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## WhyItMatters

# *Interning for a degree – and job*



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University programmes which require students to undertake longer and more structured internships were launched at two universities just three years ago. But already they are translating into better job prospects for students.

The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), which requires its students to take up internships lasting up to a year, said last week that of its first batch of 82 accountancy students who went on the stints, 69 received job offers from the firms they interned with.

Two of its students who interned with Ernst & Young were even offered positions one level higher than those generally offered to fresh graduates.

The other institution, SIM University, also said that two of its students had opted to continue working for the firms after their internships ended. The university's flexible curriculum allows students to switch to evening classes and continue working.

It is not just the students. Employers who had students working for them on internships said they have also benefited. As employer Daniel Thong said, the usual two- to three-month stints are too short. The longer period enabled him to put UniSIM student Abdul Fareed Mustakin through the paces. He ended up asking the marketing degree student to continue working in a permanent position.

The SkillsFuture Work-Study Degree Programmes announced by Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung last Friday takes this approach to the next level. SIT and UniSIM will launch schemes in which students can take on jobs and be sponsored for their degrees at the same time. He said more such pathways were needed to support the increasing proportion of degree holders here.

Indeed, when 40 per cent of each cohort takes the university route by 2020, employers would not hire people simply because they have degrees.

Workers would have to be right for the job. Long attachments would help employers pick such people.

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