

IT, business grads get higher starting pay

They can earn up to \$5,000, compared with median monthly salary of \$3,400, survey shows

✶ SUE-ANN TAN & ETHAN LEUNG

Ms Chng Hui Yie, 23, got into computing because of her interest in Neopets and blogging when she was younger.

While her parents were reluctant for her to study computing, her decision has paid off.

Last year, she graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) with a degree in computer science.

Ms Chng, who started working a month after graduating, earns about \$5,000 as a software engineer in inventory management start-up TradeGecko.

The latest annual survey of graduates from NUS, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) shows people like Ms Chng are getting higher starting pay compared with the 2016 cohort.

The starting pay for last year is the highest since the survey began in 2012, with fresh graduates having degrees in business, economics and computing see-

ing the biggest pay jumps.

The survey, conducted last November, polled 11,628 fresh graduates of full-time courses from the three universities.

Their median gross monthly salary last year was \$3,400, up from \$3,300 in 2016, according to the survey results released yesterday.

However, NUS graduates in computer science enjoyed a median gross monthly salary of \$4,285 in 2017, compared with \$4,000 in 2016.

NTU graduates with double degrees in business and computing had even higher starting salaries last year – \$5,000, compared with \$4,600 in 2016.

And 88.9 per cent of graduates found full-time, part-time, temporary or freelance work within six months of their final examinations, a slight dip from the 89.5 per cent in 2016.

The proportion of those who found full-time permanent jobs last year dipped to 78.4 per cent from the 79.9 per cent in 2016.

At the same time, the number

“There is a great demand for talent in IT and a shortfall in labour, which translates to higher wages as organisations compete to attract graduates.”

– Nanyang Business School Associate Professor of information technology Damien Joseph

of graduates freelancing last year rose to 2.4 per cent from the 1.7 per cent in 2016.

INTEREST

Ms Chng told The New Paper: “I started getting interested in computing because I liked to customise my Neopets (pages)

and blog skins by tweaking the HTML and CSS programming.

“Many companies that traditionally didn’t hire people in technology, as well as the Government and statutory boards, are now looking in that direction.”

Experts point to high demand for graduates in IT-related fields as pushing up salaries for employees in those roles.

Nanyang Business School Associate Professor of information technology Damien Joseph said: “There is a great demand for talent in IT and a shortfall in labour, which translates to higher wages as organisations compete to attract graduates.”

Associate Professor Goh Khim Yong, vice-dean of corporate relations at the NUS School of Computing, said computing degrees attract one of the highest starting salaries. It overtook those in other fields such as dental surgery last year.

He added: “It is not far-fetched to say that every sector needs IT.”

“It is like an ‘all access pass’ and the force that ties industries such as transportation and even media together.”

SMU information systems undergraduate He Huili, 24, is already doing freelance web design for clients while studying.

“I want to learn more about coding. I like designing, which is also something I picked up while creating my blog in secondary school,” she said.

Ms Chng feels local graduates have an edge over those from overseas because they understand what Singapore needs.

“A local designer would build certain aspects that are familiar to Singaporeans into the applications so that they would not be surprised by the user interface. It is much more than just coding,” she said.

suetan@sph.com.sg
leungeti@sph.com.sg

**FOR MORE, READ
THE STRAITS TIMES TODAY**