

Collaborative process

Seminar-style interactive classes and approachable professors make SMU a dynamic place to study

Douglas Chew

INTRIGUED by how real life can be modelled by economic concepts and theories, Ms Regina Ng, 23, took a double degree in economics and business management at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

She specialised in the Quantitative Economics Track (QET), which focuses on technical and quantitative treatment of the subject, applying mathematics and statistics to economic analysis to understand and give empirical content to economic relations.

SMU is known for its seminar-style teaching, where the small class size meant that lessons tend to be interactive and vibrant.

"There was a lot of collaborative learning, when we would share ideas and help one another through any difficulties faced in understanding what was taught in class," says Ms Ng.

"While the QET is technical in nature, the professors are very capable in explaining the intuition behind the formulas and numbers. The course provided good training in intellectual perseverance, to persist in thinking through complex issues. I would recommend QET for someone who is serious about pursuing a career in the field of economics, as the rigorous coursework creates a strong foundation."

Her course also included subjects such as Facilitation and Counselling Skills, where students practised facilitation techniques, active listening and empathy in role-playing sessions.

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— Ms Regina Ng

"This module contributed significantly to my personal development, and taught me how to deal with difficult social situations better, such as helping a friend who is going through a rough patch, or one who is feeling stressed during examinations," she says.

Another subject Ms Ng enjoyed was Economic Development in Asia, where the class explored economic challenges in poor regions, and used economic tools to analyse and better understand what drives development there. They had weekly debates on topics ranging from colonialism to inequality, helped by the mix of Singaporeans, international and exchange students offering diverse viewpoints resulting from their different cultures and backgrounds.

Ms Ng is a recipient of the Lee Kong Chian scholarship, available to outstanding students at SMU. It covers her tuition fees and provides an annual book allowance, a one-off laptop grant and funding for international programmes. The scholarship is worth about \$60,000, with up to 50 scholarships awarded each year.

On the scholarship's funding, Ms Ng served the community in Cambodia, went on a business study trip to China, participated in an exchange programme in Paris and attended summer school in Hong Kong.

"After two successive trips to the village in Cambodia where I taught English, music and some arts and crafts, I forged a bond with the children there and we still keep in touch," says Ms Ng.

"As an undergraduate in SMU, I was given many opportunities to travel abroad and broaden my horizons. More importantly, the international experiences have heightened my sense of curiosity and have taught me to be more daring," she adds.

"Studying abroad has taught me how to adapt quickly in a new environment, and I am now much more confident in communicating with people from different nationalities and cultures."

To ensure students are prepared for the workforce, SMU students have to complete a minimum of 10 weeks of internship as part of the curriculum, allowing them to explore different career options. The university also offers seminars and workshops on resumé writing, interview skills, career

planning, social etiquette and personal grooming.

Four months prior to graduation, Ms Ng already landed her current job as an economist at the Ministry of Trade and Industry. As part of the Economist Service of the public sector, she conducts surveillance of the economic environment, and empirical research and analysis on issues related to Singapore's public policies.

Her studies have adequately prepared her for this role, and she is grateful to her teachers.

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MS NG ENJOYED THE INTERACTIVE AND VIBRANT LESSONS BY APPROACHABLE PROFESSORS. PHOTO: RAVICHANDRA