

'Flexible work' on rise among SIM grads

82.7% found jobs within six months; more doing part-time, freelance and contract work

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Like its public counterparts, Singapore's leading private school is also seeing a rising number of its graduates taking on part-time, freelance and contract work.

The Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) reported that 82.7 per cent of its graduates last year found jobs within six months of completing their degree studies.

But of the total, 18.8 per cent were freelancing or had taken on jobs on a part-time or contract basis – something the school termed “flexible work”. The figure was 17.4 per cent last year.

The median gross monthly salary for SIM graduates remained the same as in the previous year – \$2,700. This is less than the starting salaries of \$3,360 for graduates from the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University.

NUS, NTU and SMU, which released their graduate employment survey in February, reported that 80.2 per cent of their graduates landed full-time jobs within six months of graduation, but the number of part-timers had gone up to 9.5 per cent, from just over 6 per cent the previous year.

SIM found that half of the 18.8 per cent had taken on freelance, temporary or contract work because they were unable to find a full-time position.

Of those who took up flexible work, about 14.4 per cent said it was by choice, and another 19 per cent said they took on such work to try out the job and industry.

SIM's global education arm has the largest number of Singaporean students among the private schools here.

Of its total enrolment of 20,000 students, 16,500 are Singaporeans and the majority of them are study-

ing for full-time degrees offered by SIM's overseas university partners, including the University of London and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Mr Lee Kwok Cheong, who heads SIM's private education arm, said the flexible work trend is here to stay, partly because the younger generation of workers prefers to try out jobs before committing to them.

He stressed that his school has many measures to help its students find good jobs. It organises internships, mentorships and networking sessions, as well as job fairs.

Mr Cao Yuan, 26, who graduated with a first-class honours in computing and information systems earlier this year, said the University of London degree provided through SIM enabled him to land a job as a software developer at FDM Group, a multinational corporation providing IT consultancy services.

“I had to sit an assessment test and go through interviews, just like the other applicants, many of whom were from the local universities. In the end, I landed the job and with a position and salary on a par with (those of) the other fresh graduates,” he said.

In contrast, Mr Luke Tan, 27, who graduated with a business degree from SIM two years ago, has managed to land only two contract jobs over the last two years. “But they pay quite well, as much as full-time jobs, and you get to manage your own time,” he said.

Mr Lee said that with the rising number of graduates seeking flexible work arrangements, institutions need to reassess how they measure employment outcomes.

He said: “Should we be looking at just full-time jobs and starting salaries? Or should we be asking our graduates whether they are doing what they really want to do?”

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