Fresh graduates got higher starting salaries

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SINGAPORE — Despite the economic uncertainty last year, the graduating cohort of 2011 from three local universities saw robust employment and good starting salaries, according to graduate employment surveys released yesterday by the Ministry of Education's (MOE).

The overall employment rate for graduates from the National University of Singapore (NUS) was at about 91 per cent, a slight increase from 90.9 per cent in 2010, while the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) saw nine in 10 graduates find a job within six months of graduation, comparable to the year before.

The overall employment rate for Singapore Management University (SMU) graduates fell by some 4 per cent, from 99.9 per cent in 2010 to 95.6 per cent.

On average, these graduates also saw starting salaries rise by between 3.6 and 4.8 per cent compared to the graduating cohort of 2010.

According to the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the year-on-year inflation rate for last year was 5.2 per cent, while wage growth for all workers was 6 per cent.

At NUS, dentistry, law and medicine graduates continued to maintain 100 per cent employment as with 2010, while civil engineering, pharmacy, computer engineering and information systems graduates also saw full employment last year.

Law graduates were top earners with highest median basic monthly pay of $5,500 and mean basic monthly pay of $5,804.

At NTU, aerospace engineering graduates received the highest median basic monthly salary of $3,500, while computer engineering graduates saw the highest mean basic monthly salary at $3,436.

Over at SMU, information systems Management graduates (cum laude and above) saw the highest median basic monthly pay of $3,800 and mean basic monthly pay of $4,097.

But it was not all rosy for graduates last year.

NUS social science graduate Ahmad, for instance, told Today it took him six months to find a suitable job in the Civil Service.

On this year’s outlook, NTU associate provost Professor Kam Chan Hin said: “With headcount in the job market expected to be maintained in 2012, we remain positive about the employment prospects for our graduates this year, despite the uncertainty surrounding global economic conditions.”

NUS undergraduate Hugo Lim, who will be graduating in June this year, is already applying for jobs. He said he is “very concerned” as he feels that “there are very little options outside of teaching” for English language majors.

The graduate employment surveys are conducted six months after graduation and are published by the MOE to assist prospective students in choosing their courses.