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Work-study scheme to train NSF's as digital specialists

Under Mindef-NTU tie-up, they can also earn academic credits for related degree

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The Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have launched a pro-

gramme to train selected full-time national servicemen (NSFs) to contribute to Singapore's digital defence.

The NSF's participating in the Digital Work-Learn Scheme will serve as digital specialists under

the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) 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 yesterday.

To complement their in-house vocational training and opera-

tional hands-on experiences with the DIS, these servicemen can take up modules to earn academic credits that count towards 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 past 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 stud-

ies for two more years.

The first batch of digital specialists will enlist in April next year 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, Mindef said.

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

Prof Phee said: "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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