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Headline: Polys, unis to run more modular courses

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Bite-size programmes offer flexibility to working adults seeking higher qualifications

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Hoping to stay competitive in his job despite various commitments and a busy schedule, engineer Mohamed Johannes Wahid took up a modular course in maritime and offshore operations two years ago.

The 36-year-old, who learnt about the various activities carried out in the oil and gas industry and the financial and safety requirements, completed the short course at Singapore Polytechnic (SP) last April, after about five months. He now applies what he learnt in the classroom to his job in a subsea services company.

Mr Johannes, who has two children and is expecting a third, said: "I believe lifelong learning is better in short courses as working adults... may not be able to commit to

long-term programmes."

Singaporeans hoping to stay relevant in a fast-evolving economy can look forward to more bite-sized courses which make it easier for them to learn at their own pace.

These skill-based modular courses, aimed at working adults, may be stacked up towards qualifications such as diplomas and degrees.

There were 513 modular courses last year, up from 338 in 2015. On average, these courses, offered at polytechnics and universities, can be completed in three to six months.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) will work with institutions to offer more of such courses this year. It said such courses offer flexibility to those juggling their desire to upgrade themselves with personal and work commitments.

"Enrolment is... steadily rising," MOE added. "Beyond modularity, it



Despite having family commitments and a busy work schedule, engineer Mr Johannes managed to upgrade himself by completing a five-month modular course in maritime and offshore operations two years ago. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

is more important the courses meet industry needs," it said.

The ministry noted institutions need to keep abreast of industry changes and rope in practitioners to help them develop relevant courses.

Institutes of higher learning are seeing growing demand for these courses. Some institutions, such as SP, National University of Singapore and Nanyang Polytechnic, said that short courses which can count towards diplomas or degrees are an in-

centive for workers to keep learning.

Others, such as the Singapore Management University, Republic Polytechnic and the Singapore Institute of Technology, said the flexibility these options offer is a draw.

Helping workers acquire and use deep skills was one of the seven strategies spelt out by the Committee on the Future Economy to prepare Singaporeans for future challenges.

As jobs are likely to change at a faster pace, "we must go beyond the pur-

suit of the highest possible academic qualifications early in life, to seek knowledge, experience and skills throughout life", said its report.

It admitted that there would be a challenge in acquiring such skills as working adults would have to balance personal development with other priorities. That is where modular courses could be one of the ways to enable them to get up to speed in a world of constant disruptions.

Several institutions, such as SIM

University and Ngee Ann Polytechnic, explained that a fast-changing economy means new jobs and new competencies are needed.

Mr John Leong, director of Temasek Polytechnic's Temasek SkillsFuture Academy, said modular courses offer options for workers to undergo targeted training. "Individuals customise a learning pathway that best suits their needs."

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