



National University of Singapore undergraduate Tiffany Toh benefited from the polytechnic foundation programme, which allows Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) students to apply directly to a polytechnic for a foundation year instead of completing Secondary 5 and sitting the O levels. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Pathways into polytechnics set to be expanded

Ng Wei Kai

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is looking to expand pathways into the polytechnics, including the increasingly popular polytechnic foundation programme (PFP), Second Minister for Education Maliki Osman said yesterday.

“In the lead-up to the implementation of full subject-based banding in 2024, we are looking at how the PFP can cater to a more diverse profile of secondary school students, with different strengths and pace of learning,” he told Parliament.

The PFP is a scheme for Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) students which allows them to apply directly to a polytechnic for a founda-

tion year instead of completing Secondary 5 and sitting the O levels. It was established in 2013 with about 800 students, and saw 1,500 successful applicants last year.

This increase in demand may be attributed to students such as Ms Tiffany Toh, who found the PFP to be a good balance between challenging and nurturing.

Now an undergraduate studying social work at the National University of Singapore, the 23-year-old entered Temasek Polytechnic under the PFP in 2015.

“When I applied to the PFP, it was a choice which was slightly frowned upon by my peers because everybody still wanted an O-level certificate,” she said.

“But it provided me with a safe space to grow in confidence and adapt to the self-directed learning

style in polytechnic. I am someone who needs time to adjust so I appreciated the transition period that the PFP gave me.”

Mr Terence Leong, head of the Centre for Foundation Studies at Temasek Polytechnic, said: “The demand for PFP from Secondary 4 Normal (Academic) students continues to be strong. Our lecturers are very invested in this and we want our students to do well. The students come into the programme generally motivated to do well.

“Our students have always given us very positive feedback about their PFP experience. The enrolment number of our PFP cohort has also increased since the first intake in 2013, from 200 to over 300 this year.”

Dr Maliki also said MOE is planning to expand the Common Entry

Programmes (CEPs) in polytechnics to include the arts, design and media clusters and the science clusters in all polytechnics by 2023.

“With this change, we expect 25 per cent of year one diploma students to enter polytechnic via a CEP, up from 20 per cent currently,” he added.

The CEP is a general course now running in subject clusters such as engineering which allows students to take a range of modules in year one of polytechnic before specialising.

Dr Maliki is leading a review of applied learning pathways, a subject also touched on by Ms Mariam Jaafar (Sembawang GRC) in Parliament yesterday.

“As our education system moves to novel approaches like subject-based banding in our schools and dual majors in our universities, let us not neglect to consider similar approaches for our polytechnics and ITE, including the potential to accelerate progression based on performance,” she said.

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