81.2% of new grads found full-time permanent work in 2018, up from 78.4% in 2017: Poll

Anelia Tang
Education Correspondent

Fresh university graduates turned a higher starting pay last year, with those in the information technology (IT) sector posting the highest rates for full-time permanent jobs.

Fresh grads took home a median monthly salary of $3,500, up from $3,400 in 2017, according to results of a joint graduate employment survey released yesterday.

Those in courses such as computer, business analytics and information security had the highest median gross monthly pay of $4,300.

The annual survey, conducted last November, also found that 81.2 per cent of new graduates were in full-time permanent work, higher than the 78.4 per cent in 2017.

Overall, 95.2 per cent of them were employed, up from 94.9 per cent in 2017. This refers to graduates in full-time, part-time, temporary or freelance work.

The proportion of graduates doing freelance work fell from 2.4 per cent in 2017 to 1.8 per cent last year, while those who have still not been able to find a full-time job dropped by 2.1 percentage points.

For the first time, the survey also released employment outcomes by course clusters, to help students make decisions on course choices.

Graduates from the information and digital technologies, business and built environment courses had the highest full-time permanent employment rates.

The survey polled 1,100 fresh graduates from full-time programmes at four universities—the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

The joint exercise is conducted by the six autonomous universities six months after their graduates' first-terms exams. Due to differences in calendars, the Singapore University of Technology and Design and the Singapore's Institute of Technology polled their graduates separately.

The universities said many of their graduates managed to find full-time jobs through internships.

For instance, more than a third of SUSS first batch of full-time accountancy graduates were offered jobs through work attachments, while half of the graduates from SMU who had job offers before finishing school received them through internships.

NUS computer science graduate Leonhard Ho, 24, now a software engineer at Facebook in California, feels lucky to be at the forefront of advances in the tech industry.

On why he chose to work overseas, he said: "I seized the opportunity to work with and learn from the best and brightest engineers in the field. Also, the total compensation package for jobs in the Bay area is typically very attractive for new graduates in the technology field."