

ITE grads prove their mettle in polys

Their skills, hard work and maturity put many of them among the top of poly cohorts

Amelia Teng

At 24, Ms Seow Mei Poh was about five years older than her schoolmates when she joined Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) in 2014.

She had taken a longer route, going through a nursing course at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) first. As a nurse enrolled with the Singapore Nursing Board, she also worked for five years before joining NYP.

Her years of hard work have paid off and the 28-year-old is now a registered nurse at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. She graduated last year



Ms Seow Mei Poh graduated last year among the top 5 per cent of her nursing cohort in Nanyang Polytechnic, while Mr Samuel Ng is among the top students in the game design course in Temasek Polytechnic. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

among the top 5 per cent of her nursing cohort, with a grade point average (GPA) of 3.92 out of 4.

The hospital had sponsored her full-time study. Like Ms Seow, 15 per cent of ITE graduates in each batch do well enough to be in the

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1 in 4

Ratio of ITE graduates who have moved on to polytechnics every year since 2014, compared with one in five in previous years.

Steep learning curve, but attitude is key

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top quartile of the polytechnic graduating cohort each year in the last five years.

According to data from the Ministry of Education, these ITE upgraders perform even better in the infocommunication technology and health science courses. About a third of them scored in the top quartile of their cohort, outperforming their classmates who entered the polytechnics from secondary schools.

Since 2014, one in four ITE graduates has moved on to polytechnics every year, compared with one in five in previous years.

Lecturers said that many ITE students who join the polytechnics are

more mature and hardworking.

Mr Tan Hong Yap, section head for game design at Temasek Polytechnic, said: "They do have an advantage because they already have some of the skills. Some are better in hands-on, practical skills.

"They are also a bit older, more mature and responsible."

Mr Samuel Ng, 21, joined the course in 2015 after graduating with a Nitec in visual effects from ITE, where he earned a perfect GPA of 4.

In secondary school, the Normal (Technical) student found his interest in video editing while watching movies and playing video games.

"ITE allowed me to continue doing what I enjoyed and gave me a solid foundation in designing," said Mr Ng, who is in his final year at

polytechnic. His current GPA is 3.8, and he is among the top 10 per cent of students in his cohort.

"I didn't really expect myself to do very well. I did struggle a bit at the start of poly because the learning curve was quite steep," said Mr Ng.

"In poly, we take five to six modules at a time, compared with two to three modules in ITE."

But he pushed himself to learn. Mr Tan, who was Mr Ng's supervisor, said he is one of the top students in the course.

"He fares better in skills like modelling because of his ITE foundation. He's also very proactive and motivated to learn," said Mr Tan.

"He's also willing to take on leadership roles when needed."

Republic Polytechnic business in-

formation systems lecturer Mary Yeo said: "I have good students from both the O levels and ITE, so it's not so much the background.

"It's their attitude and willingness to learn."

ITE upgraders said some adjusting was required. Said Ms Seow: "Most of my classmates with O-level background did subjects like biology, which I wasn't so good at. But I was very determined to do well... To understand the content, I had to go through it two to three times."

She hopes to take up an advanced diploma specialising in geriatrics, or a part-time nursing degree in the future. "Nursing is what I really want... It's my passion," she said.

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