

Earn and Learn scheme making progress: WDA



Poly graduate Ong Jia Ming giving a presentation to Acting Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung at Accenture's office yesterday.
 PHOTO: ACCENTURE

Work-study scheme has 150 trainees across eight sector-specific programmes so far

Pearl Lee

Mr Dillon Choy, 22, was offered a place at the Singapore Management University (SMU) to study information systems.

But he gave it up to join an Earn and Learn work-study programme in the infocomm technology sector instead. This began in August under the national SkillsFuture initiative to arm workers with deep skills.

Mr Choy, a Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) graduate who has a diploma in business enterprise IT, is one of 27 graduates across the five polytechnics in Singapore to join the scheme in the infocomm technology sector.

Yesterday, he gave an update of his participation in the scheme to Acting Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung at consultancy firm Accenture's office in Raffles City.

Mr Choy has been working at Accenture since June, when he started a four-month training programme

on emerging technology. He is now part of a team that ensures the smooth running of a grants and funding management system developed by Accenture for a client.

Mr Choy goes back to NYP every two months for a week-long course to complement his on-the-job training. At the end of the programme, he will graduate with a specialist diploma in information systems development.

"I had looked at SMU's curriculum and compared it with this programme and found them quite similar. But with this programme, I get to work in a multinational company and learn skills that I can apply immediately to projects," said Mr Choy.

Accenture is one of three firms taking part in the work-study programme in the infocomm sector. It employs 24 of the 27 poly graduates under the scheme. The others have been hired by tech firms Innova InfoTech and Nebulas Tree.

Workforce Development Agency chief executive Ng Cher Pong said

the work-study scheme is "on track", with about 150 trainees across eight sector-specific programmes. Other sectors include logistics and food manufacturing.

"We hope to increase the number of Earn and Learn programmes to even more sectors and expand the number of placements," he said.

"We've been reaching out... to companies and the response has been fairly positive. This is new to the companies as well, some of them require a bit of hand-holding on how to set up internal structures."

The universities, especially the Singapore Institute of Technology and SIM University, are exploring whether they can offer advanced standing to those who complete the work-study scheme and wish to pursue a degree, he added.

Mr Ong Jia Ming, 23, who is employed by Accenture under the scheme, said he hopes to continue working at the firm after he finishes the work-study programme.

"I think it is important to work and gain experience... But I will also look out for part-time university degrees that I'm interested in," he said.

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