

# Record 15,000 to enter local varsities this year

---

**This is 1,000 more than last year, raising cohort participation rate to 32 per cent**

---

**Sandra Davie**  
Senior Education  
Correspondent

---

---

Even as the Government provides alternative pathways for school-leavers to achieve career success, it has opened more university places this year.

Ministry of Education (MOE) figures show that 15,000 polytechnic graduates and A-level school-leavers have been given places in the six universities, including the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and SIM University (UniSIM), for the new academic year.

This is 1,000 more places than last year and raises the age group's rate of entry into university – called the cohort participation rate (CPR) – to 32 per cent. The rate last year was 30 per cent.

MOE said it was on track to reach the target CPR of 40 per cent by 2020.

Among polytechnic graduates, 20 per cent of them won a place in

a publicly funded university this year, said an MOE spokesman. A few years ago, the figure stood at about 15 per cent.

Most of the new varsity places were created from the expansion of SIT and UniSIM.

UniSIM in Clementi launched full-time degrees last year, offering just over 200 places in marketing, finance and accountancy.

This year, it added a human resource management degree and increased its intake to 288.

SIT, which offers niche degrees from overseas universities, started running its own programmes last year, offering 1,800 places. This year, it added more of its own degrees for a total intake of 2,080.

The other four universities, Nanyang Technological University, the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) and Singapore Management University, also added more places and courses.

SUTD, which opened its Changi campus in May, admitted a record 386 students. Last year, the university, which partners the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and China's Zhejiang University, took in 332 students.

Yale-NUS College, the liberal arts institution, admitted close to 200 students this year, compared with 170 last year.

MOE said the six universities received about 39,000 applications from A-level holders, and close to 31,000 applications from polytechnic graduates this year. Each applicant usually goes for two, if not three, different institutions.

Students welcomed the diversity of choices in higher education – from the liberal arts courses provided by Yale-NUS College to the applied learning approach taken by SIT and UniSIM where classroom learning is integrated with real-life, on-the-job application.

Both UniSIM and SIT offer work attachment programmes that are longer and more immersive.

Polytechnic diploma holder Glenda Chua Huai Jiao, 20, chose a finance degree at UniSIM because of the industry-relevant curriculum and intensive work attachment programme.

“It always helps to gain real work experience. There's nothing like applying what you learn in the classroom to real-world situations,” said Ms Chua, who hopes to work for a bank.

Parents welcomed the additional university places.

Sales executive Catherine Chai, 48, whose polytechnic graduate daughter secured a place in SIT to study tourism management, said: “My daughter wanted to go to Australia to study for a degree, but I cannot afford that. So I am glad she got a place in a local university. It is so much more affordable and I can use my CPF to pay her fees.”

---

sandra@sph.com.sg