

Helping To Scrutinise How Public Money Is Spent

Seeing the extensive work done by the AGO to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for affirmed Tan You Yan's decision to take up the AGO Auditing Service Scholarship (Mid-Term)

BY NICOLE LIM

For Mr Tan You Yan, 25, there could not have been a better time for him to join the Auditor-General's Office (AGO).

The fresh accountancy graduate from the Singapore Management University (SMU), joined the office last July, right after the circuit breaker in Singapore was lifted and the government had introduced four budgets with a total commitment of \$93 billion in economic and social support, as well as public health management measures to fight Covid-19.

Mr Tan was impressed by the total value of government support measures, noting that it is an "unprecedented amount, unparalleled among nations our size". This generous support, he notes, was only made possible through the government exercising prudence in spending over the span of many decades.

It is thus a timely reminder of the importance of the AGO's work which includes, among many other things, ensuring that public funds are properly accounted for.

He shares his experience as a recipient of the AGO Auditing Service Scholarship (Mid-Term) during his penultimate year of study.

Tell us more about your choice of degree programme and why you chose it.

"Growing up, I enjoyed the analytical and problem-solving aspects of maths and numbers. I am also very prudent when it comes to finances and understand the importance of saving money. Therefore, accountancy was a sensible choice of degree for me to pursue.

"Often touted to be the backbone or language of business, accountancy is an extremely practical and versatile degree as it provides one with the necessary skill set to understand businesses from a financial perspective in terms of cash management, financial recording and detailed reporting.

"I greatly appreciate the fact that many principles taught in accounting can be applied to my personal life, from personal income tax computation to simple personal finance management such as budgeting my income and expenses."

How did you come to know about the AGO Auditing Service Scholarship (Mid-Term) and why did it appeal to you?

"I was introduced to a career in the public sector by my professor at SMU, and was drawn to AGO while looking through the various mid-term scholarships available for consideration. The difference between mid-term and full-time scholarships is the point of application. A mid-term scholar takes up the scholarship after he has commenced the course, but before completing his degree.

"Applying for a mid-term scholarship allowed me time to understand my strengths and explore multiple career options through internships in both the public and private sectors. It also does not have a minimum bond period of four years, which can be a daunting decision to make from the onset."

What fascinates you about the AGO's work?

"As an independent organ of state, AGO carries out duties as the nation's auditor without fear or favour.

"In the six months that I have been with AGO, I worked on financial statements audit, specifically on testing the effectiveness of systems and internal controls that process and generate the figures that flow into the financial statements.

"This is done via system walkthroughs (reperforming work done by the system) and sampling with the end

goal of assessing whether we can rely on the reports (financial statements) that have been created.

"What stood out to me was the level of detail in the test steps designed and performed

on the systems and controls.

"We also need to document the process meticulously with due care and diligence. This is to ensure that we have a proper trail of the work that has been performed."

■ Visit <https://www.psc.gov.sg/scholarships/public-sector-scholarships/browse-agencies/auditor-generals-office> for more information.



Mr Tan You Yan has always enjoyed the analytical and problem-solving aspect of maths and numbers.
PHOTO: MAX CHAN