiPen course next year."

Another A-level holder, Ms Karen D'Souza, 20, hopes to enrol in the UNLV course here next year. She said: "I will have saved enough money by the middle of next year."

She described her earlier disappointment at being told she could not apply for the course: "It was excited at the news of them partnering SIT as the fees will be subsidised generously by the Government. That was until I heard that it was not open to A-level holders."

Mr Jonathan Lee, 23, is enrolled in a business degree course at Nanyang Technological University and works as a chef in the evenings at Artichoke cafe in Middle Road.

He will be applying to join the degree course developed by SIT in partnership with the Culinary Institute of America – ranked the No. 1 culinary school in the US.

The tuition fees at the institute's New York campus are about US\$110,000 (\$S142,000), – putting it out of reach for aspiring chefs such as Mr Lee.

He had previously enquired about joining the institute here and was disappointed when told it was for only polytechnic upgraders. But after learning courses were being opened up to A-level holders from next year, he said: "I will switch courses in a heartbeat if I can get in because cooking is my passion."

sandra@sph.com.sg