

Solving business problems with IT

ISS' practitioner-oriented Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis prepares its students to apply technical knowledge to real-life issues

Douglas Chew

MS ONG Lay Hoon's interest in information technology (IT) led her to sign up for the Institute of Systems Science' (ISS) Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis.

ISS is a specialist education institute of the National University of Singapore and provides IT graduate education and professional development courses.

Studying the techniques of gathering user requirements, systematically analysing and designing solutions, coding, testing and time management has helped Ms Ong in her current job as a system specialist at Accenture, a leading management consulting, technology and outsourcing company.

She previously worked as an operations executive at ST Logistics for five years.

Coming from a mathematics background, she found the programme challenging and at times stressful, but her desire to advance her career motivated her.

"There were a lot of ups and downs during those months. However, the experience has developed a stronger character in me and proved that nothing is impossible until you've tried hard enough," she says.

IT professionals can also benefit from the graduate diploma course.

Mr Ruly Kurniawan was an IT graduate and worked as a software system analyst before signing up for the course.

"I have learnt a lot, not merely about theories, but also about executing theory into real implementation, enterprise design and project management," he says.

"We were also taught to be more professional through training on presentation delivery, writing good resumes and tackling interviews. All the things I learnt in ISS have made me a better IT practitioner."

The graduate diploma's curriculum is practitioner-oriented. Lectures are augmented by workshops, laboratory sessions and group projects, culminating in a 20-week industrial attachment (IA) at the end of the 13-month full-time programme.

Dr Leong Mun Kew (below), deputy director of ISS, says: "The IA is a very important part of the curriculum as the students need to adapt quickly to companies' working environment, pick up new technical skills and domain knowledge, propose feasible IT solutions and, most of all, develop and deliver the solution to the satisfaction of their users."

Mr Kurniawan's five-month internship at the Land Transport Authority allowed him to translate what he had learnt into real-world projects, helping him to clinch Accenture's Best Industrial Attachment Project prize for his work in developing a new ticketing system.

He is now working as a solution architecture analyst at Accenture.

Accenture has been giving out these awards to the Graduate Diploma in System Analysis students since 1988, where the winning project gets a cash prize and a plaque.

Ms Ng Wee Wei, Accenture's managing director and health and public service lead in Singapore, says: "There has been an advance of technologies in the last few years, and it's evident in the kind of projects that each batch of students got involved in."

"These tend to be digital-related, from mobility to e-commerce, and the students get to solve real-life issues and contribute directly to the business."

A judge for the award, Ms Ng looks for well-rounded individuals who display initiative, resourcefulness and understands the business objectives for their project.

"My belief is that technology is most relevant when applied to the context of a business problem."

"So my advice to IT students would be, besides developing IT skills, they also need to develop business acumen, so that they can serve as a bridge between business and technology," she adds.

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— Mr Ruly Kurniawan (right)



PHOTOS: NUS, ONG LAY HOON, RULY KURNIAWAN



The course helped Ms Ong, who has a mathematics background, to advance her career in the IT field.