

Scholarship Profile – Png Yan Da

To say that the 4 years I spent on my undergraduate studies in the United Kingdom were one of the most fulfilling phases of my life thus far would have been an understatement. This would not have been possible if I did not receive an overseas scholarship from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF).

As with all prospective students about to depart to a foreign land for their studies, I was indeed apprehensive on what to expect and wondered if it was the right decision to tread into the unknown and abandon the familiar environment I had grown up to. Being overseas on your own meant that many things which you take for granted back home, now had to be handled by you personally, and I really had to pick them up quick. Firstly I had to pick up cooking my meals fast as many students in London would attest that the costs of eating-out are exorbitant. Being in a cosmopolitan city in London also led me to meet and acquaint with many friends from various countries, where we frequently shared our own experiences from our respective countries.

Having majored in Chemical Engineering at Imperial College, I am very glad that my course allowed me the flexibility of choosing from a diverse variety of options, besides the core engineering modules. Some modules I chose included financial management, people behaviours and even Spanish. Of course, it was not all work and no play during my time there. In my free time and vacations, I travelled extensively around the UK, Europe and even to exotic destinations like Egypt. I also spent much time taking advantage of the numerous free museums and parks in London by visiting them frequently. Being a major city, I was able to catch many acclaimed musicals and shows in the West End, as well as live English Premier League action in the stadiums around London.

So after returning to Singapore to commence my bond with the SCDF, I do get many queries from friends and family, wondering if I have ever regretted taking up this scholarship, since this job does not seem to utilise the knowledge I acquired during my undergraduate studies. Well, the answer I give them is a definite NO. The job in SCDF is very challenging and it has indeed exposed me to many areas which may not be possible in other jobs. For example, the split-second decisions I have to make on numerous occasions whenever I go for fire or rescue calls affect the men under my charge, as well as the affected parties. I have picked up a variety of skills during my overseas stint which are very applicable to my job at the moment. For example, I am able to analyse any problems I face and solve them in a logical manner from what I have learnt during my academic studies. Also, I have learnt crucial people management skills while participating in group academic projects and also from dealing with housing agents and landlords during house hunting in London.

It was also relatively easy for me to transit from the study phase to my current job. I believe that this was due to the fact that while overseas, I was assigned a mentor from SCDF who kept in constant communication with me throughout my studies in the UK. In addition, I was involved in work attachment programmes at SCDF's HazMat (Hazardous

Materials) Department during my summer vacations. The work attachment also allowed me to be updated on the developments in the Force. To those who are reading this article and thinking about a career in the SCDF, I urge you to make your decision now and join the Life Saving Force!