

Revised tertiary fee subsidy to benefit 7,000 Malay students

Mendaki sets aside more resources as more eligible with new income rules

■ BY JENNANI DURAI

UP TO 7,000 Malay students could have some or all of their tertiary education fees paid for by the Government, starting from this year.

Community self-help group Mendaki, which administers the Tertiary Tuition Fee Subsidy scheme, has set aside more resources after revisions were made to the way that applicants are assessed.

The programme was created in 1991 to replace the policy of not charging Malay students tuition fees for tertiary education.

Those who are Singapore citizens or Singapore permanent residents will receive help towards their first diploma and first degree.

The changes mean that at least two-thirds of Malay families will qualify for a subsidy of 50 per cent or more, com-

pared with fewer than half of them under the old scheme.

They were announced in September last year by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs. He said the proportion of Malay households that benefited from the scheme had decreased over time as the income criteria had not kept pace with the changing income levels of the households.

“As such, some Malay families – particularly the larger ones – have found it financially challenging to meet their children’s tertiary education needs,” he added.

This is the first time the subsidy scheme has been revised since it started

20 years ago.

One change is that candidates will no longer be assessed on the basis of their total household income, but their family’s income per head.

This will be of particular help to those with large families.

Most students will receive an increase in their subsidies on their polytechnic or university fees.

They include Mr Hafiez Ismail, who is in his first year at the Singapore Institute of Technology.

The 22-year-old used to qualify for a 70 per cent subsidy on his tuition fees based on his family’s monthly household income of \$2,935.

But with six members in his household, its per capita income is about \$490, entitling him to a 100 per cent subsidy under the revised criteria.

“I was quite worried about affording the fees, and had started saving up during my national service,” said Mr Hafiez, whose father works in the postal service. “So I’m quite relieved that they have changed the criteria.”

Students already enrolled in the polytechnics or universities who will benefit from the revised scheme should apply for it again.

However, in situations in which the revised scheme would reduce a student’s subsidy, Mendaki’s advice is to not reapply.

Another change is that the calculation of household income will now no longer include the national service allowances of any members of the household.

The deadline for applications varies for different types of students.

Full details can be gleaned from www.mendaki.org.sg/tertiary-tuition-fee-subsidy/tertiary-tuition-fee-subsidy.aspx or the hotline for the scheme on 6245-5734.

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