SIT degree courses in high demand

More than 1,000 poly diploma holders apply for 200 places

By SANDRA DAVIE
SENIOR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

WHEN the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) announced that it will offer its own degrees from this year, some doubted that there will be strong demand.

But the doubters are wrong – more than 1,000 polytechnic diploma holders, many of whom are armed with good grades, have applied for the 200 places in SIT’s three degree programmes.

This has spurred SIT to increase the places in the courses in information and communications technology, infrastructure engineering and accountancy to 300.

Singapore’s fifth public university also received a record 6,000 applications for the 1,500 places in the 28 courses it runs with overseas university partners, including the University of Glasgow and the British University of Newcastle.

The total intake for the university is well over 1,700 this year, with 90 per cent of students having listed SIT as their first choice. Last year, the intake was 1,500.

Some had questioned if SIT’s own degrees would see strong demand as the university was given the charter to grant its own degrees only in March.

Also, students enrolled in SIT degrees will have to spend an extra eight months to a year to go on intensive internships combining work and study.

Students taking up the overseas university programmes generally take two years to complete their studies.

SIT president Tan Thiam Soon said the university was heartened by the response.

“I am glad that polytechnic diploma holders recognise the value of the work-study programme as it will boost their job prospects.”

This is the case at American universities such as Drexel in Philadelphia, where more than a third of graduates clocked as much as 1½ years’ work experience in a five-year degree course.

They landed jobs with their co-op employers even while they were still studying, with their work experience valued and leading to higher starting salaries.

“The specific focus of the courses combined with the work-study scheme is aimed at nurturing best-in-class specialists – graduates with deep knowledge and skills in a particular field,” said Prof Tan.

He said students also recognised the strong demand for trained graduates in the fields covered by the three new courses. This includes infrastructure engineering, which will train engineers who can design, monitor and maintain infrastructure such as power grids and transport systems.

It is a “one-of-a-kind” course as the other public universities here do not offer such a specialisation.

SIT will also offer its own accountancy degree. While this is available at four out of the other five local universities, including SIM University, places are still limited, leading polytechnic graduates to go abroad, said Prof Tan.

There is also industry demand for more accountants, given that many accountancy graduates from local universities go into banking and finance, he added.

Ms Nathira Ahamed Saif, 20, who graduated as one of the top students in her accountancy class in Singapore Polytechnic, will be taking up accountancy at SIT.

She turned down offers of places from two other local universities because she felt that SIT’s internship programme will give her an edge in the job market.

“With so many graduates coming out of the universities you need to stand out in some way,” she said.

“I feel that SIT’s intensive work-study scheme will help me stand out and land the job I want.”

sandra@sph.com.sg