

New-graduate employment remains high despite Covid-19, but more working part-time

Those in information and digital technology sectors earning the most for full-time positions

Singapore

MOST students in Singapore who graduated from four local universities last year secured a job and earned a higher median starting salary, with those in the information and digital-technologies sectors continuing to draw the highest salaries for full-time permanent jobs.

But more graduates in 2020 were employed in part-time jobs or traineeships, amid disruptions from the Covid-19 pandemic; more than one in five students took up such temporary roles.

Fresh grads took home a median gross monthly salary of S\$3,700 last year, compared with S\$3,600 in 2019, according to an annual joint graduate employment survey released on Friday, which was the first

since the pandemic struck.

Overall, 93.6 per cent of them were employed within six months of completing their final examinations, up from 90.7 per cent in 2019. This refers to graduates in full-time, part-time, temporary or freelance work.

Those in courses such as computer science, cyber security and software engineering had the highest median gross monthly pay of S\$4,760, as well as the highest rate of full-time permanent employment at 87.3 per cent.

But the annual survey, conducted last November, showed that the proportion of graduates in full-time permanent work has fallen: from 81.7 per cent in 2019 to 69.8 per cent now.

Some 22.3 per cent of fresh graduates

last year started work in part-time or temporary employment, up from 7 per cent the year before.

The study said that about half of this group, or 11.3 per cent of all graduates, had involuntarily started working in such a role last year, a sharp increase from the 2.4 per cent of graduates from 2019.

More than three out of four of these graduates in part-time or traineeship roles are participating in the SGUnited Traineeship Programme.

Introduced last year, the programme helps fresh graduates from universities and polytechnics boost their employability, when hiring demand picks up after the pandemic, by undergoing an attachment with a company and receiving an allowance.

Government support for the SGUnited Traineeship Programme has been extended to March 31 next year in light of the pandemic's continuing impact on hiring.

In his Budget speech on Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said additional help will be extended to workers who need support before landing a job, through programmes like SGUnited Skills and SGUnited Traineeships.

The employment study also found that the proportion of graduates doing freelance work was 1.5 per cent last year, down from 2 per cent in 2019.

The survey polled 11,800 fresh graduates from full-time programmes at the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University and Singapore University of Social Sciences.

The joint exercise was conducted around six months after the graduates had completed their final exams.

As the surveys for Singapore Institute of Technology and Singapore University of Technology and Design are ongoing, their results will be released at a later date. THE STRAITS TIMES