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Headline: Apprenticeship degree scheme a big draw

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Nearly 200 apply for about 65 places on offer in work-study degree programmes this year

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A new scheme modelled after the renowned German and Swiss system of apprenticeship has seen keen interest from university students, with close to 200 applying for 65 places on offer this year.

Under the SkillsFuture Work-Study Degree Programmes that started in January, undergraduates at the Singapore Institute of Tech-

nology (SIT) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) can work and study for their degrees concurrently.

The scheme is meant to better support the growing proportion of degree holders in Singapore amid a more challenging job landscape.

It aims to ensure that the skills students learn are directly relevant to the industry they plan to enter, and support workers hoping to upgrade skills through a degree course.

There are two work-study programme models at SIT. The first largely caters to students without full-time work experience. They alternate between studying at university for one or two terms, and working with a sponsoring firm over the course of their degree programme.

On top of paying for students' work stints, the companies may offer a study allowance and cover tuition fees partially or fully. They may also offer the students full-time employment before graduation, with a bond. After being interviewed by potential sponsoring firms, 34 students out of 100 who applied were admitted to this pro-

gramme in the January intake.

The other model targets working adults. Students alternate between working three or four days in the partner firm, and studying in SIT for the remaining one or two days each week. SIT currently offers the programme for its food technology and civil engineering courses.

Partner firms can send interested employees on the scheme as long as they support the student taking time off work to study. Potential students who are keen can also approach their firms to discuss the possibility of partnering SIT.

Six SIT students were accepted into this programme in July.

At SIT, there are now more than 10 company partners, including building contractor Shincon Industrial and American ingredient supplier Ingredion.

At SUSS, six of 25 finance students who applied last year have been placed under the work-study programme with Standard Chartered Bank. They spend three days a week at work and two days attending classes at SUSS – and may be employed by StanChart after graduation. StanChart will be recruiting 13 for next year's scheme.

Meanwhile, over 30 students from SUSS have applied for the scheme this year. Placement outcomes have not been announced.

The National University of Singapore is also piloting the Cooperative Education Programme, which will place students on 18-month internships. It will kick off with students in the business analytics and information security programmes, who start internships next May.

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