

# New nursing degree to address rising demand

BY GWENDOLYN NG

**A** NEW nursing degree course aims to help address the rising demand for health-care professionals as Singapore's population ages rapidly.

The Bachelor of Science with Honours in Nursing Practice programme will be jointly offered by the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and The University of Manchester (UOM).

It will produce about 70 graduates annually once the first **cohort** completes the programme. Classes, which begin in September, will be held at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) in Ang Mo Kio.

As part of their coursework, the undergraduates will spend four weeks in Manchester city in Britain, observing at hospitals, **mingling** with students and doing community work.

It will be the second government-subsidised nursing degree to be offered locally, after the one offered by the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies in the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

At yesterday's signing ceremony to seal the partnership between SIT and UOM, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence Ng Eng Hen said it is important to train more nurses.

This is because they are "critical to the foundation of daily health-care operations".

The event was held at NYP.

He said: "With the opening of Khoo Teck Puat Hospital last year, and with Jurong General Hospital set to open in 2014, the demand for nurses will increase further."

## HELPDESK 我的字典

**Cohort:** 同僚 tóng liáo

**Mingling:** 交融 jiāo róng

**Prospective:** 有意的 yǒu yì de

**Alma mater:** 母校 mǔ xiào

Nurses make up about 40 per cent of the staff in public hospital groups. The number of registered nurses has grown by 60 per cent, from 16,000 in 2000 to more than 26,000 in 2009.

To qualify for the two-year degree course, **prospective** students must first

have a nursing diploma from either NYP or Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Professor Karen Luker, the dean of UOM's School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, said the degree will improve the image and status of nursing here. She said at the signing event: "Nursing certainly has a lower status here than in the United States or Britain.

"I hope that, over time, nursing will become a first-choice career for intelligent young people, and not just a second choice that people think about only if they can't get their first-choice career option."

A total of 20 scholarships will be offered to the first cohort of undergraduates by five public hospital groups: Alexandra Health, Jurong Health Services, National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and Singapore Health Services.

Said final-year NYP nursing-diploma student Sheena Ramazanu, 21, who originally wanted to go overseas to pursue her degree: "I'm very happy that UOM is here, as I can now stay in touch with my family while studying."

She wanted to become a nurse because of her father, a trained nurse who now lectures at NYP.

She said: "I hope to take on the role of a senior staff member in a hospital some day, or come back to NYP to serve my **alma mater**."

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