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## Mindef, NTU launch cyber defence work-study programme for full-time National Servicemen



NSFs participating in the Digital Work-Learn Scheme will serve as digital specialists under the SAF for four years. PHOTO: MINDEF



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SINGAPORE - The Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have launched a new programme to train selected full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) to contribute to Singapore's cyber defence.

The NSFs participating in the Digital Work-Learn Scheme will serve as digital specialists under the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)'s newly established Digital and Intelligence Service (DIS) for four years.

"They will develop artificial intelligence (AI) applications and perform software engineering tasks in support of real-world military operations," said Mindef in a statement on Wednesday (March 9).

To complement their in-house vocational training and operational hands-on experiences with the DIS, these servicemen can take up modules to earn academic credits that count toward getting a degree in data science and AI, computer science or computer engineering.

Digital specialists will attend classes at NTU for one semester every year to prepare them for their roles in operational units.

The DIS is the SAF's fourth branch of service after the army, navy and air force.

It was announced by Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen in Mindef's 2022 Budget debate on March 2.

The DIS will be responsible for intelligence, cyber and psychological defence, as well as advancing the SAF as a networked force.

It consolidates cyber and C4I (command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence) units that have been formed over the last decade under a unified structure.

After completing a minimum period as full-time National Servicemen with the DIS, these specialists will receive the salary of a regular serviceman for the rest of their four-year stint.

At the end of four years, digital specialists will earn half the academic credits they need and can go on to complete their studies for two more years.

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

Interested pre-enlistees can apply for the Digital Work-Learn Scheme one year before their enlistment, added Mindef.

Defence cyber chief Brigadier-General Mark Tan and Professor Louis Phee, vice president (innovation and entrepreneurship) and dean of NTU's College of Engineering, signed a memorandum of understanding for the new programme on Wednesday.

Said Prof Phee: "The new programme also facilitates the transition of participants into further education in NTU and nurtures the next generation of digital experts, who can help shore up our nation's critical infrastructure."

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