

Selected NSFs Will Serve 4 Years of NS in New SAF Service But Will Have Completed Half of Their Degree

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Currently, all Singaporean males are required to undergo two years of compulsory National Service (NS). Now, imagine if that was increased to four years.

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But wait, there's more to it. What if you can complete half of your university degree at the same time?

Serve in the New Digital and Intelligence Service

Last week, The Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) announced that the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) was launching a fourth service, the [Digital and Intelligence Service \(DIS\)](#), in the final quarter of this year.

You can watch this video to know more about it:





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More details about the new service have now been announced.

Selected NSFs will undergo a newly-launched Digital Work-Learn scheme and serve as digital specialists under the newly established DIS.

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

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.

Four-Year Programme

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.

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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.

Roles & Benefits

Under this scheme, the selected NSFs will serve in specialised digital roles.

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

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

The incentives?

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

Furthermore, there is no bond after the four-year contract.

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What to Expect

Now, you might be curious about what the training will look like.

Under this scheme, digitalised specialists' training is split into three aspects—vocational training, on-the-job training and academic training.

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Vocational training will equip servicemen with knowledge and skills, including how AI and digital solutions are applied in MINDEF or 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.

Academic training will then take place at NTU, applicable to three degree programmes—Computer Engineering, Data Science and AI, and Computer Science.

Who Can Apply

The new scheme is open to national service pre-enlistees. However, applicants are still 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.

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Shortlisted applicants will be put through “rigorous selection tests assessing their aptitude and digital skills”, with successful applicants offered the DigiSpec Award before enlistment.

According to the Defence Ministry’s website, prior experience and knowledge of programming, AI and software development will be useful.

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.

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