

Gateway to IT

The Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis by NUS-ISS enables graduates to pick up practical skills and also get a leg up in the industry

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NON-IT graduates who wish to chart a new career path in the information technology (IT) industry can do so with the Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis (GDipSA).

Offered by Institute of Systems Science at the National University of Singapore, it is a 13-month full-time programme, of which five months is an industrial attachment stint.

Put together in consultation with experienced practitioners from the IT industry, the curriculum is frequently reviewed and revamped to ensure that the skills taught are those crucially needed by the IT industry.

Since 1981, over 2,200 students have graduated with GDipSA.

One of them is Ms Goh Siow Chuen, 29, who is a quality analyst with OCBC Bank. Ms Goh not only graduated with distinction, she is also the winner of the IBM Gold Medal and Book Prize, an honour given to the cohort's top student.

Her interest in IT grew during her undergraduate days when she participated in a programme called NUS Overseas Colleges.

She says that the programme was designed to train and inspire young students to venture into entrepreneurship in the technology field.

After graduating from NUS with a Bachelor of Science where she majored in applied mathematics in 2011, she went on to work as an operation manager for an analytics software company that developed big data analytics software for online social games for two years.

She started the course last year in February.

On why she chose GDipSA, Ms Goh says: "It is the perfect programme for people who do not have any technical background in IT, but who are interested in venturing into the technology industry."

"Unlike the Master of Computing offered by NUS' School of Computing, this programme allows those without a technical background to learn the basics of programming and systems analysis and design."

She felt that the programme will help her to build a better foundation before she proceeds to take the Master of Computing or Master of Technology, where she would have to plunge straight into computing theories.

Dr Esther Tan, chief of GDipSA Programme, says: "The GDipSA programme is unique — it transforms someone without IT knowledge into an IT professional in a very short period of time."

Those who have lost touch with their IT knowledge can also join the programme as a refresher course and they will be updated with the latest IT knowledge, she adds.

Stepping stone

The internship is an integral part of the programme. Dr Tan says: "ISS works closely with industries and companies who need IT solutions by providing them with student interns. Throughout the duration of the internship, students can gain real-life experience as an IT professional, and companies are able to prototype advanced technologies that they would like to explore."

She adds that companies also use the internship programme to scout for potential employees and may even offer full-time employment after they graduate.

After eight months of intensive learning comprising lectures, workshops and projects, Ms Goh was posted to OCBC Bank for her five-month internship, during which she participated in an end-to-end software development process — from gathering requirements, analysing and designing the software, developing and testing it, to finally deploying it for use.

She developed a system which functions in alignment with the existing business process, a crucial requirement that ensured the quality of the software developed. Producing an efficient and user-friendly application helped her to land her current role.



Producing an efficient and user-friendly application during her internship in OCBC Bank helped Ms Goh to land her current job as quality analyst. PHOTO: HUS-SS

she says. "As a quality analyst, my job scope includes working with both the IT team and users to analyse the quality of systems developed for consumers' and internal staff's usage. It also includes developing analytics tools and productivity dashboard to monitor the quality and efficiency of the systems."

On what she enjoyed most about the course, Ms Goh says: "The lecturers are very motivated and eager to share their knowledge with us and this positive energy influenced me to keep on exploring on the subjects taught, sometimes beyond the scope of the syllabus."

She also picked up transferrable skills such as project management skills and agile development process.

Graduates from the programme are eligible to take up master's degree courses with NUS and other universities.

Ms Goh plans to apply for the Master of Technology offered by NUS-ISS; Master of Science in Business Analytics offered by School of Computing, NUS; or Master of Science offered by School of Computer Engineering, Nanyang Technological University.