

Varsities, polys, ITE to raise fees

Increase of 2%-7% is to 'keep up with rising costs of providing quality education'

■ BY AMELIA TAN

SINGAPORE'S three universities, five polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) yesterday announced separately that they will raise tuition fees by around 2 per cent to 7 per cent for the

next academic year.

They said the increases were due to the increased cost of providing a quality education. As in previous years, the increases will be bigger for permanent residents and foreigners than for citizens.

At the polytechnics and ITE, the fee

increase will affect new and existing students. At the universities, however, the increases will affect only incoming students. But male students who applied for places before their national service will have their tuition fees pegged to the date of their applications.

University fees have generally been increased almost yearly, as the Government has said previously it would have more frequent but smaller fee increases rather than a hefty hike every few years.

From this year, Singaporeans starting at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will pay 4 per cent to 6 per cent more than their seniors, depending on the course; those starting at the Singapore Management University (SMU) will pay 5 per cent more.

The biggest increases are for the business courses at NTU and the architecture, business, medicine, dentistry, nursing, law, music, and pharmacy courses at NUS. Fees for all these courses will go up by 6 per cent.

Singaporeans starting at the Singapore Institute of Technology, which offers degree programmes for poly graduates, will pay 2.6 per cent more than their seniors.

At the polytechnics, Singaporeans enrolled in diploma courses this year will pay \$50 more than last year – a rise of 2.3 per cent, to \$2,250 a year.

Singaporeans studying in a Nitec course or Higher Nitec course at the ITE will pay \$20 more a year, amounting to \$300 for a Nitec course and \$536 for a Higher Nitec course. Singaporeans taking the technical engineer diploma will pay \$2,250, or \$50 more.

The fee hikes are steeper for non-citizens across the board. For example, a permanent resident admitted to SMU to study law this year will pay \$15,610, or \$1,430 more than last year. An international student will pay \$21,750, or \$2,400 more. Singaporeans reading law will pay \$11,820, or \$579 more than their seniors who entered last year.

The institutions stressed that financial help is available.

Students interviewed said they were not surprised by the announcement as there had been regular fee hikes recently.

"I think the fees are still affordable now," said Gan Sok Ting, 19, a final-year biotechnology student at Singapore Polytechnic. "But if the fees go up higher, by about \$100, for example, it might be expensive for some students."

ITE Higher Nitec student Aw Meng Kit, 17, said: "I think the increase is reasonable. The Government has been trying to raise the standard of ITE education by providing us with good facilities and teachers."

ameltan@sph.com.sg