

TODAY • WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST 2017

11 singapore

More career guidance for SIT, SUSS undergraduates

All first-year students to undergo career mentorship and coaching programme

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SINGAPORE – Undergraduates at two universities will now receive more career guidance from the early days of their degree programmes, under a tie-up with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC).

It will be compulsory for all first-year undergraduates at the Singapore University of Social Sciences to undergo the NTUC youth wing's programme, which includes career mentorship and coaching.

NTUC's volunteer career guides will come from social services, banking and healthcare, and the SUSS students will be able to meet different industry partners every quarter.

The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) will pilot the NTUC's Youth Career Network programme for its engineering undergraduates at the start, and include other undergraduates "in due course".

The two universities and NTUC's youth wing, which inked an agreement yesterday, aim to recruit and train over 60 career guides and help a total of 500 students within a year.

"(On) this year's May Day, we shared with the Labour Movement that we intend to go into the institutes of higher learning — the three Institutes of Technical Education (ITEs),

six universities and five polytechnics — because we want to make sure that the next generation of workers start by having the correct counselling, having the correct access to career coaches, so that they have a very clear idea of the career that they want to go into, the kind of skillsets that they want," said NTUC secretary-general Chan Chun Sing.

Young NTUC executive secretary Desmond Choo said the tie-up with SIT could help more to choose engineering as a career, as "a lot of engineering students do not go on to become engineers".

"It's at its infancy, but we hope to learn from this partnership how we can best retain engineering talent from school all the way into the workplace," he said.

Students and graduates from SUSS and SIT welcomed the initiative.

Ms Joanne Teh, a recent offshore engineering graduate from SIT, said: "I see the importance of it (since internship is not compulsory at SIT)." Ms Teh, 23, said she had to seek networking opportunities herself when

she was a student. She is currently a self-employed investor as she could not find a job relevant to her degree.

SUSS marketing undergraduate Nur Sabrina, 21, said career guidance would be helpful.

She took a gap year last year and interned in three different industries — design, advertising and marketing — to find out which job is most suitable for her. "I was wandering for a while before I found out what I wanted to do," said the mass communication diploma holder.

Her coursemate Natalie Cheong, 19, said: "The working industry is a very unknown field to me. As a student all my life, I don't really have any connections. (Without this,) I think I will be struggling quite a bit ... My best options would be the Internet, or LinkedIn."

NTUC's Youth Career Network's discovery and mentorship programmes started in September last year. Since then, more than 700 participants have benefited from the coaching of 100 over volunteer career guides, mainly through roadshows and its school networks.