

New degree courses in health care

By PEARL LEE

FOR the first time, full-time degree courses in physiotherapy and occupational therapy are available in Singapore.

Both one-year degree courses are the result of a tripartite partnership involving the Singapore Institute of Technology, Trinity College Dublin and Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP).

The courses, which started in September, are offered to diploma holders. They are conducted at NYP, the only local

institution offering diploma courses in physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Previously, students who completed diploma courses in these fields and wanted to further their studies had to go abroad to do so.

The launch of the two degree programmes comes as the health-care sector faces a shortage in allied health professionals, including physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

At the official signing ceremony of the three institutions on Oct 29, the guest of hon-

our, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong, said there is a need for Singapore to grow its allied health manpower pool in order to meet the health-care needs of a rapidly ageing population and the rising incidence of chronic diseases.

The inaugural cohort consists of 51 students in the physiotherapy course and 32 students in the occupational therapy course. All 83 of them previously read diploma courses in physiotherapy and occupational therapy at NYP.

One of them is Ms Emily Koh, 37. She worked as a for-



(From left) Technical officer Azeni Ajum, 44, and students Sharlene Teo, 23, Chan Jing Cheng, 26 and Ivan Lee, 28 at a mock teaching session of the new courses. PHOTO: DESMOND LUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

eign exchange trader in a bank but is now pursuing a degree course in occupational therapy.

She said: "It is my passion

and dream to work with children with special needs... I hope to go into paediatrics in future."

✉ leepearl@sph.com.sg