

**Singapore News****More options for mid-career professionals looking to join healthcare sector**

By Chan Luo Er | Posted: 13 Feb 2016 12:00 | Updated: 13 Feb 2016 23:00

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SINGAPORE: Mid-career professionals keen to join the healthcare sector as a physiotherapist, occupational therapist or radiographer can now do so through heavily-subsidised degree courses under an expansion of the Healthcare Professional Conversion Programme (PCP).

This was announced by Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor on Saturday (Feb 13) at a career preview fair at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

The Healthcare PCP is jointly offered by the Health Ministry and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to provide mid-career professionals the relevant training to join the healthcare sector. This is the first time the programme will encompass degree courses.

It follows the introduction of new degrees for allied health professionals at the Singapore Institute of Technology in November 2014. Previously, only diploma courses were available for allied health professionals in Singapore. The first intake of the new degree programmes, for both undergraduates and mid-career professionals, will start from September this year.

The new courses for Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Diagnostic Radiography offered by the Singapore Institute of Technology will replace the current PCP diploma programmes at Nanyang Polytechnic.

Speaking at the event on Saturday, Dr Amy Khor said that the expansion of the PCP will allow more mid-career professionals to join the healthcare industry.

"Nursing and allied health offer meaningful and rewarding careers where our professionals can use their talents to make a difference in the lives of patients every day. With an ageing population, we need to train and recruit more nurses, therapists and radiographers. Through our Healthcare Professional Conversion Programme, mid-career entrants can gain the requisite training to join the healthcare sector," said Dr Khor.

One such professional is Ms Dinar Rahimita, 31. A former flight attendant who was with Singapore Airlines for the past six years, she is looking to switch careers. Ms Rahimita discovered her passion for helping others while in her previous job, and believes the enhanced PCP will make the transition a lot easier.

"In my previous line of work, I have handled a lot of passengers who have difficulties in cutting their food, going to the toilet and moving from one seat to another because they have disabilities. That is why I want to join this PCP - because I figured out that Occupational Therapy would be suitable work for me," she said.

HEAVY SUBSIDIES FOR MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS

Course fees for mid-career professionals will be heavily subsidised: Singaporeans eligible for the MOE Tuition Subsidy will have their course fees fully sponsored while Singaporeans who are not eligible for the subsidy will co-pay course fees of S\$44,000 for the entire course.

Monthly training allowances will range between S\$2,100 and \$2,420, depending on prior work experience, and all trainees will receive a one-time bonus of S\$2,000 upon graduation. Trainees will also be bonded to a healthcare institution for four or six years, depending on their eligibility for the MOE Tuition Subsidy, a point which some job-seekers said was a key consideration.

"I think one of the main aspects will be the bond, for me it will be a six-year bond. On hindsight, it can be a good thing as it promises me job stability," said former teacher Riesal Mikael Idries.

This is the second round of enhancements to the Healthcare PCP, which also includes nursing programmes. In 2014, training allowances were raised and the one-time career transition bonus was introduced.

"Following the enhancements, we actually saw an increase in intake of PCP trainees by 48 per cent. Between academic year 2014 and 2015, (there was an increase in intake) from 40 to 59, so I think we have been encouraged by this and we have continued to review the PCP programme," said Dr Khor.

Allowances for those in the PCP diploma programmes will go up again in this round of enhancements. From April, monthly allowances will go up by between S\$50 and S\$150.

Applications for the Healthcare PCP degree programmes are now open until Mar 18, 2016. Mid-career professionals can find out more at WDA's website.