The Ministry of Education (MOE) will open up more university places this year, bringing the number of places at the six universities, including the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and SIM University (UniSIM), to 14,000.

This means the Government’s target of providing university places for 30 per cent of an age group will be reached a year earlier than planned.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat announced this in a Facebook post yesterday as he congratulated SIT on officially becoming an autonomous university. With the new status, five-year-old SIT can confer its own degrees. Previously, it could award only joint degrees with overseas institutions.

About one in five polytechnic graduates is expected to win a place in the publicly funded universities this year, said an MOE spokesman.

Most of the new varsity places are being created from the expansion of SIT and UniSIM. UniSIM in Clementi will add three full-time degrees to its part-time offerings. The courses in marketing, finance and accounting will offer 200 places.

SIT, which offers niche degrees from overseas universities, will run its own programmes this year in infrastructure engineering, software development and accountancy and add another 200 places. The other four varsities, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) and Singapore Management University (SMU), are also adding places with new courses.

Launching three new undergraduate degrees in August, NTU is offering nearly 100 places in philosophy and earth science and one course merging engineering with business. Yale-NUS College is offering the chance for its students to do double degrees at NUS while the University of New South Wales (UNSW) is offering nearly 100 places in philosophy and earth science and one course merging engineering with business.

Target to offer admission to 30% of cohort achieved a year ahead of plan