

**Publication: ST Online**

**Date: 31 July 2019**

**Headline: One of SMU's top law grads an 'accidental law student'**

### **One of SMU's top law grads an 'accidental law student'**



Mr Aaron Yoong says he learnt the most outside the classroom. He has had his work published in top academic journals and taken part in international mooted competitions. He was also part of a team from Singapore Management University that prepared a submission to the parliamentary Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods last year. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Mr Aaron Yoong is graduating among the top of his law class of about 150 students at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

He also has had his work published in top academic journals and taken part in international mooted competitions.

He even had the chance to make representations before the parliamentary Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods last year.

But the 25-year-old, whose father is a taxi driver and mother a management executive, calls himself an "accidental" law student.

The former Raffles Institution student had taken science subjects for his A levels, thinking it would be easier to do well in them.

"I'm grateful that SMU even granted me an interview in the first place because my A-level results were not perfect."

He had three As for economics, mathematics and project work, and Bs for the rest of his subjects like chemistry and physics.

Most law-school students typically get straight As.

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"But I've always been a humanities student, so for university, I wanted to try something really different," said the younger of two sons. His brother is a counsellor.

"My parents were always of the view that we could do what we liked, and they left us to decide."

Mr Yoong said there was still some concern about whether university fees would be a burden for his parents.

"SMU was very kind to arrange for bursaries throughout my four years of studies, which reduced the fees significantly," he said.

The bursaries covered about half of his tuition fees and he took a bank loan for the rest.

Mr Yoong, who has a training contract with a major law firm, said he learnt the most outside the classroom. In university, he had the chance to go for mooting competitions in Hong Kong, Germany and Britain where he represented SMU in presenting oral arguments in settings that simulate a court hearing.

He was also part of a team from SMU that spent months preparing a submission to the parliamentary Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods last year.

A research paper he had worked on for seven months for school, with the help of a professor, also made the cut for a top academic journal, Tort Law Review, last year.

Said Mr Yoong: "My friend asked me to try out mooting in my first year, and I thought I would fail in my first instance. I also had a fear of public speaking.

"But I was lucky enough to stay on. Much of law school was shaped by mooting, getting to understand different perspectives and meeting people around the world."