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Headline: 1,300 signups for more than 113 courses under SGUnited Skills programme

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The SGUnited Skills programme has seen about 1,300 signups across more than 113 courses launched so far, announced Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung on Friday (Jul 17).

The programme offers full-time training courses of six to 12 months in sectors such as ICT and manufacturing that can provide job opportunities as the economy recovers. Fees are subsidised and trainees receive an allowance of S\$1,200 a month.

The courses are delivered by 13 training providers with a total training capacity of 6,500, and more courses will be offered in the coming months, said Mr Ong.

“By strengthening existing skills and building up new ones, training through the SGUnited Skills programme is an effective avenue for Singaporeans to access better or broader employment opportunities later on,” he said in his opening speech at the SkillsFuture Forum on Friday.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the incomes of self-employed people have been “drastically affected” and companies are starting to retrench workers in “quite sizeable numbers”, he said.

“The disaster preparedness of every economy is therefore now put to a stringent test. It is not just a test of your immediate response and immediate agility, but also emergency readiness that has been built up over the years.”

SkillsFuture, along with Singapore’s national reserves, has put the country in “a better position” than many others to face the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Ong said.

Calling SkillsFuture one of Singapore's "most critical economic institutions", he said: "In peacetime, we use it to upgrade the skills of Singaporeans to enhance expertise, raise productivity, pursue new careers. During emergencies and crisis, we use it to save jobs and help Singaporeans find new job opportunities.”

SMU DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

The Singapore Management University's SGUnited Business and Digital Transformation Programme was also launched at the SkillsFuture Forum on Friday.

Delivered by SkillsFuture Singapore, the university and eight industry leaders from various sectors, the programme is tailored to meet the needs of companies, especially small- and medium-size enterprises, said Mr Ong.

“The programme will be hands-on and highly applied, (with) industry mentorship and real-life business projects from the sponsoring companies,” he added.

Thong Siek Food Industries, one of the eight companies involved in the training programme, said it was a "win-win situation" for the company to participate.

"This programme will be customised for us based on our needs. And through this programme, I think the trainee can implement new initiatives into our processes, at the same time our people can also learn from this," said deputy CEO Novelle Lim.

Although there is “no obligation” to hire trainees at the end of the programme, Mr Ong encouraged companies to “hire those who need help”.

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“There are many young, well-trained, talented young graduates who have no problem finding jobs, even during such times, but they too have a desire to train, and to upgrade their skills, but they may not be our target group here.

“We want to target groups that are more vulnerable, that need our help with that six to 12 months of retooling at this stage of their career in this current situation,” said Mr Ong.

Mr Victor Tan, CEO of mining and trading firm Top International, said he hopes the trainees attached to his company will eventually be hired as staff.

"The average age from my company is probably about 30 to 35. So I'm hoping that the experienced PMETs that join us will have that wise wisdom and share with the energetic young team," said Mr Tan.

In closing, the Education Minister noted that the coming months “will not be smooth sailing”.

“The Government will do our best to support your effort by helping affected workers as much as we can.

“From the fresh graduate starting out on your career, mid-career worker looking for new job opportunities, to back-to-work parents or senior citizen trying to stay employed, we will try our best to help you weather this storm.”

Source: CNA/cy