More than 30,000 students took the O-level examinations last year and will be receiving their results tomorrow. This is the second of a five-part series on the results and the developments in the educational institutions that students can join after the examinations.

Niche courses at poly\'s draw for students

Growing allure also due to improved chances of poly graduates going to universities

Sandra Davies
Senior Education Correspondent

More school leavers – including those who did well enough to enter junior colleges – are joining the five polytechnics in Singapore, continuing a trend that started more than five years ago.

Figures from the Ministry of Education show the intake of the five polytechnics went up from 25,700 in 2010 to 26,970 in 2013, the latest year for which the complete figures are available.

More significantly, of those who entered the polytechnics after the O-levels, 49 per cent had qualified for junior college.

More than 37,000 students sat the O-levels in 2012. The growing allure of the polytechnics is due partly to improved chances of their graduates progressing to universities here and the institutions offering more unusual courses for which there is demand, poly officials and students said.

The niche courses offered by the polytechnics are part of the attraction for school leavers. Such courses range from film, sound and video studies at Ngee Ann Polytechnic to sports coaching at Republic Polytechnic.

This year, four new courses are being added, including three offered at Ngee Ann, Republic and Temasek polytechnics.

Republic is also offering a course on engineering systems and management, which aims to groom multi-disciplinary engineers.

To enter a junior college, a student’s LIR8 score – based on O-level results for English and five relevant subjects – must not exceed 20 points.

Polytechnics require that the total score for English and four other subjects not exceed 26 points.

For popular courses such as biomedical science and banking and finance, applicants need to score below 12 points to be accepted.

Students taking the three-year polytechnic route say they were attracted to the interesting courses and the practical and applied learning approach.

Despite qualifying for junior college with an LIR8 score of 6, Soehn Samudklin, 18, decided to take up the diploma course in veterinary technology at Temasek Polytechnic instead.

The former Singapore Chinese Girls’ School student said: “I had my heart set on becoming a vet. So I thought, might as well enrol in a course that is directly relevant to the field I want to enter.”

Hoping to realise dream

“I know it is more difficult for poly students to get into medicine and law, but the numbers are increasing every year... I believe my polytechnic education has prepared me well for university, so I hope to land a place and realise my dream of becoming a doctor.”

TAN FONG XIN, who is studying biomedical science at Singapore Polytechnic, despite qualifying for junior college with an LIR8 score of 6, Soehn Samudklin opted for the diploma course in veterinary technology at Temasek Polytechnic instead. She also volunteers at the SPCA.

POLYTECHNICS IN NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Number of polytechnics in Singapore</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26,879</td>
<td>Total polytechnic enrolment in 2013, up from 25,700 in 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Percentage of applicants who also qualified for junior college</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Percentage of poly students expected to make it to university this year</td>
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