Lots of choice: NTU students looking at openings in their Career Fair booklet yesterday. The university said internships give graduates an edge when it comes to full-time employment, with many receiving job offers later.

Jobs look for graduates at campus career fairs

Big-name employers flock to NTU, NUS offering a diverse range of options

By SIOW LI SEN
(SINGAPORE) As a career fair at one university here draws to a close and a similar fair kicks off at another, it appears that jobs are chasing Singapore’s graduates.

There are some 3,000 openings available at the National University of Singapore (NUS) career fair, which got going yesterday and another 4,200 at the National University of Singapore (NUS) fair, which ends today.

NTU’s fair has some 221 employers taking part, including several Japanese companies that are here for the first time. This gives the graduates a more diverse field to choose from. Last year, 175 employers took part in the event.

But it cannot mask the fact that a slowdown is affecting hiring; this year there are about 3,000 jobs up for grabs – down 25 per cent from over 4,000 in 2011.

"The sentiment is more cautious this year," said Loh Pui Wah, director of NTU’s career and attachment office.

According to NTU, close to 15,000 students are expected to attend the event, including more than 8,000 final-year students (6,000 of whom are undergraduates) who will graduate in July.

NUS, too, is seeing a larger number of companies at this year’s career fair, which ends today.

There are 176 companies participating in this year’s NUS Career Fair – an increase of about 20 per cent compared to 2011, which had 145, said an NUS spokesman.

About 4,200 jobs are on offer this year, similar to 2011, she said. Nearly 10,000 students (undergraduates and post-graduates) will be graduating from NUS this year.

At NTU’s career fair, almost 90 new employers are taking part for the first time.

They include big names like Coca-Cola Singapore, Merck and Toshiba group as well as start-up companies from the IT sector.

Toshiba, which began its global recruitment programme seven years ago, hopes to hire 69 graduates this year from Asia and has shortlisted 12 candidates from Singapore. Hiroe Tsutsui, Toshiba Asia Pacific assistant senior manager, said the global graduates will be taking up permanent roles in Japan and get the same employment terms and benefits as Japanese employees.

Toshiba, which has 203,000 staff worldwide, has more than 300 non-Japanese employees working at its headquarters in Japan.

"The 12 shortlisted candidates went through two interviews in Singapore and the final round of interviews will be in Japan," said Ms Tsutsui.

Fresh graduates will be paid a basic monthly salary of 295,500 yen (about $3,400). In addition, they can expect 4-6 months’ bonus, allowances and pension benefits as well as subsidised housing and full commuting expenses, Ms Tsutsui said. The total annual package works out to about $60,000, she said.

The economic slowdown could give employers like DSO National Laboratories a better chance of fulfilling their hiring targets.

DSO (which does research and development for the defence sector) is hoping to hire at least 30 NTU graduates this year, said Serene Tan, assistant director, human resource. DSO is looking for about 50 graduates in total this year, same as last year, she said.

"The best graduates gravitate towards the financial sector," said Ms Tso. "The economic outlook is not bright, at least this year. So we're maintaining the recruitment numbers," she said. Starting pay at DSO is above $3,500 a month.

NTU also said internships give graduates an edge when it comes to full-time employment.

"Internships have proven to be effective talent-spotting for organisations as they extend offers of full-time employment to students who have held internships with their firms," it said.

For the Class of 2010, nearly 800 out of about 4,000 undergraduate students surveyed had received job offers from their internship companies.

In that year, about 4,300 NTU students did their internships at more than 1,200 organisations worldwide, such as global technology company IBM, the Big Four accounting firms, American multinational oil-and-gas corporation ExxonMobil, Lucasfilm Animation, and power systems giant Rolls-Royce.

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Jobs look for graduates at career fairs

As a career fair at one university here draws to a close and a similar fair kicks off at another, it appears that jobs are chasing Singapore’s graduates. There are some 3,000 openings available at the Nanyang Technological University campus career fair, and another 4,200 at the National University of Singapore fair.