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Five years on, SIT still a big draw for poly grads

They make up 80% of 12,000 applicants for 2,700 places the institute is offering this year

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As it celebrated its fifth anniversary as an autonomous university last month, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) affirmed its popularity with school leavers, drawing 12,000 applicants for the 2,700 places it is offering this year for its 42 degree courses.

As in recent years, its high-technology and high-touch degree courses such as nursing which require more personal attention and service, were five times oversubscribed.

Allied health sciences, including nursing and occupational therapy, drew 2,800 applicants for about 540 places.

Courses related to computing – including information security and software engineering – followed the same trajectory, with 2,500 applicants for 500 places.

Work-study degree programmes, where students alternate between work and study either every semester or a few days a week, are also growing in popularity.

Last year, more than 200 students applied for 11 work-study programmes and 66 were admitted. Applications for this year's intake have yet to close, but the number is already expected to exceed last year's figures.

Of its 12,000 applicants, SIT said about 6,000 will be shortlisted for the aptitude-based admission process, where they will attend interviews and submit portfolios.

Employers are invited to sit on the interview panel to select candidates for courses such as the hospitality degree programme.

Nearly 80 per cent of the 12,000 applicants are polytechnic diploma holders, while the remainder are A-level and International Baccalaureate Diploma holders.

The A-level applicants mostly applied for the allied health, accountancy and computing courses.

SIT admissions director Kelly Koh said the university's interactions with prospective students indicate that its applied learning model is a huge draw for school leavers.

He said the demand for courses in information and communications technology (ICT), as well as health sciences, suggests that school leavers are practical and realise that high-tech, high-touch careers are the way of the future.

He added: "They are also being strategic, knowing very well that SIT's close links with industry, as well as our now well-received Integrated Work Study Programme, will give them that added edge."

SIT president Tan Thiam Soon said: "Five years on, SIT's focus remains on providing students with an applied learning and industry-focused education – a unique pedagogy that blends classroom learning with on-the-job learning."

He noted that SIT's suite of degree programmes aims to supply manpower in high-growth areas such as healthcare, engineering and ICT, and that the university's two new programmes are designed to provide the talent pipeline needed in growing economic sectors.

The air transport management degree, developed in close consultation with industry leaders, was launched in response to the burgeoning aviation sector, given the upcoming airport terminals.

The dietetics and nutrition degree, developed in consultation with the three public healthcare clusters, was in response to the need for dietitians in an ageing population.

Professor Tan said: "SIT ensures that intake numbers match the expectations of the industry, so that our students graduate with job vacancies available for them."

"This has been proven in our Graduate Employment Survey, which revealed that more than 90 per cent of our graduates achieved employment following their graduations, with some being offered a job even before being conferred the degree certificates."

Full-time national serviceman Joel Ching, 23, who will start his degree studies in radiation therapy this year, said he was drawn to the emphasis on work attachments.

He will be spending 36 weeks of

his four-year degree in clinical practice. The polytechnic graduate in biomedical science said it is important to have exposure to real-world settings.

"Not only do you get to apply what you learn, but it is also when you come in contact with patients that you develop interpersonal skills that are so important for those who work in healthcare," he said.

SIT's employment survey, released in September last year, showed that the overall employment rate for its university graduates hit 92.3 per cent last year.

Those who secured full-time jobs saw their mean gross monthly salaries go up from \$3,282 to \$3,350 last year.

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Pioneer graduates of the Singapore Institute of Technology's Information and Communications Technology degree, after the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2018 at the Dover campus last year. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO