HR managers say they wouldn’t hire fast-track course graduates

Concern over honours degree programme which cram's 7-year course into almost 3 years

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A NEW fast-track degree programme may sound good on paper, but the reality is, its graduates may not land their dream jobs.

Three human resource managers my paper spoke to said they will not hire graduates of this programme. Educationists also advised students to do their homework before signing up for it.

To be introduced in late February, the programme aims to allow N-level students to get an Honours degree in business management in a record time of two years and nine months - down from seven years.

The course is jointly offered by business training consultancy SmartTeam, private school Chartered Institute of Technology (Citech) and Britain’s University of Gloucestershire.

It is open to N-level graduates and those with higher qualifications. N-level graduates need a credit grade in mathematics and English in order to qualify for the $21,600, part-time course.

Students will first undergo a rigorous nine-month course to obtain their Professional Certificate in Marketing. Then they have to do a one-year diploma in Business Administration with a focus in marketing.

If they obtain the diploma, students will undergo the one-year honours course in Business Management administered by the University of Gloucestershire.

It usually takes between five and seven years for an N-level graduate to get an Honours degree through a private school or the traditional junior college-then-university route.

The short duration of this degree programme has led some human resource managers and educationists to question its quality - the technical knowledge in the course usually takes more than four years to be digested.

Associate dean of Singapore Management University's School of Business Annie Koh advised: "You have to question and ask if it's just a piece of paper you are buying or an actual degree. It takes time to learn and acquire the necessary knowledge to obtain a degree."

Human resources manager with Achieve Career Consultant Susan Koh agreed: "Frankly, I'd think twice before hiring someone with such a degree."

Dr Chan Weng Kee, managing director of SmartTeam, is aware that the programme will face its fair share of sceptics.

He said that although it is a part-time course, there is no compromise on its quality as students will undergo 600 hours of lessons a term - the same as many full-time courses.

There will be at least nine hours of lessons a week, which does not include time spent on projects. Eight out of the 16 modules from the diploma programme will be waivered as students would already have covered the concepts at the certificate level.

N-level graduate Tan Yee Kan, 17, said he will not take the chance of signing up for such a course. He said: "I want to get a degree that will appeal to employers. I don't want to be passed over."

There were 1,100 complaints against private schools in 2006. During the budget debate last year, Minister of State for Education Gan Kim Yong said: "Education service providers have to compete on quality, rather than course fees or shorter time to graduation."

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