

Work attachments pay off for SUSS grads

Longer stints, work-study plans land them good jobs, higher pay

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Longer and more structured work attachments have translated into good job offers and higher salaries for Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) graduates.

The university has yet to complete its graduate employment survey of its pioneer batch of 168 full-time degree graduates, who started on their studies in 2014.

But to date, within three months after completing their degree studies, 86 per cent of them have landed jobs. Of the total are 83 accountancy graduates. About half of them have gone to work with companies that they interned with after receiving priority offers. Their starting salaries were \$3,800 – \$200 more than the starting salaries of other fresh accountancy graduates.

The university requires its students to go on work attachments for at least six months as part of its graduation requirements, but more than half take on at least two work stints, adding up to a year.

Its emphasis on applied learning and work experience is one of the reasons the university continues to draw an increasing number of applicants despite shrinking cohorts.

SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat said the university received 5,700 applications this year for the 700 places it offered in eight full-time degree programmes at its Clementi Road campus. Last year, there were 4,900 applications for 580 places.

He said many of the 2,000 short-listed applicants interviewed said they liked the emphasis on applied learning and work-study programmes, which they believed would improve their job prospects.

Professor Cheong said as the university grows its yearly intake to 1,000 at a steady rate over the next few years, it will continue to emphasise applied learning and work-study programmes, where students undertake longer work stints – by



Mr Abdul Fareed Mustakin (far left) impressed his boss, Mr Daniel Thong (left), so much during his six-month internship two years ago that he was asked to continue in a permanent position while he studied. Later, when Mr Thong started a new firm, Nimbus for Work, he offered Mr Abdul Fareed a full-time job as the marketing and branding lead. ST PHOTO: SYAMIL SAPARI

as much as two years out of four.

Currently, there are 40 students alternating between work and study. Ten of them work three days a week at Standard Chartered Bank and attend classes two days a week.

There are also 30 accountancy students who work alternate semesters in accounting firms and study at SUSS.

Prof Cheong said SUSS is looking at offering more of work-study programmes in other degrees, including social work and early childhood. When SUSS reaches its full intake of 1,000 a year, he expects that 10 per cent of the students will be on work-study degrees.

One SUSS graduate sold on the idea of longer and more work at-

ADDED ADVANTAGE

I not only picked up useful skills through the work attachment, it also got me interested in learning user experience design, which I took up at a private school. Most of all, it landed me a full-time position as a marketing and branding lead.



SUSS GRADUATE ABDUL FAREED MUSTAKIN

tachments is Mr Abdul Fareed Mustakin, who went on a six-month internship two years ago at a company that runs a platform connecting household service providers to customers. He impressed his boss so much that he was asked to continue in a permanent position.

The 26-year-old marketing graduate decided to seize the offer and switched to evening studies.

And even before he completed his degree course, his boss, Mr Daniel Thong, who went on to start a new maintenance services firm, Nimbus for Work, offered him a full-time job as the marketing and branding lead.

Mr Abdul Fareed said: "I not only picked up useful skills through the work attachment, it also got me in-

terested in learning user experience design, which I took up at a private school. Most of all, it landed me a full-time position as a marketing and branding lead."

Prof Cheong said it is important that university education is not seen to be separate from work. "Work attachment is a powerful way of learning. It enables students to apply what they have learnt in the classroom and see the relevance of it." He added that alternating semesters of work and study is good preparation for the future. "Increasingly, workers will have to keep learning while they work, to update their knowledge and skills."

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