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## Selected NSF's to undergo work-learn scheme for 4 years while serving in SAF's new Digital and Intelligence Service



The cyber NSF scheme, launched in 2018 to let full-time national servicemen be deployed in cyber roles critical for Singapore's defence, will come under the Digital and Intelligence Service. (Photo: MINDEF)



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SINGAPORE: Selected full-time national servicemen (NSFs) will undergo a newly-launched Digital Work-Learn scheme and serve as digital specialists under the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) newly established Digital and Intelligence Service (DIS).

The scheme will see the selected national servicemen serve for four years, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) said on Wednesday (Mar 9).

Last week, the Defence Ministry announced the SAF will launch a fourth service, the DIS, by the last quarter of this year.

These digital specialists will develop artificial intelligence (AI) applications and perform software engineering tasks "in support of real-world military operations", said MINDEF and NTU.

During their service, these NSFs will take up modules to earn academic credits at NTU that contribute to a degree in Data Science and AI, Computer Science or Computer Engineering.

After their Basic Military Training and vocational course, they will attend classes for one semester every year and work for the remaining period of the year.

At the end of the four-year period, they will earn 50 per cent of academic credits and can complete their studies in another two years.

Digital specialists will receive a regular service salary after they complete "the minimum period as NSFs", MINDEF and NTU said.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on Wednesday by Defence Cyber Chief Brigadier-General Mark Tan and Professor Louis Phee, Vice President (Innovation & Entrepreneurship) and Dean of NTU's College of Engineering.

## HOW DOES THE SCHEME WORK?

NSFs selected for the scheme will serve in "specialised digital roles" during their four years of service, MINDEF said on its [website](#).

These include roles in data engineering, AI model experimentation, development and evaluation, operational deployment of models, software engineering, user experience and user interface design.

They will also receive the DigiSpec Award, which includes a "competitive salary and benefits such as leave and medical coverage", said MINDEF.

Tuition fees for the university studies within the timeframe of the scheme will also be covered.

There is no bond after the four-year contract.



### WHAT DOES THE SCHEME COVER?

Digital specialists will undergo vocational training, on-the-job training and academic training, said MINDEF.

Vocational training will equip servicemen with knowledge and skills, including how AI and digital solutions are applied in MINDEF/SAF's context.

They will then be deployed to operational units for on-the-job training, where they will receive supervision and guidance to develop software and AI models as well as perform operational tasks.

As for academic training, three NTU degree programmes are currently available under the scheme: Computer Engineering, Data Science and AI, and Computer Science.

At the end of the four-year period, they will earn 50 per cent of academic credits. Academic credits at NTU may be eligible for credit transfer to other universities, subject to the academic policy of the respective universities.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

All national service pre-enlistees can apply. Applicants are required to secure a place in the affiliated university degree programmes on their own merit.

The selection process for the scheme will begin one year ahead of enlistment. Shortlisted applicants will be put through "rigorous selection tests assessing their aptitude and digital skills", with successful applicants offered the DigiSpec Award before enlistment.

"Prior experience and knowledge of programming, AI and software development will be useful," the Defence Ministry said on its website.

The first batch of digital specialists will enlist in April 2023 and begin their first semester at NTU in August 2023.

There is no extension available under the scheme. Once these digital specialists complete their four-year contract, they may consider a career in MINDEF or the SAF.

Unsuccessful applicants will continue to be enlisted according to standard enlistment procedures, said MINDEF.

Graduating Year	Type of Course	Application Window
2023	Diploma course Higher Nitec course	1 Jun 2022 to 31 Aug 2022
	NUS High School Diploma or International Baccalaureate Diploma course GCE 'A' Level course GCE 'N' or 'O' Level course National ITE Certificate (Nitec) course	2 Mar 2022 to 2 Apr 2022
2024	Diploma course Higher Nitec course	1 Jun 2023 to 31 Aug 2023
	NUS High School Diploma or International Baccalaureate Diploma course GCE 'A' Level course GCE 'N' or 'O' Level course National ITE Certificate (Nitec) course	1 Dec 2023 to 28 Feb 2024
2025	Diploma course Higher Nitec course	1 Jun 2024 to 31 Aug 2024
	NUS High School Diploma or International Baccalaureate Diploma course GCE 'A' Level course GCE 'N' or 'O' Level course National ITE Certificate (Nitec) course	1 Dec 2024 to 28 Feb 2025

Source: CNA/vc(mi)