

SMU links up with 8 firms to offer PME courses for career change

They will equip them with skills to enable the switch to new roles, and meet needs of SMEs

Jolene Ang

The Singapore Management University (SMU) is linking up with eight companies to co-deliver courses that will help upskill people keen to make a career change.

The initiative under the SGUnited Skills programme is targeted at professionals, managers and executives (PMEs), and aims to meet the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular.

It will equip them with business management, digital and internationalisation skills to enable them to switch to new careers and roles.

The eight firms will provide projects, mentorship and potential job opportunities for trainees. Some of the topics to be covered in training include business and environmental sustainability, innovation and digital transformation.

Trainees will attend classes at SMU for six months, and then get hands-on training at the companies for another three months.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the university, the eight companies and SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) at a forum yesterday that focused on how businesses and the workforce can be reshaped amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The event, which was organised by SSG and supported by The Business Times and The Straits Times,

was held in a hybrid format, with a number of participants at the Lifelong Learning Institute in Paya Lebar, while others attended via teleconference.

The SGUnited Skills programme, which is tailored for people looking to upgrade their skills while job hunting, is a full-time one ranging from six to 12 months.

Course fees are heavily subsidised, with trainees also receiving a monthly allowance of \$1,200 for the duration of the programme.

SSG said about 1,300 people have signed up for courses under the SGUnited Skills programme, with over 5,000 places still available across more than 100 courses.

Education Minister Ong Ye Kung said at the forum: "We want to target groups that are more vulnerable, that need our help, need that six to 12 months re-tooling at this stage of their career, in this current situation."

"Mid-career, mature PMETs are one of the most vulnerable groups. The coming months will not be smooth sailing. Workers and companies will need to adjust, adapt, build new capabilities and seek out new opportunities."

Ms Novelle Lim, deputy chief executive of Thong Siek Food Industry, one of the eight firms in the SMU programme, said her company is looking into digital marketing and data analytics.

"The programme covers a lot,



On the SkillsFuture Forum panel yesterday were (from left) SkillsFuture Singapore chief executive Ong Tze-Chin, Pan Pacific Hotels Group CEO Choe Peng Sum, HRnetGroup executive director and chief legal officer Adeline Sim, Ademo Security Group managing director Toby Koh, Greenpac CEO Susan Chong, and The Business Times digital editor Christopher Lim, who was the moderator. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG

mainly on digital technologies – artificial intelligence, e-commerce, digital marketing and data analytics. I think it is very powerful," she said.

Mining and trading firm Top International Holding hopes the programme will pave the way for more mid-career workers to join its relatively young team.

Its chief executive Victor Tan said: "The average age of employees in my company is about 30 to 35. So, I am hoping that the experienced (workers) who join us will share their wisdom with the energetic young team we have."

The forum is part of this year's SkillsFuture Month, which started yesterday and will run until Aug 16.

A series of mostly virtual events will be organised to cater to Singaporeans at different stages of their career and life. There will be training opportunities for job seekers, especially mid-career ones who have been affected by the economic impact of Covid-19.

Organised by SSG and various partners, SkillsFuture Month 2020 supports the efforts of the National Jobs Council. More than 80 community, educa-



Education Minister Ong Ye Kung speaking at the SkillsFuture Forum, which is part of this year's SkillsFuture Month, at the Lifelong Learning Institute.

tion and industry partners are participating in SkillsFuture Month, which is expected to reach more than 15,000 learners.

A series of events designed to meet the needs of different workforce segments have been lined up,

including live webinars, online classes and workshops, and virtual exhibitions.

SSG chief executive Ong Tze-Chin said: "I hope that the series of SkillsFuture Month activities, both virtual and physical... will allow

HELPING VULNERABLE WORKERS

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EDUCATION MINISTER ONG YE KUNG

more Singaporeans to discover new opportunities, explore available resources and continue their individual lifelong learning journeys, even amid these challenging times."

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