

Poly grads' starting pay rises after flat two years

Survey shows employment rate remains high, with salaries up by about 5%

Salaries of polytechnic graduates across courses

| Course category | Gross monthly salary (\$) | |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Fresh graduates | Post-NS graduates |
| Applied Sciences | 2,000 | 2,338 |
| Built Environment, Engineering & Maritime | 2,200 | 2,500 |
| Business, Management, Design & others | 2,000 | 2,500 |
| Health Sciences | 2,350 | 2,610 |
| Hybrid courses | 2,000 | 2,300 |
| Information & Digital Technologies | 2,000 | 2,478 |
| All courses | 2,100 | 2,500 |

Source: JOINT POLYTECHNIC GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2015 ST GRAPHICS

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After a flat two years, the starting salaries of polytechnic graduates have climbed by around 5 per cent.

The graduating class of 2015 who landed full-time jobs were hired on a median monthly salary of \$2,100, compared with \$2,000 in 2013 and 2014.

The monthly pay of graduates who had completed national service (NS) after finishing school in 2012 also moved up by \$100 to \$2,500.

These were the results of the latest employment survey by Singapore's five polytechnics, which were released yesterday. It found that the employment rate for the newest polytechnic graduates remained high at 88.9 per cent, and 91.5 per cent for post-NS ones.

Still, more are either finding it tougher to land full-time employment or prefer to work part-time as they consider their options.

Those with full-time jobs fell from 59.4 per cent for the class of 2014 to 57.9 per cent for those graduating last year.

Meanwhile, those taking up part-time or temporary employment went from 29.8 per cent in 2014 to 31 per cent last year.

But this is no cause for worry, said the polytechnics. The majority of graduates doing part-time or temporary work said they were pursuing further studies or preparing to do so.

With the further expansion of public university places last year, one in five polytechnic graduates



The five polytechnics – Nanyang (above), Ngee Ann, Singapore, Republic and Temasek – said that while there was an increase in those taking up part-time or temporary employment, the majority of graduates doing such work said they were pursuing further studies or preparing to do so. ST PHOTO:ALICIA CHAN

won a place in a degree course this year. Four years ago, the figure was 15 per cent – less than one in seven.

Most new university places were created from the expansion of the

Singapore Institute of Technology, which was set up to offer degree pathways for polytechnic graduates, and SIM University.

Recruitment experts said free-

lance or contract work is quite common among those in the information technology and creative industries.

Mr David Leong, managing director of PeopleWorldwide Consult-

ing, said: "This is the age of Uber, so many of them in the IT and creative industries want to work as independent contractors so they can be flexible with their time."

The ride-hailing app Uber does not employ taxi drivers, but uses independent contractors.

Nanyang Polytechnic IT graduate Kalista Chan, who chose to work on the Earn and Learn scheme despite her high grade point average, said she wanted to chalk up some work experience before deciding on her degree education.

Under the Earn and Learn scheme, Institute of Technical Education and polytechnic graduates can further their qualifications while working.

Ms Chan, 20, who works as a functional analyst at Accenture while studying for a specialist diploma, said: "Business analytics is a wide field. I felt that I needed to first understand the industry and the opportunities available in the field. University studies can wait."

The survey, which involved 10,513 graduates from last year and 4,876 post-NS graduates who completed their diploma course in 2012, also compared the pay levels of polytechnic graduates across different courses. Those with diplomas in built environment, engineering and maritime, and health sciences were the best paid.

Fresh graduates from the health sciences courses, which include physiotherapy and occupational therapy, had median monthly salaries of \$2,350, while post-NS graduates from the courses got \$2,610.

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