

Singapore IT, digital tech fresh grads in demand, command highest median salary

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The latest edition of the survey, covering 11,200 fresh Singapore graduates, finds that the Class of 2018 had higher overall and fulltime permanent employment rates than the previous cohort. — TODAY pic

SINGAPORE, Feb 27 — Singapore graduates from the Class of 2018 who took IT and digital technologies courses had the highest full-time permanent employment rate (91.7 per cent) and commanded the highest median salary, according to the 2018 Joint Graduate Employment Survey.

The annual survey, which presented employment outcomes by course clusters for the first time, showed that the median salary of fresh IT and digital technologies graduates left their peers in other courses playing catch-up.

The median gross monthly salary of IT and digital technologies graduates in fulltime permanent jobs was S\$4,100 (RM12,353) — significantly higher than the overall median of S\$3,500. Their median salary was 37 per cent higher than graduates of arts, design and media courses, who earned the lowest median gross monthly salary of S\$3,000.

In 2018, IT and digital technologies graduates, business and built environment graduates had the highest full-time permanent employment rates.

The latest edition of the survey, covering 11,200 fresh graduates, found that the Class of 2018 had higher overall and fulltime permanent employment rates than the previous cohort.

The fresh graduates excluded architecture, law, medicine and pharmacy students as they had to continue with further training or residency programmes.

The Class of 2018 in fulltime permanent employment also reported higher median starting pay.

Respondents were surveyed on their employment status as at November 1, 2018, about six months after they completed their final exams.

The 2018 survey was conducted by Nanyang Technological University (NTU), the National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU) and — for the first time — the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

Better employment indicators

Employment numbers for fresh graduates increased overall. Of the 10,100 survey respondents who were in the labour force:

More found employment within six months of completing their final examinations. The overall employment rate of 90.2 per cent was higher than the 88.9 per cent in 2017.

More secured fulltime permanent employment. The rate of 81.2 per cent was higher than the 78.4 per cent in 2017.

Fewer of them engaged in freelance work, with freelancers making up 1.8 per cent, down from 2.4 per cent in 2017.

Fewer were in part-time/temporary employment. The 7.2 per cent was lower than the 8.2 per cent in 2017.

Those who were unemployed and still looking for jobs, or in involuntary part-time/temporary employment, decreased from 11.4 per cent in 2017, to 9.3 per cent.

Salaries increased overall as well

The mean gross monthly salary among fresh graduates in full-time permanent employment increased to S\$3,733 in 2018, from S\$3,613 in 2017.

The median gross monthly salary was S\$3,500, higher than S\$3,400 previously.

Follow-up survey

Another 700 graduates from NTU, NUS and SMU participated in a 2018 follow-up survey.

They were from the Architecture Class of 2015, who took part in the survey upon completion of their practical training.

Others were from the biomedical sciences & Chinese medicine, law, medicine, and pharmacy courses who completed their studies in 2017. They were surveyed in 2018

after completing their one-year practical law course, pupillage, housemanship, or first-year residency training.

The mean gross monthly salary among those in fulltime permanent employment was S\$4,583, slightly higher than the S\$4,565 in 2017.

Their median gross monthly salary was S\$4,500, the same as in 2016 and 2017.

96.9 per cent were employed after completing their training, similar to 2017.

There was a slight increase in the full-time permanent employment rate, from 93.6 per cent up to 93.9 per cent.

Helped by work attachments

The universities cited work attachment programmes as a key factor for graduates securing employment.

“Students who return from a work attachment or internship are much more self-driven and ready for the global workplace,” said Professor Tan Ooi Kiang, NTU Associate Provost for undergraduate education.

NTU students may do 10 to 30 weeks of internship or work attachment either locally or overseas. More than one in three business & computing graduates were hired by their internship companies, said NTU.

These experiences give students a competitive edge, Tan added. “Employers expect more from job candidates, and internships can open the door to multiple job offers well before graduation.”

Similarly, SUSS said work attachments are a graduation requirement for full-time undergraduates.

Lasting at least 24 weeks of their courses, the work attachments expose students to “authentic work environments” and facilitates their learning, said SUSS in a press release.

What graduates say

Before graduating from NUS’ School of Computing, Celeste Ang interned at artificial intelligence start-up AppZen in Silicon Valley, as part of the school’s overseas college programme.

There, she used machine learning techniques to enhance the process of editing and auditing expense reports.

Ang felt that the programme enabled her to “develop soft skills and an entrepreneurial mindset.”

Shortly after graduation, she was employed by multinational firm Unilever as a data scientist.

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SMU School of Information Systems graduate Tay Jing Ying said her two internships enabled her to “explore different industries and gain global exposure.”

Her second internship was with the Bank of America Merrill Lynch, where she is currently employed as a technology analyst.

“Apart from the technical knowledge gained, the curriculum also built my analytical thinking, resilience and interpersonal skills, which are crucial and relevant in the real world,” said Tay.

SMU was the first university in Singapore to make internships compulsory for all students. — TODAY