

Which grads earn the most?

Pay, employment rates of grads now available online

REPORT: LIEW HANQING
 hanqing@sph.com.sg

FRESH graduates from the economics degree programme of the Singapore Management University (SMU) are among the best paid in their peer group, with a median starting salary of \$3,300.

Those with distinctions fare even better. The corresponding figure for them is \$3,750.

SMU's economics programme is among several local undergraduate courses with a 100 per cent overall employment rate for recent graduates.

Prospective students can now have a better idea of which local degree programmes offers the best pay, thanks to data released by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the first time this year.

Its Graduate Employment Survey is based on responses from recent graduates of the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and SMU.

The survey tracks employment data of graduates six months after graduation.

The survey results are available on MOE's website, www.moe.gov.sg, on the "post-secondary education" page.

The information available includes overall employment rates as well as mean and median gross monthly salaries of graduates, organised according to the degree courses offered by each university. (See table right.)

For example, about 90 per cent of mechanical engineering graduates from NUS

were employed six months after graduation, with a median gross monthly salary of \$2,965.

However, the economy and employment conditions have worsened since these graduates got their jobs.

A spokesman for MOE said it would publish the results of the GES annually.

"The data gives prospective students a general indication of the employment conditions of the graduates from the various degree courses offered by our local universities," he said.

He added that MOE decided to publish the survey results to help students make informed course decisions.

The survey was conducted on graduates who completed their studies between May and June last year and entered the labour market by 1 Nov.

Point of reference

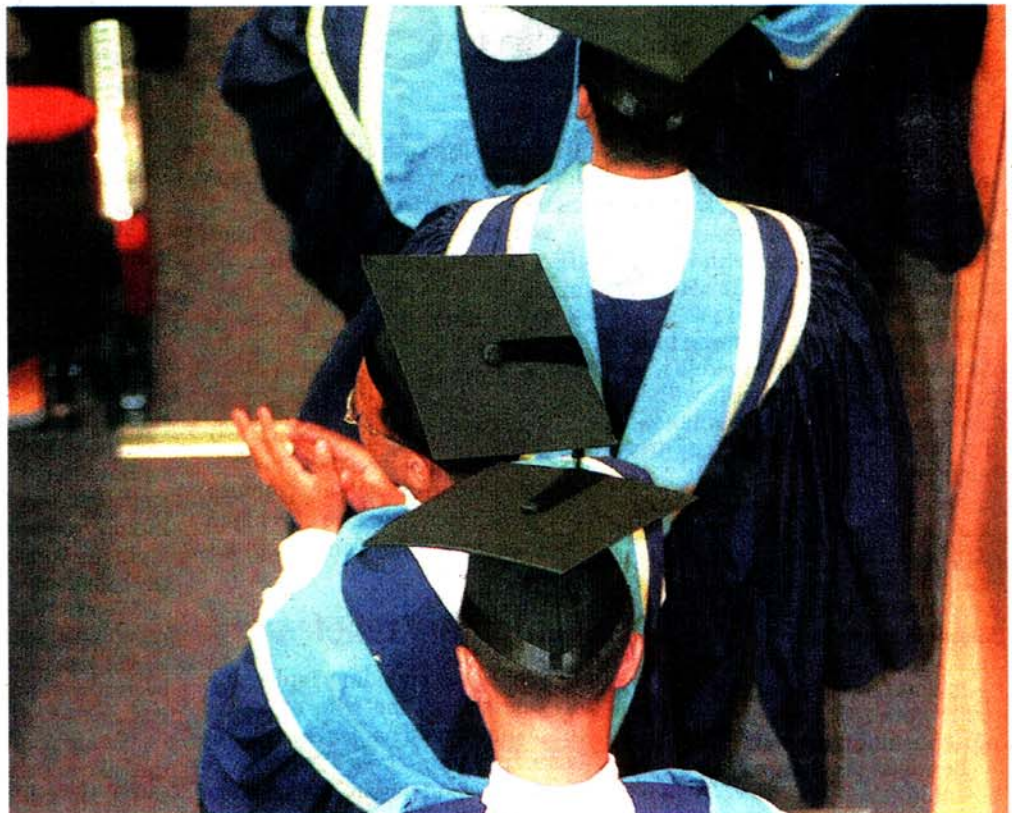
Said the spokesman: "We understand employment conditions may have changed since, but we hope that the data may still be useful as one point of reference for the students."

The survey covers most available degree courses, but omits data from law, medicine, pharmacy and architecture, as graduates in these subjects must first undergo professional training.

Most students The New Paper spoke to felt the information was useful for those trying to choose a course of study.

Said Tan Ying Quan, 18, who has applied to both local and overseas universities: "The information is useful because it allows students to gauge the viability of their studies in the current job market."

He added that the availability of such employment data would prevent students from having unrealistic expectations of their starting salaries or the likelihood of securing employment upon graduation.



ST FILE PICTURE

READY FOR WORK: A file photo of a convocation ceremony at Nanyang Technological University.

But undergraduate Yvonne Poon, 20, said the starting salary is just one factor that most prospective students look at when selecting a possible future career.

"When it comes to the crunch, surely pay doesn't matter that much - aptitude and passion is more important," she said.

"You cannot brainwash yourself into developing a liking for, say, the highest-paying job around."

Undergraduate Joanne Chia, 22, said she felt the information would help job hunters have a good idea of what to expect when they enter the job market.

She said: "There are still quite a number of undergraduates who don't have an accurate idea of what entry-level pay to expect."

"This information would help moderate their expectations and hopefully help them pick their jobs wisely."

She added that it would be useful if information such as the names of big-name employers, and the number of graduates they hire from each local university, are published as well.

"That would give us a good idea of our chances of being employed by the more sought-after companies," she said.

Degree	Overall employment rate	Median monthly salary
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE		
Business Administration (3-year programme)	98%	\$2,700
Computer Engineering (School of Computing)	97.6%	\$3,100
Arts (Honours)	94.4%	\$2,900
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY		
Business (3-year programme)	92.2%	\$2,746
Computer Engineering	90.4%	\$3,021
Communication Studies (Honours)	94.1%	\$2,733
SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY		
Business Management (4-year programme)	94.2%	\$2,800
Information Systems Management	96.5%	\$3,000
Social Sciences (Honours)	93.8%	\$2,800

View the complete stats at: www.moe.gov.sg/education/post-secondary/