special GO Guide — Beyond A Levels

The reception area at Kaplan City Campus @ Wilkie Edge.

More private education institutions expected to leave industry this year in light of revised requirements

Stricter rules to raise quality

Things have been shaking up in the private education sector lately.

Since the establishment of the Committee for Private Education (CPE), a statutory board tasked with cleaning up the private education sector, in 2009, many private education institutions (PEIs) have been weeded out.

In 2012, the number of private schools in Singapore was 332, compared to more than 1,000 that were in operation in 2009.

Eighteen PEIs shut down in 2015 and 25 private schools deregistered with the CPE last year.

There are currently 293 registered private schools, the lowest in recent years.

More PEIs are expected to leave the industry this year, as the CPE prepares to implement stricter rules to raise the quality of PEIs here.

These revised requirements were released last month and will take effect in June.

Mr Brandon Lee, director-general (private education) of SkillsFuture Singapore, which the CPE is part of, said earlier this month that the restructuring will continue as the Government shapes the private education sector to better serve the needs of students and the economy.

He said: "Existing players need to be committed to continuous improvement to make their programmes more industry relevant and robust."

The new rules state that PEIs offering degree programmes will be required to take part in an annual survey to track how easily their graduates find jobs.

Private schools that want to offer degrees or diplomas that lead directly to degrees also need to obtain a four-year EduTrust certification.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AWARD

This is a quality assurance award that focuses more on academic processes and student education outcomes.

Private schools will need to have a minimum paid-up capital of $100,000 and meet a minimum credit rating by June.

The PEIs are also required to improve their quality of services, transparency of information to stakeholders and the protection of families, students and staff.

These strict criteria will help ensure that bona fide schools remain to cater to the rising number of students opting for the private education route.

Although the closures are bad news, many PEIs here are staying strong and doing their best to keep up with the new regulations and maintain their competitive advantage.

They are doing this through a variety of strategies which include attracting parents and students with multilingual programmes as well as using high-tech tools and innovative teaching styles.

Several PEIs use interactive whiteboards, tablets with e-books and educational contents, smartphones, websites, podcasts and comprehensive school management systems, among other methods.

Dr K Thirumaran, Head of Academic Group, Business & IT, and Senior Lecturer in Business, Hospitality & Tourism Management at the Singapore campus of James Cook University, said: "We have sustained ourselves through the consistent standardisation of our enrolment processes and internationally recognised academic rigour.

"These efforts have qualified us as one of the leading universities in Singapore.

STRENGTHS

"We continue to attract a good number of students, given our strengths in Business, IT, Arts, and Psychology degree programmes with an Australian education essence."

Mr Leon Choong, President of Kaplan Singapore, said: "Kaplan is committed to offering educational opportunities of the highest standards.

"Till today, we are the only education provider to have been awarded three distinct four-year EduTrust certifications across all our entities.

"We maintain close links with industry, regulatory bodies and trade associations to ensure that our offerings are up-to-date and relevant to the needs of a dynamic workplace and Singapore's changing economy."

PARTNERSHIP

Kaplan Singapore has partnered University College Dublin, one of Ireland's leading universities, for more than 25 years.

Murdoch University, Australia, which has a long-term partnership with Kaplan Singapore, also recently extended the partnership until 2026.

Mr Choong added: "Such partnerships firmly place us in the forefront of the education sector, allowing us to introduce innovative programmes to suit the needs of students and industry.

"The blended learning curriculum supporting our proprietary diploma programmes have produced more than 400 original videos with localised content.

"These are then delivered in an immersive, collaborative and interactive classroom setting, which has helped to significantly improve our students' academic performance."

More choices for courses

James Cook University has introduced two new degree programmes this year.

The Bachelor of Business and Environmental Science (Majoring in Aquaculture) combines studies in business, environmental science and aquaculture.

Students learn to apply principles from the three areas of study with the aim of creating a holistic and environmentally friendly approach to businesses operating in the aquaculture sphere.

RELEVANCE

The course has particular relevance in the 21st century as declining aquatic food resources make it essential to develop sustainable aquaculture products to improve worldwide food security.

The Bachelor of Business (Majoring in Banking and Finance) equips students with skills to face the challenges of a rising and exciting industry.

Opportunities are abundant in disruptive technologies, retail banking that embraces financial investments and insurance, cyber security and big data management.

MEMBERSHIP

Graduates of the programme can also seek membership in the Australian Institute of Credit Management, and Finance and Treasury Association.

The intakes for both programmes are in March, July and November.

For more information, visit www.jcu.edu.sg, call 6709-3888 or e-mail admissions-singapore@jcu.edu.au

The Singapore campus of James Cook University at Sims Drive.

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