

# Nursing degree offers mid-career switch

Govt will sponsor new 2-year NUS course to encourage more locals to join healthcare

**Rachel Au-Yong**

Singaporeans can now make a mid-career switch to nursing – and get a degree in two years.

The new degree-level Professional Conversion Programme (PCP) for Registered Nurses, administered by the National University of Singapore (NUS), was launched at a career preview fair yesterday and is targeted at those who already have degrees in other disciplines.

The latest offering is in addition to an existing two-year accelerated course for registered nurses at the diploma level, conducted by Nanyang Polytechnic.

Launching the programme, whose first intake begins in July this year, Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor noted a growing interest in nursing. The total nursing intake has expanded by a third from 1,500 in 2012 to around 2,000 last year, she said. “With an ageing workforce and an increasing incidence of chronic diseases, the demand for healthcare services will grow in tandem,” she said.

About a third of the some 34,000 nurses here are foreigners, and the Government has planned to add about another 3,000 nursing jobs from last year to next year.

The new degree, Dr Khor said, would be of “multiple pathways” to encourage a “strong local core”.

Successful candidates will gradu-

ate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the NUS Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies. About 15 to 20 people will be shortlisted.

The \$74,500 course fees are fully funded by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Workforce Singapore, and trainees will receive monthly allowances throughout the two years of training. Upon graduation, they also receive a one-time bonus of \$2,000. They must also serve a three-year bond with MOH Holdings, the holding company of Singapore’s public healthcare entities. Employers also receive an \$18,000 incentive for each nurse, to support the transition to a new career.

More than 1,000 mid-career professionals have undergone healthcare PCPs since they were launched in 2003.

NUS nursing assistant professor Shefaly Shorey, 38, herself a graduate of the nursing diploma PCP 12 years ago, said it was “high time” a degree-level course was rolled out.

Previously a science teacher with a master’s in biological science, she faced some opposition from family members, who questioned her decision to “downgrade” to a diploma.

“This course nudges those who have higher qualifications but are concerned about the transition... in the right direction,” she said.

Automation engineer Willy Lim, 50, who attended the career fair yesterday, said: “I have worked on machines for the last 30 years. I thought it would be good to serve humans for a change.” Applications for the new degree are open till March 2.

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\$74.5k

Course fees for the new degree-level Professional Conversion Programme for Registered Nurses.

\$2k

Bonus upon graduation.

\$18k

Incentive to employer for each nurse to smoothen transition.



(From left) NUS nursing student Ong Teng Teng, 42; Tan Tock Seng Hospital nurse manager Lim Han Kee, 37; NUS nursing assistant professor Shefaly Shorey, 38; and Changi General Hospital staff nurse Neo Yi Ling, 30. The new Professional Conversion Programme for Registered Nurses is aimed at those with degrees in other disciplines. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE