

MINDEF, NTU Launch Digital Defence Work-study Programme

- Kirana Aisyah
- March 10, 2022



-
-
-
-

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).

The Defence Ministry announced the SAF will launch the fourth service. These digital specialists will develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications and perform software engineering tasks in support of real-world military operations. During their service, these NSF's 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 NSF's.

NSF's selected for the scheme will serve in specialised digital roles during their four years of service. 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.

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.

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. 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.

As [reported](#) by OpenGov Asia, NTU Singapore has partnered with a big tech company to fuel innovation and transform the future of education with its cloud-enabled Smart Campus. With a digital-first strategy and the adoption of technologies, NTU Singapore is set to accelerate innovation and thrive amid the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

As of January 2022, NTU has successfully converted over 2,600 fixed phone numbers to the company’s phone system. With the cloud-based phone system, calls become richer and more collaborative, as NTU employees can make and receive calls on their business number from all their internet-enabled devices, while

using the same tool they use to chat and host video meetings. In addition to cost savings for the University, employees remain productive, as they can also seamlessly transfer their calls across multiple devices, including laptops, PCs, tablets and mobile phones.