Increase grant for overseas medical students

I refer to last Friday's article ("Medical students in Britain can apply for grant"). Awarding grants to medical students is a good move, as an overseas medical education does not come cheap.

However, the grant of up to $40,000 a year for two years may not be enough to entice these students to return to Singapore to serve their bonds upon graduation.

Local medical students are receiving a grant equivalent to 80 per cent of their university fees. According to the National University of Singapore website, this is equivalent to an amount of $441,000 for a five-year course.

Local students are bonded to public medical institutions for five years after graduation, while overseas medical students who are awarded a maximum grant of $80,000 have to serve a four-year bond.

Given the high costs of studying in medical schools abroad, most overseas medical graduates would probably want to recoup their "investment" as soon as possible. So it is highly unlikely that they would take up the grant and return to Singapore, when they could set up a much more lucrative practice overseas.

For the system to work, the Government should award deserving overseas students a grant percentage similar to that for local students.

The Government should also consider awarding grants to overseas students pursuing other professional courses. For instance, we are short of lawyers, even with the setting up of a second law school at the Singapore Management University.

The Ministry of Law might consider providing grants for deserving law students from reputable overseas universities.

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