Dear students,

Recently I read the World Economic Forum’s “Future of Jobs” report with a mix of fascination and trepidation. What it predicts is that just five years from now, over one-third of skills (35%) that are considered important in today’s workforce will have changed. The experts are talking about what they call the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”, which is a tsunami of change-disrupting business models across all industries. Entire categories of jobs will emerge and others will become extinct.

We’ve already seen this change affecting the fabric of our everyday life. The Grabtaxi or Uber cars that have become ubiquitous on our roads have disrupted the transportation sector. Even the apps on our mobile phones didn’t exist just five years ago.

Now, if we don’t know how jobs will change, how do we prepare for the future? The key seems to be in developing key skill sets and positive mindsets that will support us through our lives.

In a future where robotics and automation are the norm, we must work on developing humanistic skills and qualities that cannot be easily replicated by technology. Humans can engage and develop relationships based on trust, use intuition, and work collaboratively in a way that machines cannot.

For example, in the future, robots may be able to diagnose and treat you more efficiently than a human doctor, but nothing can beat the feeling of seeing your family doctor who has a rapport with you.

It is very important to know that these soft skills and mindsets can be learned and developed. We are not condemned to being either good or bad at soft skills. Through neuropsychology research, we now know about the concept of neural plasticity – which allows us to develop certain abilities the more we exercise a certain way of thinking.

At CFG, we run two programmes that will help you develop positive skills and support you to fulfil your future potential. Roots & Wings is a personal and interpersonal effectiveness programme focusing on developing emotional intelligence, self-awareness and a clear vision for your future. Career Catalyst is a follow-up programme that focuses on developing your career strategy, personal brand, résumé and work-ready skills.

We also have a team of skilled Careers Advisors who are trained in the latest career-coaching techniques – you can book an appointment with them at any point of your time at NUS and receive customised advice.

Thinking of what advice to leave you with, I am reminded of our recent NUS Mindset 2.0 forum, where my friend Loren Shuster, Chief Commercial Officer of Lego, said that the best advice that he could give graduates was to think about the intersection of these two questions:

“What am I curious about?” and “What does the world need?”

Let’s talk about the first question, “What am I curious about?”

If you were to do one thing at university, it should be this: develop your sense of adventure and curiosity. University is a time where you can experiment with developing new habits, practices, friendships, and views that will undoubtedly shape the rest of your life.

Do not be afraid of judgement and failure. What if I tried something I haven’t done before? Said hi to a person I wouldn’t have normally approached? Considered an internship or career that was out of my comfort zone? Everything begins with curiosity. I hope that many decades from now, when you look back on your life, you realise that the direction that it took stemmed from something you were curious about during your time with us.

The second question, “What does the world need?”, is also important as we need to ground our careers in reality. It is essential to keep abreast of what is going on in the world outside of your textbooks. What are the job sectors that are growing? Where are my skills in demand? Who should I be networking and developing relationships with?

I encourage you to spend ample time to reflect on these two questions and to constantly practice using your toolbox of skills and healthy mindsets.

All of us in the NUS ecosystem – the CFG, faculty, halls and residential colleges, industry networks, and alumni mentors – are here to walk alongside you and support you through this tremendously exciting journey! Best of luck!

Much love,
Crystal Lim
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“BE HUMBLE AND REMAIN OPEN TO ALL OPPORTUNITIES GIVEN TO YOU.”
CFG: YOUR BRIDGE TO A FULFILLING CAREER

Centre for Future-ready Graduates helps you develop personally and professionally, and provides resources for you to explore viable career pathways.

Embark on a fulfilling student life right from freshman year, and supplement your studies with essential employability skills by connecting with the Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG). CFG offers critical career advice and resources to help you optimise your university experience and graduate with the necessary know-how to successfully navigate the corporate world.

PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

Career Advisory Services
For most students, venturing into the world of job applications, résumés, and interviews can be an unnerving and solitary experience. Knowing your career options, how to produce an effective résumé, and what to say in an interview requires a high degree of awareness of your interests and competencies, and sufficient industry knowledge.

CFG’s Careers Advisors are on hand to offer you guidance on the types of programmes you may participate in to maximise your time in NUS. They have been selected from a variety of industry backgrounds and experience to help you develop your potential, take charge of your personal and career development, and enhance your employability.

Consult your faculty’s Advisor early to schedule an appointment for career consultation, résumé critique, or mock interviews.
Roots & Wings

Roots & Wings is a foundational life skills module which aims to equip you for a future of rapid change.

The programme is based on the latest psychology and neuroscience research and focuses on developing awareness and resilience so that you can unlock your fullest potential and get greater clarity on developing a personal vision.

‘Roots’ stands for the focus on your person and the cultivation of self-awareness. This will enable you to have a better understanding of your strengths, challenges, brain patterns, and habits, and will allow you to become a more resilient individual by developing a healthier attitude.

‘Wings’ stands for how you can best contribute to others and the wider world. You will develop interpersonal skills that will help you connect and engage with others better and explore the question of how you can best contribute to the world by using your own unique strengths. We will also explore the ever-changing industry landscape and help you articulate your personal story.

This programme aims to achieve four main outcomes:

1. **Focus**: Learn to reduce distractions and manage stress levels

2. **Self-Awareness**: Discover your strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits

3. **Interpersonal Awareness and Effectiveness**: Learn the importance of collaboration, conflict resolution, and having empathic conversations

4. **Personal Vision**: Define and articulate your goals and vision statement

CFG offers two versions of Roots & Wings – CFG1010 Roots & Wings 1.0, and CFG1020 Roots & Wings 2.0. All freshmen will be pre-allocated CFG1010 either in their Year 1, Semester 2, or Year 2, Semester 1.

- **Roots & Wings 1.0 (CFG1010)** is made up of eight weekly e-seminar videos and readings, with two experiential workshops. It carries two modular credits.

- **Roots & Wings 2.0 (CFG1020)** is similar with eight weekly e-seminars, with the additional weekly tutorials, an individual project, and a capstone group project requirement. It awards students four modular credits.

By the end of Roots & Wings, students should be able to develop their own personal vision, and become more motivated to effect and sustain change. ✔️
Career Workshops

CFG runs a variety of workshops throughout the year, from Résumé Writing and Interviewing Techniques to Professional Grooming and Personal Branding.

Our flagship workshops are:

Résumé Writing
Join our Résumé Writing workshops to learn how to grab an employer’s attention, understand their needs, and communicate your experiences and competencies effectively. This hands-on workshop will provide you with the ability to craft a winning résumé.

Interviewing Techniques
Learn about the interview and selection process and how you can present your best self at each of them. This workshop will give you the opportunity to practise your interview skills and prepare you with the right mindset to take on the most challenging question. You will also learn how to network with ease and confidence so that you can build lasting and impactful relationships in your personal and professional life.

Future-ready Leaders

This programme was initiated by CFG to train our student leaders. It focuses on helping them discover and develop leadership abilities through highly interactive and experiential activities.

The core belief of the programme stems from the need for leaders to have clear personal goals and direction, in order to efficiently and effectively lead others. Student leaders go through three full days of training in self-development modules, such as those on limiting beliefs, ownership and authenticity.

At the end of the three days, they are required to state their personal vision or goals. The training continues with four bi-weekly reinforcement sessions, where students are required to reflect on the progress of those goals, and what they can do to achieve them.

Practical application in volunteering a total of 16 hours on planning and facilitating NUS projects reinforces the training programme. CFG mentors are on hand to guide students in their voluntary work. Students are awarded a Certificate of Achievement upon completion of their voluntary work.
MEET YOUR CAREERS ADVISORS

If you need faculty-specific career guidance, contact our friendly Careers Advisors to find out more about how we can help you.

RYAN ANG
Co-Head (Non-STEM Faculties)
Centre for Future-ready Graduates
ryanang@nus.edu.sg

My background
After graduating with an honours degree in Political Science from NUS, I started my career as a higher superintendent at a government enforcement agency that regulates the flow of dutiable goods coming into Singapore. Thereafter, I joined a government statutory board that specialises in helping Singapore-based companies search for business and investment opportunities overseas. I managed and implemented export promotion strategies for the local infrastructure and construction industry, and worked closely with Singaporean companies to venture into the Latin American and South Asian markets.

During my 13-year stint at the statutory board, I was fortunate to be seconded to the World Bank office in Singapore for two years as a liaison officer, and was subsequently posted to Chennai, India, for three years to lead the agency’s efforts to promote Singaporean products and services in South India. The experience provided me with opportunities to work closely with Singaporean companies, foreign companies and government agencies, vendors, consultants, NGOs, and entrepreneurs from various backgrounds and sectors.

Students can speak to me about...
...career preparation techniques and options for graduating students from the Faculty of Science, and overviews of industries and sectors that they are keen to join or may not have even thought about.

DESMOND TEO
Co-Head (STEM Faculties)
Centre for Future-ready Graduates
desmonde@nus.edu.sg

My background
My career started in the healthcare industry where I was involved in healthcare operations, as well as talent acquisition for two hospitals. Thereafter, I joined the public sector as a career coach during the 2009 global financial crisis, in hopes of assisting fellow Singaporeans during tough times. I have coached professionals, managers, engineers, and teachers who were either facing retrenchment or having difficulties making a mid-career switch.

I am fortunate to have heard personal stories regarding career decisions from over a thousand individuals. Through these conversations, I discovered many different perspectives on the definition of a career. Certainly, it means more than merely securing a job.

In my opinion, it is a process where individuals figure out what aligns them with their passion and aspirations – and that can change over time. I am a firm believer that everyone is unique, and with my background in psychology and human capital management, I look forward to continue my work with students and help them discover what makes them happy with their careers.

I also have an interest in technology and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Students can speak to me about...
...career planning and preparation. I will be able to share insights on technology careers, job search strategies, résumé writing, along with interviewing skills.
**My background**

Before joining NUS as a Careers Advisor, I was a retail manager in the F&B industry dealing with roles ranging from retail operations management, events management, marketing and sales, staff recruitment, and manpower planning.

My experience in the retail F&B industry has exposed me to various job functions and enabled me to understand more about the overall operations of an organisation. As a former hiring manager myself, I know which traits and qualities recruiters look for, based on the people that I have interviewed over the years.

With my passion in meeting and engaging people, and my academic background in psychology, I am thrilled to be given the opportunity in my current role to meet and engage students, guide them in increasing their self-awareness, and maximise their full potential in preparation for their future career.

**Students can speak to me about...**

...résumé writing and interview tips. As an NUS FASS Alumna myself, I hope to share with students what they can expect in their job hunting process and the transition from university to the working world. Having paper qualifications and a good track record is one thing because in order to clinch their dream job, students need to understand their passion and interests, and be equipped with the skills and ability to market themselves to their potential employers!
Faculty of Science

ANGELINE SIM
Faculty of Science
Careers Advisor
angelinesim@nus.edu.sg

My background
As a former educator, I am passionate about working with young people. The creative and developmental activities in the scope of my work as a Careers Advisor energises me the most.

Students can speak to me about...
...how to maximise their time and resources in NUS, how to equip themselves for the industry, and how to identify the diverse career options available to them.

CHERYL CHONG
Faculty of Science
Careers Advisor
cheryl.chong@nus.edu.sg

My background
I have past work experience in customer service and HR through roles in the airline, private education, and shipping industries. As I enjoy working with people, these roles exposed me to different environments and interactions which were invaluable learning journeys for me. I joined CFG as an account manager handling employer relations and events like recruitment talks and other campus outreach initiatives. I also managed selected in-house internship programmes, which included staying updated on policies and guidelines from local ministries, as well as organising workshops for students.

Students can speak to me about...
...exploring options in their future career plans. I look forward to sharing tips and insights on various industries, and what employers seek in their future talent pipeline to prepare students for a smooth and rewarding university-to-work life transition.

TEO LENG LENG
Faculty of Science
Careers Advisor
lenglengteo@nus.edu.sg

My background
I am an alumna of the NUS FASS in Economics and English Literature, and was a senior advisor in the insurance business for 10 years, where I served more than 200 clients. I continued my career as a lecturer in Polytechnics and NUS in soft skills development for eight years. Working with students allowed me to impart job search skills as well as critical thinking, and effective communication skills in the classroom and experiential learning settings. With a Master’s degree in Counselling and Guidance from NTU, I am also trained in psychotherapy and group work; and have a passion in walking clients through the process of self-discovery, as well as personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

Students can speak to me about...
...the job application process, from exploring opportunities to writing cover letters and résumés, and attending interviews. I am also interested in helping students establish an effective employment portfolio through discovering their strengths and developing their personal branding.
Faculty of Science and Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine

DR. SENTHIL RAJA JAYAPAL
Faculty of Science
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine
Careers Advisor
senthilr@nus.edu.sg

My background
After completing my PhD in Computation and Systems Biology with the Department of Singapore-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Alliance, National University of Singapore, in 2011, I worked for five years as a post-doctoral research fellow at Agency for Science, Technology, and Research (A*STAR). In addition to my expertise in biomedical research, I have extensive experience in teaching and mentoring at the tertiary level in Singapore. In my current role at the Centre for Future-ready Graduates, I aim to empower students to understand their strengths and plan their future careers during their time at the university.

Students can speak to me about...
...career planning and preparation, identifying their areas of interest and career goals, and helping them with résumé writing and interview preparation.

Faculty of Law

GENEVIEVE CHIA
Faculty of Law
Careers Advisor
genevieve.chia@nus.edu.sg

My background
I graduated with a law degree from NUS, and was called to the Singapore Bar in 1997. I have worked for a number of established local law firms and for an international bank before moving into legal recruitment in 2005. My prior experience as a lawyer has enabled me to build up a significant network of contacts in Singapore and regionally, and has provided me with an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the legal practice within law firms and large multi-national organisations. My personal career moves and experience as a recruitment professional has given me a clear understanding and a sensitivity to the issues and concerns faced by many candidates. Applying these unique insights, I have worked with private practice, as well as in-house clients across various sectors, and have successfully placed candidates at all levels.

Students can speak to me about...
...their aspirations and concerns. I hope to help them work out what their options are and how to find the right role in an organisation that best fits them. I am eager to share my experience and help them land the job, and also to discuss how to strategically manage their careers.

School of Computing

LIM KWEE LEE
School of Computing
Careers Advisor
kweelee.lim@nus.edu.sg

My background
Throughout my 18 years of experience in the IT and airline industries, I have held various portfolios in project and programme management, training, operations, and sales and marketing. The plethora of learning opportunities broadened my professional and personal insights and skills, and contributed greatly to growing my career.

Students can speak to me about...
...almost anything with regards to preparing and embarking on their career. I would also like to guide students to identify, uncover and capitalise on their potential to grow in their career and thrive in a fast-changing environment.
My background
I have more than 10 years of work experience in a myriad of diverse roles in the banking and telecommunications industry – including functions in customer experience, process improvements, internal communications, training, compliance & controls, and employee engagement. Prior to joining NUS, I was leading a team of customer experience and training professionals.

Students can speak to me about...
...how to prepare for their careers. I am happy to help them explore their options and support them in landing their desired internship or first job.

HO WING YEE
Faculty of Engineering
Careers Advisor
wingyee.ho@nus.edu.sg

My background
I started my career as an engineer in the semiconductor industry, and took up different job portfolios ranging from maintenance and operations to project management. My last position was in a managerial role where I led a team of engineers. It was also around that time that I found my passion in guiding my younger colleagues. I enjoyed helping them overcome obstacles in their daily course of work. It is rewarding to know that at the end of the day, they have learnt something useful from my experience. Every new job has challenges and new areas of learning, but it is your skills that will help you to overcome any difficulties. With the correct mind-set and a positive learning attitude, an engineer can excel in any role he/she wants to take up.

Students can speak to me about...
...the versatility and value of an engineer’s skills in the current job market. I would love to share my personal experiences and insights with students on what employers are looking for during the hiring process, so as to make their career planning and job search journey a much smoother and rewarding one.

NICHOLAS LIM
Faculty of Engineering
Careers Advisor
nicholaslwk@nus.edu.sg

My background
Since graduating from the NUS Faculty of Engineering in 2005, I have established a broad-based career with more than 10 years of work experience in both the public and private sectors. These experiences include recruitment for the Republic of Singapore Navy, process management, events organisation and coordination, equities dealing and investment, risk management, and company/market/portfolio analysis. Skills like logical thinking, systematic process planning, and problem solving, obtained during my Engineering training in NUS aided me throughout these experiences.

I enjoy reading and believe that adopting a growth mind-set will enable us to stay relevant and adapt to an ever-changing world. I am excited about utilising these skills and adding value to our youth’s process of making important career pathway decisions. Given my passion for this area, I would like to dedicate the next leg of my career to this meaningful cause.

Students can speak to me about...
...current opportunities and growth trends emerging in specific engineering domains. I will utilise my resources and experiences to assist students in formulating a clearer picture of what might be a good job for them.

KAREN TAN
Faculty of Engineering
Careers Advisor
karentanyh@nus.edu.sg

My background
I have more than 10 years of work experience in a myriad of diverse roles in the banking and telecommunications industry – including functions in customer experience, process improvements, internal communications, training, compliance & controls, and employee engagement. Prior to joining NUS, I was leading a team of customer experience and training professionals.

Students can speak to me about...
...how to prepare for their careers. I am happy to help them explore their options and support them in landing their desired internship or first job.

Faculty of Engineering

KAREN TAN
Faculty of Engineering
Careers Advisor
karentanyh@nus.edu.sg

My background
I find immense joy and satisfaction in cultivating young talent and helping them achieve their career aspirations. I also enjoy sharing my life experiences and instilling in our students that academic grades do not define their self-worth and learning is a lifelong process.

As a Careers Advisor, I am excited to partner our students in their journey of self-discovery and to guide them in searching for a career that leverages their strengths.

Students can speak to me about...
...how to prepare for their careers. I am happy to help them explore their options and support them in landing their desired internship or first job.
My background

I am an advocate of pursuing a career that is aligned with your interests and values, and I wanted a career that could impact people’s lives. I chose to start my career in the sports industry as it promotes positive well-being and entertainment to the general public. Although I am not an athlete, I was involved in pretty much all other aspects of it – facilities management and operations of a clubhouse, events management, marketing and administration.

I then moved to the education sector, impacting people in other ways and accumulating more than ten years of experience with different educational institutions. Before I joined NUS, I was in a top global MBA business school working closely with recruiters in the finance, technology, FMCG and hospitality industries, with their on-campus recruitment strategies. With this experience, I hope to help NUS undergraduates define their career goals and options, and in their job search strategies.

Students can speak to me about...

...exploring career options, job search strategies, résumé and cover letter critiques, and interview preparation.

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My background

I hail from the land of the Northern Lights, Finland where I earned my Bachelor’s Degree in Pharmacy and Master’s Degree in Biochemistry. I then spent over ten years working in both academic research and the private sector.

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My background

I have worked in the education sector for more than ten years as both an educator and a researcher. My teaching experience ranges from high school to university, both in Singapore and overseas. As an educator, I’ve had the privilege of engaging and mentoring a broad range of learners across different age groups and backgrounds. Through this I’ve gained a deeper appreciation of how learning can be a lifelong passion.

On the research front, I’ve completed my PhD in Anthropology at the University of Western Australia. During my course of study, I presented at various international conferences, and published articles in peer-reviewed journals in the area of educational research and youth identity. Upon graduation, I worked as an educational researcher and trainer in the staff development unit of an institution of higher learning, where my calling of working with others and playing a role in their progression were reinforced.

All these experiences and perspectives have shaped my approach as a Careers Advisor for Postgraduates. I see it as an honour to walk alongside our students and prepare them for the dynamic workplace.

Students can speak to me about...

...possible career options for postgraduates, and support them with their career planning process, and résumé and interview preparations. I also welcome enquiries from undergraduates who are keen to pursue postgraduate programmes.

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My background

As a Careers Advisor, I strive to effectively synthesise all aspects of a student’s disposition to constructively provide input to guide them towards the right career decisions and development.

Every student is interesting and unique. I set myself the challenge of striving to be of the utmost assistance for each and every student I meet.

Students can speak to me about...

...their options in postgraduate studies and career paths. I also help students in their career preparation with practical skills like résumé writing and prepping them to manage interviews.
THOUGHTS ABOUT CENTRE FOR FUTURE-READY GRADUATES

Find out more about how CFG has helped NUS students work towards their career aspirations.

Clare Yong Peck Sie
Bachelor of Arts (Geography), Year 4

CFG really tries their best to aid their students in whatever way they can. The career advisory consultation sessions helped prepare me to step into the working world – which can be daunting for a fresh graduate. The résumé critiques and interview preparations put me in good stead during my job search and interviews.

CFG’s Careers Advisors are also very approachable and helpful! My advisor, Doreen Ang, is a very warm and friendly lady who has provided me with valuable recommendations and information during our career advisory consultations. She even remembered my interests and personally emailed me opportunities that really appealed to me.

Lai Wei Han, Daryl
Bachelor of Science (Hon.), Year 4

The Science Careers Advisor, Angeline, is very professional and knowledgeable. I met her for a mock interview and she pointed out many of my ‘mistakes’ which if left unaddressed, could have jeopardised my chances of securing an internship at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

I picked up useful tips on managing difficult interview questions and crafting my elevator pitch which I applied confidently during my interview. I was thrilled to be offered the highly sought-after TTSH internship which provided me with excellent learning opportunities. I am grateful to Angeline and CFG’s Careers Advisors. Thank you for everything!

Lean Guanhua
Bachelor of Arts (History), Year 4

Soo Huay is a very helpful and dedicated career coach who taught me how to write a more effective résumé by highlighting my competencies. She is also very knowledgeable about the various industries and has provided useful advice to me. In addition, I’ve also learnt effective interview skills under her guidance.

Jonathan Heng
Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical Engineering and Business), Year 4

My career exploration journey started with help from the staff at the CFG. I started with a MAPP (Motivational Appraisal of Personal Potential) assessment, followed by the Global Internship and Mentorship Programme, which provided me with an exceptional stint in a corporate environment, helping me to pursue my career of choice. Since then, my journey has always been supported with advice from the dedicated staff at CFG and the many ad-hoc programmes they run.
The one-on-one consultations was one of the most important aspects of the CFG. These consultations helped me to tailor my résumé and interview style to one that fits me best and highlights my strengths. It is also where I started getting guidance and exposure for my internships and career path.

CFG’s résumé critique session is an invaluable resource. When I was looking for summer internships and a full-time job, CFG’s Careers Advisors did an excellent job by helping me polish my résumé. Apart from providing timely feedback on improving my cover letters and résumé, she also advised me on my job search and interview preparations. With CFG’s help, I’ve managed to receive good responses from employers after applying for various internships. Fortunately, I was able to secure internship positions at ANZ Bank, Citibank, Scotiabank, and J.P. Morgan.

Additionally, I found the weekly email updates from CFG regarding upcoming career networking sessions, summer internships, and full-time job vacancies extremely useful. I’ve attended a variety of those sessions. Other advisors, such as Alphonsus Tan, have even gone a step further by personally emailing me to inform me about upcoming networking sessions, and sharing tips on how to make a good first impression at interviews.

As a graduating student, I felt the need to seek resources to equip myself better before entering the workforce. Thus, I signed up and attended several events organised by CFG, such as networking sessions and business boot camps. They have been very helpful as I was able to gain insights from the speakers and programme’s facilitators. Additionally, I signed up for a personality assessment test and a consultation with a Careers Advisor – these have also been beneficial as I received feedback and gained a better understanding of myself and the type of work that I should consider, which are things I’ll keep in mind for future job applications.

My CFG Careers Advisor went through several rounds of résumé critique to help me understand my personality and strengths. She also provided practical tips on interviews, and how to equip myself with essential skills. I think she did a great job in coaching me, and was also very patient and knowledgeable about all the queries I had. For students who are not familiar with the working world, I think a trip to CFG to enquire about different career options and interview tips is definitely essential and valuable.

CFG’s Careers Advisors shared with me valuable insights on CV writing and interview preparation skills. They went beyond the standard skills and helped me work out a career path that suited my personality. The consultation made me think about which industry I can contribute to the most. Thanks to the CFG, I had a clearer idea about the direction of my career.

Other than the one-to-one consultations, I also found CFG’s workshops very helpful. The lab session on building a LinkedIn profile was particularly useful.
5 STEPS TO KICKSTART YOUR CAREER

Confused and not sure what to do – or pretty certain but still need a few pointers? Our career planning guide will help you!

Discover yourself
- Know your personality, interests, motivations, and skills

Research the market
- Find out more about the company or industry
- Understand what employers are looking for

Explore your options
- Plan how you wish to maximise your time in NUS
- Speak to your faculty’s Careers Advisor

Take action
- Gain relevant work experience or CCAs
- Participate in career events, both on- and off-campus

Manage change
- Review your career options
- What have you learnt, and are there any gaps left to plug?

#1 Discover yourself

Before you start your job search, reflect on your experiences and skills to help you understand your personality, interests, and motivations. This can help you greatly with your career planning process.

- **My skills**
  Think about the skills that you have developed from your academic studies and extracurricular activities. Do you have a flair for languages or numbers? Are you particularly patient, diplomatic, or detail-oriented?
  
  Also, find out about skills that are valued by specific industries, employers, or job roles so that you can better match yourself to their needs.

- **My beliefs, values, and interests**
  Will values and beliefs that you hold dear impact your job search? For instance, if environmental issues resonate strongly with you, factor it into your job search when researching prospective employers.
  
  Your interests can also influence your career choice. However, some people may choose to keep their personal interests separate from their working lives.
• My preferred work culture
Often overlooked, consider the type of work culture you’d prefer to be part of before deciding on a company. Would you prefer a flexible work environment, or a more structured organisation? Speak to someone who has had experience with the company to find out more about its work culture before applying for the job.

#2 Research the market

Understanding the market is vital to your job search. You need to know beyond just the employers that you’re interested in. Here are some ideas:

• The company
Look for relevant information through a company’s website, and read up on industry news articles regarding the company’s market activities. You could even speak to seniors who have had experience with the company, or with employers at career fairs to understand the organisation better.

• Market trends
Read up on the latest trends that are changing the industries. For instance, technology and data analytics have been changing the game for many sectors, including commerce, finance, and manufacturing. What is a company doing to benefit from the trend, and what will your role be if you join the company?

• Global affairs
The global economy is highly interconnected, which means that the country can be easily affected by events that take place half a globe away, such as political transformations, policy changes, or natural disasters. It will benefit you to keep an ear out for major news that may impact the industry that you’re interested in.

• Major players
Keep up with the developments of the major players within the industry, such as their projects and latest decisions, as they can influence the course of the sector.

There are plenty of information sources that you can make use of:
• Employer’s company website
• Websites of professional bodies/institutions
• Informational interviews
• Presentations, workshops, or on-campus career fairs
Having learnt all you can about yourself, the company, and the industry, you're ready to start making career decisions. Don’t worry about being stuck in a career track you do not like as people can change careers several times in their working lives. As long as you constantly take steps to manage your career and develop relevant skills and experience, you will still be able to transition between career tracks or industries later on in life.

Contact your faculty’s Careers Advisor to discuss your career plans today. Email careers@nus.edu.sg to make an appointment.

**#3 Explore your options**

Feeling stuck?
- Do not get hung up looking for the “perfect” job.
- Challenge yourself. Try out new things and believe that you have the drive to achieve what you set your mind to.
- Too much advice can sometimes overwhelm. Learn to apply critical-thinking skills when making a decision.
- Identify your needs and find practical ways to meet them to plan out a clearer career pathway.

#4 Take action

Internships are a great way to help you find out if you’re suitable for a particular role or industry, develop the necessary skills, and obtain work experience at the same time. That said, do be selective of the internships that you choose to take on.

Additionally, you should carefully consider the skills and experience that you hope to gain from your internships, and be proactive during the course of your attachments to achieve those skills.

Also, don’t just rely on published openings in your area of career interest. Many students land internships by making direct contact with employers that interest them, sending a targeted résumé, or even ringing them up.

Aside from internships, you can also consider applying for part-time jobs, voluntary work, and shadowing sessions as these can help you obtain work experience and relevant skills. Employers also often look at your CCAs for evidence of soft skills or transferable abilities, so be sure to take an active role in managing club activities.

#5 Manage change

Have you completed an internship or gained relevant work experience? Or did you just pull through a major project with your student society? If so, what did you learn from your experiences?

Make sure you periodically take time to reflect on your career direction. Perhaps your career interests may change after gaining experience in a particular field during a three-month internship.

Or perhaps your work placement stint highlighted certain gaps in your skills that you need to fill. In such cases, adjust your action plan to accommodate your responses to these new situations.

Remember, career planning is not a static process! It’s something you need to engage in regularly to ensure that you have control and direction over your career progression.
Good grades and a stellar résumé may not always guarantee you a job or even an interview – many candidates are armed with similar achievements. Having a personal brand will help you stand out in the corporate world. Your brand has to be authentic and reflect the real you, which is why you will need to know yourself before you can start building your brand. To help you get started, here are some things you can do to build a distinctive brand, and leave a lasting impression on employers.

Build a consistent brand
Recruiters often receive vague applications from students who are not clear about what kind of jobs they want. For example, graduates applying to media companies often indicate they are “keen on jobs in editorial/marketing/PR/advertising”.
To the applicants, it would seem like they are flexible and adept in multiple disciplines. However, to recruiters, the applicant may just come across as someone lacking in direction and true interest in the line of work. To demonstrate your commitment to the role on offer, be consistent throughout your application.
By clearly and consistently indicating what you want to achieve from the job, why you want it, and how you can fulfil its requirements, you will stand a higher chance of getting shortlisted for the role.

Market your brand: Tell your story
Once you have defined your brand, you will need to market yourself to employers to successfully stand out during the job application process. One effective way to do so is to treat it like a sales pitch – package your skill sets and past experiences, and create a compelling narrative about your unique brand.
There are several ways to make your pitch:
• You can be a specialist in a certain sub-sector  
  *e.g. Investment banking, app development*
• Or showcase a portfolio of your work  
  *e.g. Writing samples, web design layouts*
• You can also use unique terms that are characteristic of your abilities  
  *e.g. Time-management whiz, communications specialist*

Take note: Your personal brand can either be retroactive (built on past experiences with relevant links to prospective roles) or proactive (deciding what you want your message and image to be and working towards fulfilling those).
Polish your pitch
After you have crafted your compelling narrative, it is time to put it into action. Constantly seek room for improvement and refine your story as you meet more employers and explore new job opportunities. There isn’t a one-size-fits-all brand — you should always tweak your pitch to ensure that your personal brand aligns with the specific qualities required for different job roles.

Be yourself
However, always remember to be yourself regardless of the new experiences you acquire along the way! Personal branding allows you to be an active voice in the direction of your career path. Many graduates make the mistake of trying too hard to be someone they’re not. Seasoned recruiters can tell from the get-go when you’re merely posturing and will disregard your application.

Building a personal brand takes time and effort, and can be especially hard if you feel like your skills or what you have to offer aren’t outstanding. In that case, take a step back and evaluate your experiences so far or go out and seek new ones to flesh out a better story for a better brand. Chances are, you’ll still have a compelling brand message — it just needs discovering.

How to build a good story:

1. Know your subject
Research the company and industry thoroughly, and make sure your skills and interests are aligned with the role on offer before promoting your personal brand — a.k.a. your unique selling proposition (USP). As the ‘salesperson’, you will not be able to present a good pitch to the prospective employer if you lack knowledge about specific requirements for the job, or what makes the industry tick.

   Note that there is no shortcut to this – building a broad knowledge base about the industry could take months, or even years, so remember to read widely, and to network extensively early on.

2. Be consistent
Once you have shortlisted your USP, make sure to promote them consistently throughout your job hunting process – from networking, to résumé-writing, and job interviews.

   You can also customise or use several brand propositions depending on the nature of the role or industry.

3. Honesty is the best policy
Never, ever lie about yourself. Personal branding is not an avenue for you to exaggerate your achievements or misrepresent yourself. Keep in mind that you should always be authentic!

   A perfect sales pitch will be rendered useless if recruiters find out that you have been fabricating facts.
DIGITAL NETWORKING 101

With more and more employers engaging with candidates on social media, it’s important to manage your online reputation. Read on to find out how to get started (re)connecting with employers online.

Level 1: Novice

Facebook

Like this, like that
Like an employer’s Facebook page and their posts if you’re interested in them. This way, you’ll be updated about any upcoming activities and won’t miss out on networking opportunities.

Say cheese!
You’re free to choose profile photos that showcase your individuality, but make sure that they also respect the social norms.

Update the “About Me” section
Be sure to keep this section updated so that your potential employers will know when you unlock a new achievement, particularly under the “Work and Education” section.

Do some spring-cleaning
Vet your profile content thoroughly and make sure that you are not tagged in any dubious status updates or photos.

LinkedIn

Snap a smile!
LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking service, and your profile photos should demonstrate a similar level of professionalism – ensure that it has a clear shot of your face and shoulder.

Craft your profile
Highlight your achievements and qualifications succinctly in your profile, and be as transparent about your professional past as possible. Use the bullet point system, and don’t forget to proofread!

Keep up with connections!
Always respond promptly to pending connection requests. Also, do send a personalised thank-you message to your connections for reaching out to you.

Reach out day-by-day
Reach out to other people too! LinkedIn will prompt you to connect with people whom you might know. Take advantage of that!

Tweak your privacy settings
Update your privacy so that you keep your profile public, but hide all your activities in order to avoid spamming your contacts with every single update.
Level 2: Intermediate

Facebook

Share the good stuff
Share your interests, or repost items that demonstrate how well-read you are – but don’t overshare! Two or three shares a day is just about right.

Speak up
Comment on your shares to show that you’ve taken the time to digest and respond to the issues that you bring up. Remember to keep things positive!

Interact and comment
Take part in discussions, and respond to messages, queries, or friend requests. Practise active digital networking.

LinkedIn

Look out for viewers
People who have viewed your profile are potential connections that you can invest in! If you see someone who catches your eye, drop them a quick note to thank them for their time.

Give and take
LinkedIn lets its users recommend people and endorse skills, and these can be very powerful assessments of your skills, especially if they come from your supervisors and/or lecturers.

Blog and status updates
LinkedIn lets you make status updates and run a blog on the same platform. Use the status updates for short thoughts, and your blog for long discussions!

Level 3: Expert

Facebook

Promote yourself
• Be adventurous and set up an ad campaign on Facebook to advertise yourself on the platform.
• You’ll need to spend a little and prepare a short pitch that links to your résumé or biography, but there have been success stories!

Post notes
Share long thoughts through Facebook notes instead of updates. These can be useful as writing samples too.

Hello world
• Leave messages for employers if you have something to say, such as after attending career fairs or employer presentations.
• Most employers are happy to hear from the public because it lets them know how they can improve.

Organise your friends
• Organise your contacts into groups so that you can share news more effectively without spamming your entire list of friends.

LinkedIn

Submissions and contributions
LinkedIn has a useful widget called InShare, which lets users contribute content to Pulse – a channel that lets you feature your own articles. Getting featured will greatly boost your reputation!

Comment and discuss
Interact with your connections by commenting on their statuses and starting discussions! This keeps you in their minds.

Meet and catch up!
Networking online is good, but nothing beats classic human interaction. Do consider meeting your contacts face-to-face at actual events and meet-ups.

Welcome to online marketing!
CRAFTING EFFECTIVE RÉSUMÉS

Here’s a guide to writing effective résumés and putting together attention-grabbing applications.

It may be tempting to come up with a one-size-fits-all résumé and blast it out to multiple employers all at once, but avoid this at all costs, or risk losing out on your chance for that coveted job interview. Seasoned recruiters are quick to toss aside applications that fail to stand out, so tailor your résumés according to each application – aim to fit the needs of the job on offer, and to play up your employable strengths.

Keep in mind that every employer has a specific need, and requires specific skills to fill a particular role. Know what they are by doing prior research before getting into the nitty gritty of your résumé in order to fulfil the requirements of the role on offer. Doing so will afford you the luxury of sending out fewer résumés than your peers, but with better efficiency and results.

Recruiters’ Choice: The Reverse Chronological Résumé

Résumés can come in a variety of formats – you do not need to stick to a “tried-and-tested” one. Find one that best serves your recruitment needs, and tweak it accordingly to highlight your skills and to improve your chances at getting shortlisted for the role.

A format that comes highly recommended is the reverse chronological résumé, as it is very reader-friendly and easily customisable for each application. The versatility of this format enables you to tailor your different qualifications and skill sets to each specific role. You’ll be able to highlight your past work experiences and achievements, starting with the most recent.

However, due to its favourable status, the format has become quite common – and your application may possibly drown in the stack of similar-looking résumés from other applicants. Hence, content is key! Package yourself as a unique individual and list your outstanding qualities and achievements to distinguish yourself from the masses.

We have included two well-written résumé samples, complete with useful tips, to help you get started.

Tips:

- Avoid a one-size-fits-all résumé
- Tailor résumés for each application
- Research required skills for the role to meet employer’s needs
- Focus on listing outstanding qualities and achievements

Which typeface should I use?

Typeface matters. Here are some examples of typefaces that you should use... and some that you should not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typeface</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arial</td>
<td>The standard “sans” typeface. Arial’s clean and easy-to-read feel makes it ideal for a résumé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times New Roman</td>
<td>The standard “serif” typeface, Times New Roman is another safe bet that looks slightly more elegant than Arial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdana</td>
<td>Another common “sans” typeface. If done correctly, Verdana can be used to very classy effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic Sans MS</td>
<td>The red-headed stepchild of modern typefaces, the quirky but dreadfully overused Comic Sans MS has no place on a résumé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monotype Corsiva</td>
<td>Unless you’re applying for a job as a dramatic actor, Monotype Corsiva’s fancy flourishes are difficult to read and are more likely to annoy than to impress a recruiter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BRANDON TAN
Mobile: 9123 4567  E-mail: brandontan@gmail.com

EDUCATION
National University of Singapore  Aug 12 to present
• Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons): Major in Communication and New Media.
• Expected Date of Graduation: May 2016.
Tan Ah Teck Scholarship  Aug 12 to present
Student Exchange Programme (SEP), Seoul National University, South Korea  Jul 14 to Aug 14
• Honed interpersonal and project management skills through working with a team of 12 students of different nationalities to initiate tourism campaigns to promote Korea as a travel destination for students.
• Actively participated in the forum at ‘International Conference on Poverty and Development’ with more than 100 student delegates from 10 different countries.
• Awarded ‘Most Valuable Player’ in Conference on Globalisation with Seoul National University

WORK EXPERIENCE
PR Asean Works, PR Associate  May 15 to Aug 15
• Creatively pitched 4 advertorials to 2 big consumer accounts: Nestlé Breakfast Cereals and The Disney Channel, S. E. A.
• Successfully executed social marketing campaigns which expanded their market reach by 40%.
Ethoz Digital, Music and Marketing Assistant  May 13 to Aug 13
• Systematically set up a customer database to manage the social account details of 1,000 Starhub mobile phone subscribers, including date of product updates and upgrades.
• Recorded and analysed fast-changing music industry trends to generate recommended playlists for different target audiences by age groups.
• Effectively persuaded more than 50% of existing customers to participate in trial subscriptions for Call Tones.
• Provided prompt, professional customer service to an average of 60-80 customers per day, freeing up to 20 man hours a week for supervisor.
Artsy Fartsy Pte. Ltd., Part-time Art Teacher  Jun 11 to Aug 11
• Planned and conducted art workshops for children aged 3 to 12, receiving at least 4 written compliments per month from satisfied parents.
• Led a team of 4 teachers in brainstorming new themes for children’s party programme, increasing party bookings by 25%.
International Relations Office, Peer Advising Leader  Jun 15 to present
• Facilitated welcome activities for over 500 incoming exchange students from different universities around the world.
• Advised NUS students regarding exchange program and other overseas opportunities
Chairman, NUS Fencing Club  Aug 12 to Oct 14
• Led a group of 10 committee members in campus-wide publicity campaigns which successfully recruited 30 new members during Freshmen Orientation Week.
• Encouraged club members to actively participate in club events, improving weekly attendance by 50%.
NUS Overseas Community Involvement Programme (OCIP) Cambodia  May 13 to Jun 13
• Raised a total of $1700 through fundraising efforts for a two week expedition to a rural village in Cambodia, Phnom Penh.
• Built a community classroom and conducted English lessons for 200 underprivileged children.
• Choreographed a team of 27 team-mates to put up a cross-cultural performance in the farewell concert.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
• Proficient in Microsoft Office, Ulead Video Studio, Adobe Premiere Pro, C/C++ Programming.
• Fluent in English and Mandarin (both spoken and written).
• Enjoys fencing, kayaking and outdoors sports. Participates in at least 1 marathon annually.

What’s in a name?
Centralise, enlarge and bold your name so that it’s the first thing recruiters see. Also, it helps your résumé to stand out.

Don’t try to be funny
Ensure your email is professional and appropriate – eg. brandontan@gmail.com rather than brandonboy94@flowermail.com.

Gone global?
Done an internship overseas? Gone on exchange? Flaunt it. Overseas exposure is a must-have as we compete in a globalised world.

Show your skills
Make use of verbs and punchy phrases to highlight your skills and competencies. Keep it informative and relevant, yet concise.

Be results-oriented
Use objective and quantifiable means to prove your results. You may use the following framework: Competency + Action = Result.

Don’t abuse your CCAs!
While a long list of CCAs is impressive, shortlist the most relevant and useful ones to each specific role. Recruiters look for well-rounded individuals with both work experience and CCAs.

Be more than a worker.
Show your employer what you’re passionate about – hobbies, interests, quirks etc. This also helps recruiters figure out your suitability for a particular role.
A reverse chronological résumé for postgraduates

Aaron Tan’s résumé is representative of graduate researchers in the Sciences and Engineering fields. This résumé format is generally used for non-academic positions and only includes achievements dating back to the last six years.

### AARON TAN

**Mobile:** 9123 4567  
**E-mail:** tanas@gmail.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAREER OBJECTIVE/PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal-oriented researcher with research/professional expertise in biomedical engineering and product development, exploring opportunities as a R&amp;D engineer in your esteemed organisation; aims to contribute to the development of cost effective medical device implants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| National University of Singapore  
**Aug 12-Jun 16**  
Doctor of Philosophy (Biomedical Engineering)  
- Faculty of Engineering  
- Thesis Title: Characterisation of Biomimetic Electrospun Nanofibers |
| National University of Singapore  
**Aug 06-Jun 10**  
BSc. (Hons) in Engineering Science, Second Upper Class [CAP: 4.4]  
- Faculty of Engineering  
- Dissertation Title: Analysis of Neuronal Migration using Microfabrication |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Graduate Research Student  
**Aug 12-Jun 16**  
Faculty of Engineering, National University of Singapore  
- Conceived a novel study to develop a core structured nanofibers using fine fiber fabrication technique and study received a grant funding of $10,000 from Singapore Engineering Council.  
- Analysed data on tissue regeneration using core structured nanofibers on rabbit skin wound model and observed a 25% reduction in time taken for wound healing and findings were published in the journal Science.  
- Collaborated with clinicians from National University Hospital and tested core structured nano fibers in patients with skin injuries as part of a clinical trial and observed a 20% improvement in tissue regeneration. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Business Development Executive  
**Jul 10-Aug 12**  
BioDerm, Singapore  
- Developed a marketing campaign to promote wearable micro blood pressure sensors to Southeast Asian customers using social media platforms. The campaign was shared 5,000 times on Facebook and re-tweeted 1,000 times, which led to meeting the online sales target for 12 months and $600,000 revenue. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING &amp; MENTORING EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Graduate Teaching Assistant/Mentor  
**Aug 13- Aug 15**  
Faculty of Engineering, National University of Singapore  
- Tutored 300 undergraduates during laboratory sessions for 2 engineering modules (2 sessions per week) and achieved an overall feedback rating of 4.5 (5 points rating).  
- Guided 4 masters and undergraduate students in research project design and provided technical trainings in fiber fabrication techniques, which enabled successful completion of research projects. |

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**PAGE 1 OF 2**
UNIVERSITY/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS

Chairman, Public Relations, NUS Entrepreneurship Society Aug 13- Aug 15
• Led a group of 8 committee members to actively promote the society at various university events, which successfully increased the membership by 30% (1000).
• Organised 6 workshops on online business development, which were conducted by local entrepreneurs for 50 society members.

Volunteer – NUS Rotaract Club Aug 08- Jun 10
• Raised sponsorship of $2,000 for the Rotaract Club through crowdsourcing on social media and supported an awareness programme on personal hygiene for 200 children in Cambodia
• Contributed to fundraising activities as an event mascot that raised over $5,000 for the development of an animal sanctuary in Thailand.

SELECTED PUBLICATION


AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

NUS PhD Scholarship, National University of Singapore Aug 12-Aug 16
Society for Biomedical Applications Conference Travel Grant Oct 2015

TECHNICAL SKILLS/ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Laboratory Techniques – Histology, Electrospinning, Cell Culture
Instruments – Confocal Microscopy
IT/Softwares – Adobe Illustrator, C++, Matlab

Laboratory Management:
• Managed purchase of laboratory consumables within a monthly budget of $10,000 for research group.
• Familiar with contributing to policies and strategies and have led teams of up to six people on different research projects as a steering group member for the Singapore Association for Science and Engineering Technologies.
• Languages: Fluent in English, Mandarin and conversational Japanese

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Certificate in Project Management, Institute of Professional Development, Singapore May 2014

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Associate member, Professional Society for Intrapreneurship 2012-Present
Member, Singapore Business Federation 2012-Present
A cover letter is one of the first things that hiring managers see when you apply for a job. It is a means for you to introduce yourself to your prospective employer, so carefully list your relevant skills and experiences to convince hiring managers to grant you the interview. You can either attach it as a separate document to your résumé, or write it in the body of an email.

Where do I begin?

Before you start writing one, you should be clear of the following things: the nature of the industry, who the prospective employer is, and what they’re looking for to fill the role. Sufficient research showcases your enthusiasm for the job and reassures prospective employers of your commitment to the role, should you be hired. Having relevant background information will also help you customise your cover letter, and leave a lasting impression with recruiters.

You should also aim to highlight the most striking qualities and experiences in your cover letter, and personalise it for each application. Show how they can be applied to the role to benefit the company and weave your personality into the writing to sound approachable, yet professional.

Customise it!

Numerous cover letter templates are available online at just a click of the mouse. Refrain from copying those templates wholesale – recruiters are quick to toss out applications that fail to stand out.

Distinguish your application by injecting a little creativity into it and tailoring your cover letter to the tone and outlook of the firm. A letter written for the creative industry should undoubtedly sound different from one written for a more serious corporate sector, say the finance sector, for example. Put in the effort to take note of the little details in your application and you’ll have a better chance of securing the interview.

Here’s a list of questions to guide you through your research:

- What kind of company is it?
- What type of services does the employer offer?
- Who are its competitors/partners?
- How would the role on offer fit within the organisation?
- What skills are required for the role?
- And last, but not least: What difference can you make to the company?
Brandon Tan  
ABC Road, S654321  
Mobile: 91234567  
Email: brandontan@gmail.com  
14 Jan 2016

Mr John Lim, HR Manager  
Human Resource Department  
Edelweiss PR Company  
XYZ Road, S123456

Dear Mr Lim,

Application for position of PR Executive

Responding to the advertisement on your website, I would like to express my keen interest to work as a PR Executive in Edelweiss. I am expected to graduate from National University of Singapore with honours in Bachelor of Social Sciences, Communications and New Media in May this year, and am excited to be part of your company. Despite being one of the region’s leaders in PR and marketing management for product launches of international cosmetics brands, I am particularly appreciative of how Edelweiss pledges millions of dollars annually to charity through pro-bono services and encourages her employees to do the same by implementing rewards schemes.

As an undergraduate, I have developed a multitude of skills through the various projects I’ve undertaken during my course of study. One of which involved covering a story on social issues faced by senior citizens living in Singapore, which required me to liaise with various parties from the Ministry of Social and Family Development and interview challenged senior citizens from different backgrounds.

During my internship with PR Asean, I significantly increased the market reach of consumer brands like Nestle and The Disney Channel by 40% through diligently executing their marketing campaigns. This experience did not just sharpen my creativity, but also built up my confidence in dealing with corporate clients.

I am comfortable with taking up leadership roles. I led 10 committee members of the fencing club to publicise our recruitment drive during the Freshmen Orientation Week, which drew 30 new club members. As a Peer Advising Leader for the International Relations Office, I have facilitated activities for more than 500 incoming exchange students from universities around the world. I am confident that the skills and knowledge I have acquired will put me in a good position to excel with Edelweiss.

Thank you for taking the time to review my application. I have enclosed my résumé for your consideration. I look forward to a face-to-face interview with you to further discuss my suitability for the position. I can be contacted at 9123 4567 or brandontan@gmail.com.

Yours Sincerely,  
Brandon Tan
MASTER THE ART OF NETWORKING

Networking sessions are great for meeting industry professionals and finding hidden jobs. Make a lasting impression at your next event!

Networking is an effective way of cultivating meaningful relationships with industry professionals who can act as a catalyst for your next job offer. Besides providing opportunities, a wide network can also help you expand your industry knowledge and gain valuable career advice.

If you’re not sure how to go about navigating a networking session, here are some tips to get you started.

Back to basics

Even though your aim for any networking session is to establish connections and collect business cards, remember that your main purpose of attending the event is to meet new people, so do remain friendly and polite throughout the event.

- Recruiters and company representatives are there to meet and to get to know you, perhaps even to offer you employment or internship opportunities. So remember, be prepared, be polite and be proactive.
- Take the initiative to make conversation with recruiters. Start by introducing yourself, and be sure to include relevant details like your name and subject of study: “I’m Alyssa Tan, currently a first-year economics student at NUS.”
- Research sufficiently before launching into an array of questions. Avoid asking questions that can be found answered on company websites as you’ll appear uninformed and unprepared.
- Listen more and speak less — it is polite to take turns to talk, and you can even learn more about the firm and its hiring process when you keep an ear out.
Make small talk

Never underestimate the importance of small talk — it allows recruiters to know more about your personality and interests, and aids in forming a well-rounded impression of you. There are many ways to start a conversation using small talk — here are some of our favourites:

- **Sports:** “Did you catch that game last night?”
  Sports fans, this one’s for you. Even if you both fancy opposing teams, there’s no harm in good-natured ribbing — just be sure not to take it too far.

- **Interests:** “In my spare time, I enjoy...”
  Volunteering personal information not only builds trust, it prompts others to reciprocate and keeps the conversation going.

- **Current affairs:** When you talk about recent events, others are likely to express their opinions and this keeps the conversation going.

- **Food:** When all else fails, stick to our national past-time and talk about food! While you’re at it, you can throw in a recommendation or two.

For the introverts

For many of us, especially introverts, networking can be an excruciating task. Here are some tips for the shy to lessen the pain of networking.

1. **Create an agenda:** Talking to recruiters with a clear objective helps in guiding the conversation to intended outcomes and minimises the need for small talk.

2. **Prior research:** Know who is attending the event beforehand and shortlist those you’re keen on approaching. Send them an email ahead of the event to introduce yourself and to facilitate the face-to-face meeting. Additionally, you can also browse social media to find relevant information, such as shared interests, to use as conversational topics.

3. **Get a wingman:** Pair up with a friend to seek out recruiters. You can even ask others to introduce you — this also makes it more fun!

4. **Take a break:** While you may want to maximise your time and meet many professionals at a networking event, don’t overwhelm yourself. Take it slow instead.

5. **Practice makes perfect:** Attend as many networking sessions as possible, and continuously refine and make adjustments to your introduction as well as the things you want to talk about.

On top of it all, have fun! Networking sessions need not be dull. Refrain from getting caught up in repeating the same information over and over again. By genuinely enjoying yourself as you build crucial connections and expand your network, you may inspire others too. So prepare ahead, loosen up, and look forward to meeting like-minded people and exploring your career options.

Things to note:

- **Mobile devices should always be silent** — being distracted by technology can make you appear rude. If you’re waiting for an emergency call, inform the person you’re talking to.

- **Avoid bringing up controversial topics** such as religion and politics. Money can be a tricky issue to navigate around, so keep away from that too.

- **Don’t use offensive language or gestures**, such as stereotypes and slurs.

- **Don’t step out for a cigarette** — not only will your breath stink, it may make recruiters uncomfortable and affect your chances at a useful follow-up post-networking.

- **Control your alcohol intake** — having alcohol at an event is no excuse to get drunk, even if you think it helps you to loosen up.
DRESS TO IMPRESS

Not sure what to wear at career events? Here’s a guide on how to impress recruiters.

Many students often think that their success at networking sessions hinges on qualifications and great interpersonal skills. While this may be true, what you wear also plays a crucial role. Recruiters may judge you based on what you wear and how you wear it, so here’s how you can leave a lasting impression!

MEN

Stay conservative

*A suit, shirt and tie combo can never go wrong.*

This classic look should be your go-to style for nearly all formal functions, and ensure that the patterns on your tie are not too flashy. The colour of your shoes should match your belt and be sure to arrive in a wrinkle-free shirt.

*Tip:* Do not replace your tie with a bowtie or a cravat — you’re going to a formal recruitment event, not a fashion show.

Wear matching socks

*Mismatched socks are more obvious than you think.*

You may think that no one actually notices, but they do. Also, make sure that the colour of your socks do not clash with your outfit.

*Tip:* Match the colour of your socks to your pants. They don’t have to be the exact same colour, but a dark pair of socks that complements a dark pair of pants is a safe combination.

Jeans and sneakers are a no-no

*Even if they are black.*

Remember that this is a formal event and you want to come across as a sophisticated candidate when meeting employers. We know stuffy shirts and dress shoes don’t exactly scream comfort — but keep in mind that first impressions count for something.
WOMEN

Keep it classy

*Check your hemlines and necklines.*

Ensure that your blouse is not low-cut and check for low necklines and gaps in between buttons. Skirts and dresses should be no shorter than just slightly above the knee, and if there’s a slit at the back, ensure that its length will still be respectable even when you bend down.

**Tip:** Avoid revealing clothing and do a sitting test — check that your hemline is still acceptable and the inner lining does not poke out at the bottom.

Minimise makeup and accessories

*Go for the au naturel look.*

Let your personality, rather than your makeup shine at the event! Too much makeup has a disconcerting effect, so aim to look presentable and professional instead. The same goes for your accessories – let them accent your outfit rather than overtake it.

Bring a backup pair of shoes

*Comfort helps you go the extra mile at meetings.*

Estimate your walking distance and wear comfortable shoes. If you intend to wear heels, consider bringing along an extra pair of flats as backup for sore feet. For those wearing stockings, bring an extra pair in case the one you’re wearing rips or tears.

FOR BOTH

**Nails:** Ladies, make sure to avoid ostentatious nail polish or chipped nails. In fact, we’d recommend not applying anything at all. In general, ensure that your nails are trimmed and kept clean — this goes for the gentlemen as well.

**Scent:** We’d advise you to go without perfume or cologne — but if you must, choose a scent that is not overpowering, and use in modest amounts.

**Piercings:** If you have piercings of any sort, keep them discreet. Also, take note to avoid fancy earrings or studs.

**Colour:** Your outfit does not have to be a plain black suit and white shirt or white top and black skirt — feel free to play around with colours! Just be sure the colours you use are appropriate and do not clash. Showcase your personality but keep it professional.

Be yourself!

While we have provided you with the necessary guidelines on what to wear when gracing networking events, it is important to be yourself. Dress appropriately, but inject a hint of your personality to what you wear — it can be a unique colour or a trendy print. After all, you want your prospective employer to know the real you and be a good match for you.

Before a recruitment event, check the dress code provided and prepare accordingly. If no dress code is given, formal business wear would be a safe bet. You should never turn up in casual wear such as jeans, sneakers, shorts or sandals. Should the event turn out to be less formal than expected, you can always shed layers. It is acceptable to be over-dressed, but if employers cannot imagine putting you in a client-facing role, your chances of making a good impression will dip.

Do You Know?

Students can drop by the Centre for Future-ready Graduates or make an appointment via email at careers@nus.edu.sg to loan formal business attire for interviews and formal events. Do note though, sizes and types are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
A GUIDE TO JOB INTERVIEWS

Getting a job interview is half the battle won. The other half involves making your case for the role and winning the prospective employer over during the face-to-face session.

While we’ve all read about the off-the-wall questions that big companies like Google, Facebook, or Apple ask their applicants, most companies tend to stick to less radical questions. Most of the questions asked during interviews revolve around your personality, aspirations, skills, and your familiarity with the industry – and will fall into one of the following categories:

• **Informational questions**

These are pretty straightforward questions where interviewers try to confirm certain facts about you and understand you as a person.

*Example:* Expect questions such as your motivation for joining the industry, or choosing their company in particular, and how you intend to grow your career in the future.

*Tip:* Honesty is the best policy. Also, make use of the story-telling technique at appropriate times when answering the questions – in moderation.

• **Behavioural questions**

These typically revolve around your previous experiences, where you’re asked to describe how you’ve responded to a particular situation. It seeks to understand your values and thought processes. Interviewers are likely to complement behavioural questions with other types of questions as well, such as situational questions, so be ready to tackle follow-up questions.

*Example:* An interviewer who wants to gauge your behaviour during stressful situations could ask you to describe your actions when faced with pressure – they may use the information to forecast your future performance.

*Tip:* Many graduates either find themselves answering too briefly or elaborating too much when it comes to these questions. A good way to help you avoid either pitfall is the STAR method:

- **Situation:** Start by describing the general situation.
- **Task:** Followed by the specific tasks that you need to solve.
- **Action:** Then, explain in detail the actions that you took to solve the problem.
- **Result:** Finally, describe the results that you’ve achieved, and quantify them whenever possible.
• Competence questions

These help employers assess your range of competencies and your level of aptitude for soft and transferable skills. Employers can be quite detailed and systematic in their grill.

Example: An employer looking to hire a secretary might want someone with exceptional organisational skills, and will ask a series of questions designed to test his or her experience and understanding of the skills involved.

Tips:
- Research the company’s selection criteria to find out about the kind of skills that you should focus on. You can usually find these from the company’s recruitment pages or the job description.
- Draw up a list of how you have utilised these skills in previous experiences. You’ll need to provide concrete examples in order to be convincing.
- Go beyond your work experience – voluntary work, part-time jobs, and CCAs are great avenues to mine for examples.

• Situational questions

These are similar to behavioural questions as they let employers evaluate how you’d respond under specific circumstances. Many employers like to use these as follow-up questions to get a clearer idea of how you think and function, and can be quite challenging. There isn’t a right or wrong answer as interviewers are more interested in your thought process and how you’d react when pushed to your limits.

Example: Employers will pose questions about hypothetical situations and what-if problems.

Tips:
- Provide an example of a similar event that you’ve encountered before.
- If there are no actual examples to draw from, then focus on rationalising your steps. Tell interviewers why you’d opt for a specific method.
- If you’re stumped, don’t panic. Be honest and admit to the interviewers that you’re not sure how you would solve the situation, and attempt an answer after taking some time to think it through.
- Alternatively, ask for advice – this shows that you’re willing to take the initiative or seek advice from others when necessary.

• Skills-based/technical questions

These are designed to test the hard skills required for a position, and are usually reserved for specialised positions.

Example: Programmers will have to go through coding or logical reasoning tests, while engineers may be asked to apply relevant theories or concepts to real-life problems.

Tip: Go back to your books and research before going for the interview. Accuracy is everything, so take time to reacquaint yourself with the theories and concepts that are relevant to the company and the industry.

Also, think about how you would explain these concepts to people who are unfamiliar with the topic, and practise as many times as possible.

• Industry-based questions

These test your commercial awareness, and will require you to have knowledge of the latest happenings in the sector or industry that you’re applying to. Aside from testing your knowledge of the industry, many interviewers also treat these questions as an estimate of your enthusiasm for the line of work.

Example: You may be asked about the latest trends, regulation and policy changes, recent projects and corporate mergers between influential entities, and so on.

Tip: Get into the habit of reading widely and deeply about the global marketplace and your specialised field – at least a few months before. Be sure to know which companies are making headlines and how they are affecting the rest of the players in the market.

Don’t just confine yourself to business news. The global market is impacted by incidents like political changes and natural disasters. It’ll be a plus point if you can link them to how it may affect the company. ▶
Prepping for the big day

Knowing the type of questions to expect is important, but the preparation process is often what determines your rate of success. Most candidates will eventually find their preferred method as they ease into the job search process, but here are several useful steps that will always remain relevant to you:

• **Research the employer**
  Be sure to check their website or brochures, or search for them in the news or on social media. It’s also a good idea to speak to contacts with insider information about the organisation.

• **Read through your application forms, résumés, and cover letters**
  The first round of interviews are usually based on what you have written in your application, so it is vital to know them inside out and bring copies to the interview, just in case.

• **Compare your application form with the job description**
  Make sure that you fulfil all their requirements, and find out if you need to buff up your application with additional information. Be sure that you’re able to provide evidence and examples to back your claims up.

• **Read up on the sector/industry**
  Find out about major players, competitors, recent developments, or market trends from different sources to help you better understand the industry you’re applying to.

• **Consult and have practice sessions with your careers advisor**
  Your careers advisor will be able to advise you on the quality of your performance, as well as help you prepare for the different types of interview questions.

• **Come up with questions to ask your interviewers**
  Employers often consider questions from potential employees to be a sign of interest. Preparing three to five questions will be best.

• **Prepare a cheat sheet**
  Jot down relevant skills, programmes, or projects that you think are absolutely important, and use these to jolt your memory during the interview.

Leaving a positive impression

Good interviewees come prepared to answer questions, but great interviewees know that there’s more to having a memorable interview. Impress your interviewers with some of these tips.

• **Dress for the occasion**
  As a rule of thumb, dress formally for job interviews – however, do consider the industry and tweak the outfit to reflect the nature of the job. For instance, a suit may be the ideal outfit for an interview in the finance sector, but possibly unnecessary for a role in the creative sector.

• **Arrive early**
  Arriving to an interview just on time is almost tantamount to being late, so make sure to be there at least 15 minutes earlier. It gives you time to re-read your application materials, do a final check of your appearance, and relax.

• **First impression matters**
  So put your best foot forward and greet them with a confident smile and handshake. Make small talk to break the ice.

• **Establish eye contact and maintain an interested posture**
  Maintain good non-verbal communication as it can translate into good interpersonal skills.

• **Practise active listening**
  Many interviewees are so fixated on using their pre-prepared answers that they sometimes fail to address the interviewers’ actual question. Always listen closely, and if needed, ask questions to clarify.

• **Turn the interview into a conversation**
  Many interviewees make the mistake of approaching interviews as a one-way interrogation. Keep things organic and speak up whenever you have questions.
NAVIGATING THE CORPORATE WORLD

Transitioning from the university to the corporate environment may be a bit of a culture shock. These tips aim to help you successfully navigate the working world.

There are many challenges to your first graduate job. Besides dealing with steep learning curves and employer expectations while on the job, you may also encounter situations that will test your ability to maintain sound interpersonal relations. Fret not; while you will need to adapt to the new environment, a little patience and perseverance will serve you well in the long run, and help you grow personally and professionally.

Steer your way through the corporate world expertly with some of the following insights!

Starting a new job

Nerves can feature strongly at the start of a new job. You may feel a little lost and out of your depth, or be worried that you will make mistakes, but it’s important to remember that this is normal and that you are not alone. Your employer will likely have plans to ease you into working life.

Help is at hand!

- Expect an induction period and plenty of opportunities for you to meet people and learn about your job and the company.
- Many organisations will allocate you a mentor or buddy who will guide you along at the company.
- Try to get a feel for the company’s business culture (e.g. how to email colleagues/clients). You can start by taking your lead from senior colleagues, such as your immediate supervisor.
Adapting to office culture

Aside from developing technical skills and adopting proper business etiquette, you should always aim to achieve two key things in your career: good interpersonal relations and teamworking capability.

Good interpersonal relations

Even if your role is made up of largely solitary tasks, you will still need to learn to interact well with the people you’ll see every day in the office – your colleagues. Additionally, client-facing ability is not limited to frontline staff anymore, so learn to build up on your communication and interpersonal skills to excel at your job. Having good interpersonal relations will also help you to expand your network, which is essential for career progression.

Teamwork

Excelling at what you do is crucial for career advancement, but building good relationships is just as important an aspect to get ahead. Nowadays, teamwork is an integral part of most jobs, so being able to get along with your colleagues will greatly ease your day-to-day processes and help you fulfil your role’s requirements.

Reality check!

Working with different personalities from diverse backgrounds may get difficult, but sometimes, it’s all about focusing on your colleagues’ positive aspects and capabilities, and communicating well to work towards your goal. Also, practise good emotional intelligence at your workplace, and remember to focus on moving forward.

You may also encounter office politics at your workplace, but try not to get sucked in to any negativity. Instead, be aware of the goings-on in your office, and do your best to maintain friendly ties with everyone.

Career success should always be your number one priority, so aim on being objective when handling any issues at work. Additionally, strive to keep positive, healthy relationships with your peers and your supervisors.

How to create a lasting impression

First impressions are important, but maintaining a good image through your career is even more crucial. Recruits who impress employers the most are those who show enthusiasm, commitment, and a desire to learn at every opportunity. They are willing to contribute in any way possible – and no task is too small for them. Create a lasting impression by working on these three points.

1. Always be eager to learn: In spite of your progress, remain humble and be open to the fact that there’s always something new to learn on the job. Look for opportunities to attend professional courses, and expand your industry knowledge outside of work by reading extensively. This keeps the job exciting and helps to showcase your enthusiasm for the role – which may lead to more opportunities in future!

2. Dress right: Dressing well during the interview process may have helped you clinch the role, but it doesn’t stop there. Continue to maintain your professional image by keeping to the office’s dress code. Be safe and dress up on your first day, and adapt accordingly after observing your colleagues.

3. Keep up a good attitude: Essentially, the best way to create a lasting impression is to keep up a good attitude. Making mistakes throughout your career is expected, but counter that by being honest and open to feedback, and actively working to improve yourself. Keeping a positive mind-set and an eye out for growth opportunities will definitely get you far.

Lessons to live by:

- Listening more than you speak is a good way to learn.
- Do not be afraid to ask if you are not clear about something.
- Bank on your past experiences and apply it to your new role, especially when it comes to soft skills.
- Take initiative! Ask for tasks and do your best to shorten the amount of time it takes for you to work without direct supervision.
- Be humble. Be flexible. Be positive.
CULTIVATING CAREER RESILIENCE

Career resilience is an important quality that will set you apart from your peers in the long run and help you achieve your goals.

Having weathered through global economic slumps like the 1997 and 2008 recessions, countries all around the world have recognised the importance of building a career-resilient workforce. Singapore is not exempt from this and launched the CET (Continuing Education and Training) 2020 Masterplan in 2014 to work towards this objective.

But what’s the deal with career resilience, and how crucial should this be to you? Find out what it means to be career resilient and how you can build up on this critical trait.

What is career resilience?

Career resilience is essentially defined as being able to recover – and grow – in the face of career-related setbacks and demands.

There are numerous attributes that mark this quality, but three key characteristics best define a career-resilient individual:

• **Adaptability**
  Your ability to adapt to changes is an immensely important part of being career resilient. With the global market expanding to accommodate rapid growth, the present-day workforce is often faced with changes.
  However, if you’re able to get used to these changes quickly and focus on excelling at the task at hand, you’ll find it easier to maintain your performance throughout your career.

• **Healthy risk appetite and good risk management**
  Having a healthy risk appetite is necessary for innovation and self-development as it drives you to try out new ideas and innovate.
  But that’s not all to having a healthy risk appetite. It also means being able to manage and overcome the failures that you may potentially face in your career – you should be able to learn from your mistakes, rather than get unravelled by it.

• **Ability to take charge of your own employment**
  It is important to be able to take charge of your career and influence the way you climb up the corporate ladder. Keep a constant lookout for ways to bring your career to the next level, and be dedicated to continuous learning and personal excellence.

Why career resilience?

One reason: it gives you career security.

Working in a constantly innovating and changing economic environment, you’re bound to run into occasional disappointments. Being able to recover from these setbacks will ultimately set you apart from your peers.

Career-resilient individuals are also often believed to possess a range of essential transferable skills, such as teamwork, effective communication, and good problem-solving ability. You can expect to develop many of these skills as you train to become a career resilient employee, thereby making you more appealing to employers, and improving your chances at subsequent promotions and future career advancements.
How to cultivate career resilience

Career resilience isn’t a quality that you can develop overnight. You will need to cultivate it over time through a variety of steps and approaches. Here are six tips to get you on your way:

1. Surround Yourself with Like-Minded People
   - People are often influenced by the people around them, so start developing connections with positive-minded people whom you can learn from.
   - Establish a reliable network of contacts to build a stable support system.
   - Aim to work on yourself first – be a positive influence and offer optimism to others as well, instead of wholly relying on your peers for support.

2. Continuous Learning
   - Look for opportunities to continue your education, whether formally or informally. It will also train you to adapt different viewpoints.
   - Check out the Work Development Authority’s CET Masterplan for available programmes and courses to help you develop a variety of skills that can support your core discipline.
   - Read articles from professional journals to broaden your knowledge, and keep up-to-date with major trends that are impacting the industry.

3. Run Your Career Like a Business
   - Just as how a business can benefit from clear goals and proper planning, so can your career. Early career planning can help you identify the elements that you need to climb the corporate ladder, such as ways for you to add value to the company, and who you should network with.
   - Develop logical thinking skills and learn to stress test assumptions that you make in your career planning process to help you chart a more realistic career pathway.

4. Look at the Big Picture
   - While it is important to pay attention to the details, keep your eye on the bigger picture to help you remember the greater goal that you’re trying to achieve – this can motivate you to bounce back faster in times of difficulty.

5. Develop Your EQ
   - Good emotional intelligence is closely related to career resilience. Work on managing your emotions when responding to a variety of circumstances, rather than just reacting impulsively.
   - This will help you to gain better control of stressful and difficult situations, and ensure that you become a more forward-looking individual.

6. Assess Your Risk Profile
   - Ask yourself this: How much risk are you comfortable on taking before you feel like you’re losing control of a situation? Keep the answer in mind as you plan ahead for your career.
   - Assessing your risk threshold will also help you to understand how your decision-making is affected when you’re forced to take risks – this could lead to a better way of handling future problems.

Slow and Steady

Sometimes, even the most career-resilient individual can feel demotivated when the economy takes a downturn and hiring slows. Here are some steps that you can take to help you cope:

Try Out Different Roles or Industries
   - Don’t limit yourself to the job opportunities in one industry. Instead, consider exploring other industries/roles – you might just find your calling there.

Interning/Job Shadowing
   - Take on a second or third internship, or even a job shadowing session. It may not be a permanent position, but it lets you continue learning and adds to your résumé.

Try Temp-ing
   - If you’re looking to earn a little more, take on temporary jobs. Don’t worry excessively about how relevant the job is to your chosen field of study – work experiences will contribute to your list of soft skills.

Continue Networking
   - Don’t push people away. Continue reaching out to your network because that’s where you’ll find encouragement, support, and sometimes, unexpected opportunities.

Stay Commercially Aware
   - Keep up with the latest market updates no matter what. You don’t want to fall behind just because you’re feeling discouraged, only to have to play catch-up again later.
### ALUMNI: CHOICES
#### BEYOND NUS

Get inspired by seniors as they talk about the ups and downs that have motivated them to achieve the success that they have attained today.

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#### Getting started

I chose consultancy because of its ever-changing nature. Every consultancy project can be different (e.g. different industry, people, and locations). It feeds my curiosity and desire to learn new things.

I gather requirements from clients to understand their business, translate the business requirements to technical specifications and pass them to developers to build, evaluate and test the build.

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#### Challenges I faced

The challenge is to have an in-depth understanding about the client’s business within a short period of time. Only by having a full understanding of the industry and the company are you able to provide them valuable consultancy service.

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#### The turning point

I thought my job only revolved around completing consultant projects assigned to me until I was asked to create an IoT (Internet of Things) workshop because of my past experiences. From my role in the IoT workshop, my management leaders realised my passions and capabilities in IoT and IT innovations, and gave me a chance to further develop my skills.

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#### My contribution

I created the content for the IoT workshop. Through this, I connected with multiple talent in IBM from all over the world and had a great exchange of ideas about the latest technologies.

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#### Essential skills in my line

The most desirable skill is interpersonal and communication skills as you will need to communicate with clients to understand their requirements, and then translate it into technical specifications for the developers to work on.

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#### My advice for graduates

Try at least one IT consultancy internship as it will greatly increase your chance of getting into the IT consulting industry.

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#### Name: An Dongmei

**Role:** Consultant  
**Company:** IBM

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<th>Employer</th>
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<td>Acting IT Director Intern</td>
<td>Xiang’ Pharmacy</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>IT Support Engineer Intern</td>
<td>Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology (SMART)</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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### OPTIMISE YOUR OPTIONS

[www.nus.edu.sg/cfg](http://www.nus.edu.sg/cfg)
I improve existing applications and provide technical advice

In R&D, I develop new polymeric materials for new and existing applications, mainly in the automotive industry; while in MTS, I provide customers with technical advice about the characteristics and processing methods of our polymer resins. I also design formulations for compounding, conduct material testing, and travel all around Japan to follow up with each customer until the product is finalised.

Challenges I faced
When I first started out, I sometimes found it difficult to assert my opinion as I was self-conscious about my identity as a foreigner working in a Japanese company in Japan. Looking back, that might have been me trying too hard to blend in with the local working culture.

My contribution
My most satisfying contribution was gaining customer approval for a new material that I had been working on, thereby ending the long-time monopoly by a sole competitor.

Essential skills in my line
Knowledge, communication (including language), and time management (scheduling/prioritisation) are extremely important. Knowledge and effective communication get single tasks done quickly, but when managing multiple projects in parallel, time management is what gets the important ones done.

My advice for graduates
Always keep an open mind-set, and challenge yourself to reach newer limits.

Getting started
With a background in chemical engineering, entering the chemical industry was a no-brainer. Being thrown into a completely Japanese work environment was intimidating but also very exciting. I also had guidance from an amazing mentor who is experienced in a wide range of polymers and processing methods.

My job scope is divided into two aspects: R&D and marketing technical services (MTS).

Name: Chang Cai Qin
Role: R&D / Marketing Technical Services
Company: Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation

Getting started
I chose to work at Shell because the values that the organisation stood for resonated with me. I liked how employees were empowered to take ownership of their own career development, and were able to grow in the many roles that the large company can offer.

The rigour of the Graduate Programme ensures graduates get to do real jobs. My current assignment gives me a peek into the Compensation & Benefits space, and allows me to partner one of the businesses in Shell as their HR Advisor.

I enjoy helping companies resolve HR problems

My contribution
As a member of the HR department, I believe that recruitment is a form of helping individuals start a new chapter in their careers, and resolving HR issues will help the business perform.

Essential skills in my line
It’s important to keep abreast of what’s going on in the world and how it may impact your organisation, function, or role. It’s also important to build on your teamwork and conflict resolution skills.

My advice for graduates
Be humble, and remain open to all opportunities given to you – no task is too ‘simple’ or too ‘basic’. Also, demonstrate that you can deliver the small things before expecting managers to entrust you with bigger responsibilities. >
OPTIMISE YOUR OPTIONS

Getting started
I initially sought out a challenging career in the FMCG industry. However, my time at Procter taught me that I preferred to be in touch with the ground and desired to see impact happening before me. I then stumbled upon Halogen Foundation Singapore, a local youth development charity, and was excited by its youth work, spirit of excellence, and dynamic team.

I join the team in weekly sync-ups, meet corporations and donors, support youth in their training sessions, and have strategic discussions with the team on our needs, challenges, and new ideas for the future.

I am excited about helping youths develop
There are always new things happening, so every day is different.

The turning point
One of my biggest challenges is to pick up new skills quickly and to learn to deal with ambiguous situations. The key to dealing with this is to learn continuously, but more importantly, to always adopt the right attitude.

I grappled with the responsibilities and the steep learning curve that this new role entailed, and had to pull many all-nighters just to finish my work. While this isn’t exactly a “turning point”, it made me question my motivations for accepting this role, and when I began to identify with this role, I found the drive to cope with the heavy responsibilities it entails.

My contribution
I see my role as one that paves the way for the staff to do their great work with young people and to build a good foundation for the organisation’s growth. As such, I need to be aware of the team’s struggles, and interact with external partners to bring back new perspectives for them.

Essential skills in my line
Developing soft skills and learning how to work with a diverse team is important. It is also vital to develop an awareness of your strengths and potential blind spots as you are doing your work. At the same time, have clarity in your personal core values and goals in life.

My advice for graduates
Young people may sometimes hold very extreme views of the not-for-profit sector. For instance, they may be very passionate about the cause, but are unwilling to bear the trade-offs of working in the sector. However, every career will have areas that you enjoy and don’t. It’s important to make informed decisions and not be influenced by what others tell you.

Getting started
I had considered joining HR as I really enjoyed my time as a HR intern with Yahoo! However, I was offered a position with the Corporate Security team at Merck instead, and accepted the offer as I wanted to find out more about the corporate function.

The majority of my time was spent monitoring geopolitical events and terrorist movements to advise the business. I was later rotated to support the intellectual property protection team.

I monitor geopolitical events to advise businesses
later rotated to support the intellectual property protection team.

“Be client-centric – and this refers to everyone whom you work with, even your co-workers!”

Challenges I faced
I wasn’t familiar with many of the jargons used in the pharmaceutical industry. It took plenty of reading and clarifying before I got a handle of things.

My contribution
My team helped the company make significant savings when we pieced together enough information and worked with the local authorities to bust a drug counterfeit ring!

Essential skills in my line
It’s important to take initiative in my line of work. I took the initiative to request a private session with my new colleagues when I first started so that I could understand their role in the team and my role in relation to theirs.

Understanding the work processes and the basis for corporate decisions also helped me raise my work efficacy and make better informed decisions.

My advice for graduates
Be client-centric – and this refers to everyone whom you work with, even your co-workers! Understand their needs and find out why they’d approach you for something. Taking the extra effort to do so will help build rapport within the workgroup.
I enhance cyber security

I switched from engineering to business analytics

Getting started
I specialised in computer security while studying in polytechnic and university, and chanced upon an internship offered by DSO National Laboratories in this field. It gave me an opportunity to work with Metasploit, a software used to conduct vulnerability assessments, and helped me realise that this is a career that I wanted.

I conduct research in the latest computer security threats, vulnerabilities, and risks. I also work on detection and prevention of cyber-attacks. In addition, we evaluate and perform security assessment of national security systems.

Name: Lim Seok Min
Role: Defence Researcher
Company: DSO National Laboratories

Getting started
I joined an MNC engineering company as a piping engineer after my graduation, but realised that my interest lies in business analytics. Realising that I lack the relevant experience to make the career transition, I applied to an IT start-up to widen my exposure.

I’m the central point of communication between customers, partners, and internal teams; and am in charge of incorporating our operations to fit into different types of businesses. I am also involved in structuring processes and product management.

Name: Ooi Yee Fei
Role: Technical Account Manager
Company: Cresco Data Pte Ltd

Challenges I faced
Even though I have been exposed to computer security since my polytechnic days, I never had the chance to attend in-depth technical trainings about computers. Hence, I found myself struggling during the beginning of my job. I managed to overcome this by reading up materials both online and offline, and consulting my mentors and colleagues.

The turning point
When the infamous Sony data breach in 2014 happened and data breach became increasingly common, everyone suddenly started talking about computer security. At that moment, I was proud of the arsenal of knowledge and skills that I had acquired.

Year of Graduation: 2014
Degree: Bachelor of Computing (Computer Science)
Appointment: Defence Researcher
Employer: DSO National Laboratories

“"When the infamous Sony data breach in 2014 happened and data breach became increasingly common, everyone suddenly started talking about computer security.""

My contribution
One memorable success that I had was in building tools to help automate binary analysis. Automating binary analysis was quite new at that time, and it was a year-long research project. When our users took interest in the techniques we had developed, no words could describe my feelings.

Essential skills in my line
You need to go beyond just user level programming in order to do well in this field. Knowledge about lower level machine codes, kernel structures in operating systems, and computer architecture is important, as well as a solid foundation in programming and good analytic skills.

My advice for graduates
Always be curious!

The turning point
My lack of knowledge and experience proved to be quite a challenge, and I had to put in a lot of effort to learn everything. As a start-up, we often have to learn from mistakes.

I wasn’t sure how I could switch careers without having any relevant knowledge, but after doing some reading and seeking advice from my career advisor, I was able to approach this goal differently.

Year of Graduation: 2014
Degree: Materials Science and Engineering
Appointment: Piping Engineer
Employer: JGC Singapore Pte Ltd

""You can do anything that you aspire to be as long as you are equipped with the right attitude.""

Essential skills in my line
Being able to communicate effectively – in speech and in writing – is very important. I also feel that diversifying your experience will be helpful.

My advice for graduates
Be a voracious learner, and always go the extra mile. You can also do anything that you aspire to be as long as you are equipped with the right attitude.
I develop both hardware and software

Getting started

I started out as an iOS developer and an embedded software engineer. Over time, I have taken on extra responsibilities with low-level electronics and circuit design. I have also started coding to handle databases.

Being a hardware and electronics engineer is not a typical career path of a CS grad as it is usually about writing software. I still code, but now I do so in conjunction with the hardware that I have designed.

The turning point

As I did not have formal training in electronics, I had to take up extra classes and learn from online videos outside of work hours to pick up the relevant skills required for my job.

My turning point was when I agreed to join a hackathon by the School of Computing (SoC) in 2013. I then went on to code a printing app for SoC students after the hackathon with the skills that I learnt. This subsequently got me an internship at a local startup, where I picked up unique skills related to Bluetooth technologies. These knowledge helped me get hired into my current job.

My contribution

I single-handedly designed an entire hardware product for my company, including the circuit design, electric component selection, case design to be 3D-printed, and the firmware code.

“Technical skills are what gets you hired at first, but soft skills are what determines your career trajectory.”

Essential skills in my line

Improve your soft skills, such as speaking, writing, and presentation skills. Technical skills are what gets you hired at first, but soft skills are what determines your career trajectory.

My advice for graduates

Even if your formal education has ended, your role as a student has not. You should be continuously upgrading your knowledge to face the world of tomorrow.

Strive to attend meet-ups and conferences related to your industry. Even better, start speaking at those events. Not only will your presentation skills improve, you will also gain more connections.

I assist families with children with special needs

Challenges I faced

It was a steep learning curve at the start as there is a lot to learn about the social services sector.

I was encouraged by many of the little things—the sense of accomplishment when you close a case successfully, providing a much needed listening ear to the parents, and just knowing that your work can help someone.

Also, I always feel like I have much to learn from other experienced colleagues, but soon learnt that every employee is actually important in contributing to the combined success of the company.

Essential skills in my line

Having empathy and perseverance is very important for the job. Empathy helps you to understand the challenges of having a child with special needs; while perseverance motivates you to do your best for the parents and their child. Having some knowledge in the disability sector and working with young children is also helpful.

“Come in with an open mind and heart, and manage your expectations appropriately.”

My advice for graduates

Many enter this industry wanting to make a difference, but leave when they realise how much of an uphill journey it can be. Come in with an open mind and heart, and manage your expectations appropriately.
Having stepped right out of university with their hard-earned degrees, it’s only natural for fresh graduates to aim for the stars. While employment at multinational corporations (MNCs) may seem like the best way to move forward, don’t overlook the smaller players in your industry. There are plenty of valuable experiences to be found working with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – they may even offer learning and career progression opportunities not available at MNCs. 

Read on as employers from three SMEs share their insights and experiences.

We Are Family!

Benjamin Ow from Ann Aik Limited explains how SMEs can be an encouraging environment to work in because of its familial and tightknit culture.

Set up in 1977, Ann Aik Limited originally began as a stockist and distributor of general hardware products before making the strategic decision to specialise in the trading of stainless steel products. From there, the company continued to grow, expanding into the manufacturing and production of forged steel flanges. More recently, Ann Aik has also involved itself in the environmental business, building and operating wastewater treatment plants in China, as well as providing consultancy services to the commercial sector for water-related issues. In 2003, the company made great strides when it was listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange.

However, despite the public listing, Benjamin Ow, executive director, still thinks of the company as the family business which he had grown up with.

“This company was set up by my parents, and I basically grew up with it over the years, so as far as I can remember, I’ve always been involved in one way or another since my kindergarten days, and I know the people and how things work here,” said Ow, who briefly served as an IT executive at Ann Aik before furthering his studies in Australia.

Ow – whose extensive working experience also included a stint with the Republic of Singapore Air Force as a weapons system officer and with a US foreign exchange provider as a client liaison before returning to Ann Aik Limited – admits that it is a sense of loyalty that subsequently brought him back to the company.

“I’ve never intended for my career to start off here, but the company has always been a big part of my life, so I thought if the company needed help, I would be glad to offer – which is why I made the move back,” Ow said.

This sense of loyalty is characteristic of the tightknit, familial culture that defines Ann Aik Limited’s working environment, which Ow says is the result of being an SME.

“We’re very family-like, by virtue of our size. We tend to look out for each other because we know each other beyond just a face and a name. Having lesser layers of hierarchy enables us to get to know our staff members better, so this is one advantage that SMEs have over the bigger guys,” Ow said.

Ow also believes that it is this familiarity that helps the company weather through any obstacles and complications that might crop up during difficult times, such as economic downturns.

“If you don’t have this feeling [of familiarity], it’s very easy for someone who sees bad times coming to say ‘OK, I’d better move out first – get myself out of the situation before something really
bad happens;’’, Ow said, adding that most of their staff have served the company for about six to eight years.

Ow says that the company also does its best to provide opportunities for its staff members and to help them grow regardless of the current state of the economy.

“Retrenchment is not our first choice. We’d take all mitigating measures that we can think of, and hopefully that would turn the situation around,’’ Ow said, stressing that the company greatly regrets every employee whom they have to let go.

In fact, this reluctance to part ways with their employees extends even to those who wish to leave at their own free will.

Ow explains that they do their best to understand the reasons behind every staff members’ departure, and then work on improving the company from there.

“That’s just the kind of culture that we have here,’’ Ow said.

Baptism by fire

SMEs can offer great training opportunities – and Iceberg Holdings is a good example of one.

In a world where businesses believe that good corporate branding equals widespread recognition and commercial success, Iceberg Holdings Pte. Ltd. sticks out like a sore thumb with its “iceberg” principle. Despite being an alternative asset management firm involved in surprisingly diverse industries within Myanmar, including – but not limited to – education, human resource, financial services, consumer goods, and real estate, the company takes pride in staying away from the limelight.

“See, the thing is – we don’t really want to generate a lot of awareness because we don’t like being on the forefront of things. We are Iceberg Holdings and what we want for you to see is the tip of the iceberg only. In fact, we really take pride in the fact that you have not heard about us,’’ said Jayant Luthra, chief operating officer and managing director of the company, adding that it’s the philosophy behind the naming of their corporation.

“Be large but be invisible,’’ said Anshuman A. Ghai, chief executive officer and managing director of the company, commenting that many of the ships that hit an iceberg never knew what hit them until it’s too late, and that Iceberg Holdings aspires to be like its namesake.

But quiet success is not the sole benefit that Ghai and Luthra hope to achieve from their “iceberg” principle. They also look forward to the efficiency that comes from not being excessively encumbered by an overblown reputation, and wants it to characterise the new graduate management programme that they hope to launch in the coming year.

The programme, which is slated to take up about nine months to a year, is willing to take in no more than ten graduates at a time. It will see successful applicants being flown to Myanmar – the company’s operations headquarters – for rotation across its varying business groups.

Everyone will get to do three months in the [businesses] of their selection. For instance, you may start in education, and then spend the next three months in headhunting, followed by another three in financial services, real estate, and distribution – you’ll get to experience all the sectors, said Luthra, who likened it to the graduate programmes of the banking industry, except rotations are done across industries instead of departments.

But both Ghai and Luthra are quick to stress that the allure of their programme does not lie solely in the promise of being able to gain varied work experience. Instead, it lies in the early responsibility and real-world training that the company gives to their graduate employees.

“It’s going to be a real-world situation. We’re a real business, and the graduates will get real chances to have a real take on an active business. They’re not going to just watch from behind, and then be told that ‘yeah okay, you can make mistakes’. Nope. They will be given opportunities to take real-time shots on business decisions. And if you make the wrong decisions, we lose money. If you make the right decisions, we make money. That’s it. There is no simulation. This is the real world. Day 1 starts from the real world, until the end,’’ Luthra said.

The pressure of having such early responsibilities may also be compounded by other factors, such as the cultural and socio-economic differences between Myanmar and Singapore.

“I’ll be honest, the programme is going to be tough by itself, but you’re also going to have to manage other parts of life in Myanmar while you’re working, and that is not going to be easy,’’ Ghai said, explaining that the graduates will have to adapt to various challenges stemming from the living conditions in Myanmar.

“Water is abundant in Myanmar, but due to infrastructure problems, basic things like taking showers can become a task. So how do you get to office if you’ve not taken a shower for a few days? Working and living in Myanmar means stepping out of your comfort zone on a regular basis, and this breeds not just survivors, but people who can thrive in the toughest of environments,’’ Ghai said. ▶
Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee

Francis Tan explains how SMEs can pack a power punch during economic downturns thanks to its nimble-footedness.

“In 2014, I watched my transaction number go down, one by one, because in mid-2013, the government came up with the mother of all cooling measures: the Total Debt Servicing Ratio. That restricted a lot of young professionals from borrowing money, and the real estate market was cooled to a very low transaction. I remember thinking to myself – if my transactions were to drop by 60 percent, it’d only be a matter of time before I need to sell my car and house to pump in liquidity and capital to keep the company afloat.”

But thankfully for Tan, he did not have to because upon inspection of Scotia’s financial report, he realised that the company’s revenue did not decline, but had increased by an impressive 25 percent.

Tan credits this to a tactical move that he had made upon realising that his clients preferred to invest in property development projects instead of the leasing and reselling of completed houses. He had also observed that developers tended to be more generous with their commissions in times of crisis, often offering up to 3 to 4 percent of commission during difficult times as compared to the usual 0.5 percent.

“When I saw this opportunity, I quickly steered the company towards projects,” Tan said, adding that he was glad that his efforts in aligning the company with a thriving sector of the market had paid off.

However, he asserts that this victory would not have been possible if it hadn’t been for the adaptability and flexibility associated with being an SME. Despite having nearly 650 salespersons registered with them, Scotia only has about 20 administrative and executive staff members under its employment.

“We were able to stay afloat by being so nimble that we can make fast, quick, and good decisions. The ability to respond quickly and the light-footedness of being an SME placed us in a much better position to work for the benefit of the company, unlike conglomerates that might be encumbered by too much hierarchy and red tape,” Tan said.

Of course, Tan hopes to be able to spur Scotia into greater growth and will eventually have to contend with the issues that come with being a large entity, but for now, he is content to do his best for his agents.
ALUMNI IN SMEs
Our alumni share their experiences working in SMEs

My experience working in an SME has been eye-opening. It’s amazing what a small group of people can do when highly motivated. When a team syncs and meshes together, what they can achieve is truly remarkable.

Mazher Anwar
Principal Engineer
HOPE Technik

The culture of an SME is very different, more dynamic and youthful. You get to experience a sense of accomplishment for a job well done. The level of accountability is also much higher as we are given several responsibilities.

Vanessa Lim
Senior Human Resource Administrator
Charles & Keith Group

Although the pay is not comparable to offers by MNCs, working in SMEs gives you steep learning opportunities. Also, be sure to research the company before you decide to join any companies as SMEs do bear certain risks. Be bold to ask the state of the company and their future plans.

Christian Jonathan
Business Development Executive
Terra Weather Pte Ltd

Our company meetings tend to be “cosier” than those at big corporations. We know most, if not everyone, by name; and this makes work more personable and less distant. On the flip side, the leaner manpower calls for flexibility on everyone’s side, so you’ll need to be willing to compromise and help.

Cheo Jon Loong
Senior Education Executive
Just Education

Because things change so fluidly in an SME, adaptability and a high tolerance for ambiguity is essential. There is a high level of inter-portfolio dependency, hence the ability to work with and trust your team is essential.

Choo Yilin
Chief Executive Officer
Choo Yilin Artisan Jewellery Pte Ltd

SMEs allow employees the autonomy to propose and spearhead change. With a smaller company size, however, it also means that there are a lot less resources to tap on, and that’s where you learn to be creative in overcoming those challenges.

Lim Lee Ming
Co-founder
Insert Coin Pte Ltd
POSTGRADUATE STUDY: IS IT FOR ME?

With postgraduate study becoming an attractive option for many, we take a look at the benefits and outline some considerations before you embark on one.

For many graduates, the time has come to hit the job market, armed with a fully furnished résumé. However, today’s sluggish economy has made the saturated job market even more competitive. Postgraduate education is now a popular alternative to joining the workforce, as it allows students a chance to develop their area of academic interest and give themselves an advantage in the job market.

The positives of pursuing a postgrad

Specialisation
A postgraduate study enables students to study concepts in greater depth and acquire specialised skills to stand out and meet employers’ expectations. For instance, certain engineering fields require employees to continually upskill themselves. A postgraduate degree is also important in management consulting as it greatly influences your climb up the career ladder.

Alternatively, should you see a growing demand for a certain skill, it would be a worthwhile investment to delve into that area to meet the demand and enhance your employability.

Stay competitive
With Singapore’s status as a regional trading and financial hub, local graduates will find themselves competing against talent from around the world when it comes to seeking jobs. With dynamic industries such as IT and technology driving operations across nearly all fields, there is a need for the current workforce to engage in continuous learning and to upgrade their knowledge to stay relevant. In this regard, postgraduate education is a platform for graduates to upgrade their skills and retain their competitive edge.

Utilise SkillsFuture
To encourage lifelong learning, the Singapore government has rolled out SkillsFuture, an initiative that includes subsidies for courses, study awards, and fellowships for graduates and mid-career professionals. Skills upgrading requires high costs, but with such extensive monetary incentives, postgraduate study is now a more affordable option.
Postgraduate options

Besides the more well-known options such as a Master’s degree and a PhD, there are many other postgraduate qualifications available — here’s a brief overview:

Professional Certification

Usually offered and regulated by a professional association, a professional certificate tells employers that you have attained certain benchmarks in your aptitude, expertise, and adherence to recognised professional standards in a particular field. Many roles in accounting, banking and land valuation will require professional certifications for career progression or to advance into more specialised responsibilities.

While such certifications can be costly and may require you to take time off work, some employers do offer some sort of aid for graduate employees keen on pursuing mandatory professional certifications.

Graduate Diploma

Available both on a full- and part-time basis, these are supplementary courses for those keen on re-joining the workforce or fancy a transition to another industry. However, do note that graduate diplomas cannot replace formal undergraduate or postgraduate degrees as they do not give recognition in certain fields, such as medicine and law.

Master’s Degree

A Master’s degree allows students to explore their chosen field in greater depth and become specialists in their line of work. Aside from an increase in job prospects and mobility, you’ll also benefit from the many networking opportunities with both faculty and course mates hailing from different industries. A Master’s degree typically takes up to two years to complete, depending on whether it is coursework- or research-based.

MBA

Always a popular choice, MBA programmes are usually based on case studies and are meant to help graduates sharpen their business savviness and networking abilities, and gear them towards a career in management. While MBA programmes used to require graduates to have prior working experience (three to five years), there are now institutions that enrol graduates right after graduation.

Doctoral Degree

Exclusively research-based, a PhD programme is rigorous and lengthy, typically taking up to five years or more to complete. Those who choose to embark on a PhD programme will typically be able to carve out a career in academia or become specialists in highly technical fields (eg. molecular biology).

A PhD degree is usually funded by a scholarship or grant from universities or research agencies such as A*STAR. Every PhD requires different degree prerequisites, and it is important to note that it does not necessarily lead to better prospects as not all roles require a PhD.

Work experience is a plus!

It is sometimes not advisable for fresh graduates to enter postgraduate education as employers may deem those without work experience to be less well-rounded than their peers, and hence, less attractive hires.

However, not all is lost — when you sign on with a company, opportunities are given for continuing professional development (CPD), which includes extensive skills-upgrading courses and professional workshops such as:

• Organisational training and development: Typically conducted internally, firms may sometimes outsource it to external providers. Management trainee programmes and soft skill workshops are prime examples of such training programmes.
• Industry conferences: These are platforms where representatives from specific industries meet to discuss specific issues and share new knowledge. Besides accumulating CPD hours, attending such conferences can be a very fulfilling experience as you’ll get to hear new developments first-hand and network with industry professionals.
• Professional associations: Professional bodies like ACCA and CPA not only hand out qualifications and certifications, they also offer courses and programmes that enable the accumulation of CPD hours. Certain organisations will require you to either possess their certifications before being entitled to member benefits or pay an entry fee.

Ultimately, remember that postgraduate education is not about adding another qualification to your repertoire of credentials or an additional line on your résumé — it is a lifelong commitment to staying relevant and up-to-date in a dynamic economy.
CFG’S RECOMMENDED READING LIST

So Good They Can’t Ignore You
By Cal Newport
Discover how the author debunks “follow your passion” career advice and embark on his quest to discover the realities of how people end up loving what they do.

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die
By Chip and Dan Heath
Why do some ideas thrive while others die? And how do we improve the chances of worthy ideas? This is a book that will transform the way you communicate ideas and improve your storytelling ability!

Hardwiring Happiness
By Rick Hanson
Hardwiring Happiness lays out a simple method that uses the hidden power of everyday experiences to build new neural structures full of happiness, love, confidence, and peace. Dr. Hanson’s four steps strengthens your brain – balancing its negativity bias – making contentment and a powerful sense of resilience the new normal. Just by taking up mere minutes per day, we can transform our brains into refuges and power centers of calm and happiness.

The Element
Finding Your Element
By Ken Robinson
The Element is the point at which natural talent meets personal passion. When people arrive at the Element, they feel most themselves and most inspired and achieve at their highest levels. With a wry sense of humour, Ken Robinson looks at the conditions that enable us to find ourselves in the Element and those that stifle that possibility.

As a continuation of The Element, the sequel is a practical guide for the reader to identify his/her Element.

Emotional Intelligence 2.0
By Travis Bradberry
A book that will enhance your EQ that includes access to the enhanced online edition of the world’s most popular EQ test – the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal. It also pinpoints the strategies that will increase your emotional intelligence the most and tests your EQ a second time to measure your progress.

By Richard N. Bolles
Discover your unique gifts, skills, and interests and land a job with the world’s most popular job search book! This book is refreshed with up-to-the-minute statistics, job-field analyses, and advice on social media and search tactics.

Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential
By Carol Dweck
Dweck explains why it’s not just our abilities and talent that bring us success – but whether we approach them with a fixed or growth mind-set. She makes clear why praising intelligence and ability doesn’t foster self-esteem and lead to accomplishment, but may actually jeopardise success. With the right mind-set, we can motivate our kids and help them to raise their grades, as well as reach our own goals. Dweck reveals what all great parents, teachers, CEOs, and athletes already know: how a simple idea about the brain can create a love of learning and a resilience that is the basis of great accomplishments.

Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World
By Mark Williams and Danny Penman
This book, based on Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), reveals a set of simple yet powerful practices that you can incorporate into daily life to help break the cycle of anxiety, stress, unhappiness, and exhaustion, and promote happiness and peace within you. It helps you deal with the worst that life throws at you.
Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence
By Daniel Goleman
In Focus, psychologist and journalist Daniel Goleman delves into the ‘science of attention’, presenting a long-overdue discussion of this little-noticed and underrated mental asset that matters enormously in how we navigate life. Combining cutting-edge research with practical findings, Focus reveals what distinguishes experts from amateurs, and stars from average performers.

Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World
By Adam Grant
The author debunks the belief that successful non-conformists are born leaders who boldly embrace risk. Rather, he explains how anyone can spot opportunities for change, recognise a good idea, overcome anxiety and ambivalence, and make suggestions without being silenced.

Thinking, Fast and Slow
By Daniel Kahneman
The author, renowned psychologist and winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, reveals where we can and cannot trust our intuitions, and how we can tap into the benefits of ‘slow’ thinking. He offers practical insights into how choices are made in both our business and personal lives, and how we can use different techniques to avoid the mental glitches that lead to faulty thinking and decision-making.

Work Clean: The Life-Changing Power of Mise-En-Place to Organise Your Life, Work, and Mind
By Dan Charnas
This is the first book that demonstrates the parallels between the working habits and systems of great chefs with the principles of successful and efficient workplaces. Brimming with practical and detailed ideas, this book serves as a guide on how to implement a system to focus your actions and accomplish your work. Bordering on a celebration of obsessive meticulousness, this book is easy to read and immensely enjoyable.

Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges
By Amy Cuddy
As Harvard professor Amy Cuddy’s revolutionary book reveals, we don’t need to embark on a grand spiritual quest or complete an inner transformation to harness the power of presence. Instead, we need to nudge ourselves, moment by moment, by tweaking our body language, behaviour, and mind-set in our day-to-day lives. The book aims to help the reader learn how to approach their biggest challenges with confidence instead of dread, and to leave them with satisfaction instead of regret.

Meditation in a New York Minute
By Mark Thorton
The author, former J.P. Morgan COO turned executive meditation coach, helps to demystify meditation and shares techniques that are accessible to even the busiest beginner. This book manages to bridge the gap between solitary meditative practice and frenetic daily busy-ness – it is a must-read for those who want to find a way to achieve some degree of calm and clarity in the midst of their every day.
THE A-Z OF GRADUATE CAREERS

Not sure about your career options? Browse this handy A-Z section for insights and ideas!

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73 Public relations (PR)
73 Market research
73 Direct marketing and sales promotion
73 Conference and events management

ARTS AND HERITAGE
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74 Performing arts
74 Heritage work (including museums)

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75 Teaching (in Singapore)
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82 Travel and tourism

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84 Becoming a lawyer
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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION WORK
85 Librarianship
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86 Information work (Information scientists and information managers)

MANAGEMENT
86 Human resources
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MANUFACTURING
88 Process or operational consultants
88 Strategic consultants

MEDIA AND PUBLISHING
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89 Broadcasting, radio, and television
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THE A-Z OF GRADUATE CAREERS

ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATIONS

ADVERTISING

In this subcategory of the ever-expanding communications industry, candidates will have to apply directly for entry level positions into large organisations. All degree disciplines are acceptable when accompanied with relevant work experience.

Candidates will take on roles as account managers to manage clients in the firm’s business arm. There are also vacancies for account planners who analyse research data and monitor the effectiveness of ads, as well as coordinate the sale of ad space and create an effective media strategy. Occasionally, graduates are assigned to the creative branch, usually in teams of two – copywriter and art director (most would have done relevant training and/or postgraduate conversion courses).

While some agencies have a greater presence on campus during the Jan/Feb and Aug/Sept hiring seasons, most typically don’t advertise specific openings. Many ad agencies recruit all year round, so it’s important to know exactly which role you’re aiming for before you apply.

Institute of Advertising, Singapore – www.ias.org.sg

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

PR is about managing and enhancing reputations, a major concern of all organisations. If you pride yourself on being a confident, highly-driven individual with an eye for detail, and enjoy liaising with clients and the media, writing press releases and reports, as well as organising functions and publicity campaigns, PR could be for you.

While graduate schemes are few and far between, many PR agencies advertise vacancies all year round and accept speculative applications. It’s also possible to gain work experience in agencies.

Institute of Public Relations of Singapore – www.iprs.org.sg

MARKET RESEARCH

The job of a market researcher is to collect and interpret reliable information using two main categories of research techniques: quantitative, to generate statistics; and qualitative, to explore attitudes and behaviour.

Found both in agencies and in-house, they typically design research projects, interview people and write reports based on data analysis. Market researchers need to be interested in people and their behaviour, as well as possess good analytical and organisational skills and adequate numerical competence.

Market research is an important area of professional expertise and can markedly influence business and policy decisions.


Euromonitor International – www.euromonitor.com/singapore

DIRECT MARKETING AND SALES PROMOTION

Direct (or “relationship”) marketing employs the newest business technology available and constantly invents new approaches to develop the relationship between customers and organisations.

Outstanding communications entail key qualities such as creativity, ingenuity, determination and a sharp business sense. Graduates of any discipline will be able to find jobs that involve the research and identification of new markets and planning as well as writing copy for, executing, and analysing campaigns. Those with relevant numerate degrees are highly sought after as data analysts and data planners.

CONFERENCE AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Be exposed to nearly everything from international trade exhibitions to academic and business conferences, book fairs, corporate events, and beer festivals when you take on a role in this industry. Graduate training may be rare, but organisations are constantly on the lookout for results-oriented individuals willing to work in a fast-paced, people-intensive and high-pressured environment.

Conference and events managers (or producers) research markets to identify new business opportunities, co-ordinate sponsorships and marketing, produce programmes, recruit speakers, and manage events on-site. They need to be excellent planners with good time management ability, outgoing and persuasive; and possess good business acumen, writing skills, and inexhaustible energy.

Most graduates start off as events administrators or co-ordinators. It may be difficult to accumulate work experience, but prior stints in particular sectors (finance, IT, education, etc.) can enable you to better understand the needs of clients within these specific sectors. A proficient grasp of languages is important, and opportunities to travel may increase as you gain experience.
ARTS AND HERITAGE

ARTS MANAGEMENT

Arts organisations include theatres, cinemas, galleries, arts centres, touring companies, orchestras and artists’ agencies, among many others. This sector attracts those with a strong interest in promoting and widening access to the arts, who want to work with artists, but don’t wish to be performers themselves. Jobs range from fund-raising to marketing venues, performances and events, designing community arts education programmes, organising projects, and managing buildings and staff.

PERFORMING ARTS

If you spend nearly all your spare time at NUS acting, directing, singing, dancing, and playing music, you may want to consider a career as a performer. While this is a viable route, you should still expect plenty of rough patches – especially at the beginning. The recipe for surviving recurrent bouts of insecurity, unemployment, and financial hardship is stamina, talent, sustained enthusiasm, and a determination to take charge of your own career.

Network as widely as possible – contact NUS alumni and ask about their experiences of finding jobs and working in the arts. It’s essential to be proactive as few vacancies are openly advertised.

Many performers find it necessary to develop portfolio careers, combining performance with activities ranging from teaching, event administration, community arts projects, scriptwriting, and reviewing, to working as TV and film extras, or freelance proofreaders.

HERITAGE WORK (INCLUDING MUSEUMS)

Heritage sites encompass landscapes, ancient monuments, historic buildings, industrial and economic archaeological sites, and museums. Often operating within commercial constraints, heritage managers have to strike a balance between preserving historical sites while appropriately promoting them. They may market them as educational resources, visitor attractions, venues for private functions, or as film sets.

The range of work is huge. Specialist roles include curator, archaeologist, archivist, art historian, education officer, interpretation officer, publications officer, exhibition designer, restorer, conservator, ecologist, and architect. Most posts are hotly competed for, and many will require a higher degree or vocational qualification, as well as relevant prior experience. These roles often entail both project and people management.

Entry level jobs are based mostly in marketing or fundraising, but even there, many applicants have PhDs. Progression usually requires further vocational or academic courses and experience in other professions can be a route in (e.g. from teaching to heritage interpretation, from charity fundraising to museum sponsorship management).

Consider joining a profession that serves the heritage industry – e.g. law, accountancy, marketing, IT – and having heritage clients, possibly moving into a heritage organisation as a second career.

EDUCATION

ACADEMIA

Embarking on this route will definitely require a passion and aptitude for your subject of study, but is that enough? A PhD is necessary, and before that a Master’s Degree. Finding funding may be your first hurdle, especially in non-scientific fields.

A realistic understanding of the nature of work, job opportunities, and lifestyle is crucial. If clear promotion prospects, an attractive salary, and long holidays are important to you, it would be prudent to rethink your options. In many fields, the going gets tough after the PhD – a series of short-term contracts may be the inevitable next move, but even finding those can be difficult in the arts, social sciences, and humanities.

Academic careers are highly competitive; and in arts subjects, anything less than a first class degree may instantly render your prospects negligible. That said, there are opportunities for those who are bright, determined, resourceful, and passionate enough about their subject. Talk to as many academics as possible to get a balanced overview of prospects in your field. To be well-informed, compare alternatives by talking to a Careers Advisor. This will also help you to be aware of “escape routes” should your plans need revising.

TEACHING (IN SINGAPORE)

A challenging front-line job, teachers and lecturers in schools and colleges have to maintain enthusiasm and consistency in front of their students every day, while coping with long hours, a rising tide of administration and behaviour problems in the classroom. If you’re considering teaching, it would be advisable to visit schools and talk to educators to gain further insights.

Teaching jobs in Singapore are largely dominated by the Ministry of Education (MOE). All new teachers have to undergo a postgraduate diploma of education with the National Institute of Education (NIE). Fully paid for by the MOE, teachers will have to serve a three-year bond in return.

The MOE typically allocates teaching subjects based on the needs of individual schools and teachers’ academic qualifications. If you hope to specialise in a certain subject instead of being a general teacher, you will have to sit for an entrance proficiency test administered by the MOE.


TEACHING (OUTSIDE SINGAPORE)

Most graduates who teach abroad do so as Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). TEFL is a popular option for graduates who want to spend a year or two outside of Singapore, and there are opportunities across the world. Demand for certified TEFL teachers is high in Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and parts of Eastern Europe.

The 4-week Cambridge CELTA certificate is the most widely-recognised TEFL qualification worldwide, and is offered by the British Council in Singapore. It costs around $55,900 and typically does not attract scholarships or grants.
Unqualified applicants can still find TEFL jobs, but may find this difficult, especially in Europe. Some schemes allow you to teach overseas without a TEFL qualification – some of the best known are the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) (www.jetprogramme.org), and schemes run by the cultural exchange organisation IST Plus to teach in China and Thailand.

TEFL is a demanding job (and you do need a very good grasp of English grammar), so don’t see it just as a way to spend time abroad! Check job offers and choose employers very carefully – terms and conditions of work can vary widely.

Other options for teaching outside of Singapore include volunteer teaching work with NGOs such as Teach For All. You will be assigned to a school in need of teaching expertise, and live and work within its vicinity for a dedicated period of time.

The British Council (Singapore) – www.britishcouncil.org.sg
Teach For All (Global) – www.teachforall.org

EDUCATION-RELATED JOBS
Those who seek teaching jobs away from the classroom can take on roles from private tutors to curriculum planners or education policy administrators in government bodies.

There are also many education-related jobs that do not require a teaching background. Some examples include university and further education administrator, careers advisor, and education sales and marketing.

ENGINEERING
A degree in engineering not only allows a career as a professional engineer, it also enables access into many other careers. Although engineering consultancy, research and development, technical, industry, and defence are key employment sectors; engineers also work in commercial, management, and consulting roles in a wide variety of organisations.

AEROSPACE
The global aerospace industry has a tiered structure topped by prime contractors such as Airbus and Boeing – who build aircraft; followed by engines and systems contractors such as General Electric, Rolls-Royce, and Pratt & Whitney. The aerospace industry in Singapore is mostly centered around the latter, particularly in the area of aerospace maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO).

Aerospace-related R&D for both civil and defence purposes is also another up-and-coming area of this industry in the local sphere, in light of recent research partnerships inked between companies such as Boeing, Pratt & Whitney, and Rolls-Royce with the state-funded A*STAR research consortium.

Engineers in this industry constantly deal with high-end technology including materials, structural design, and stress-testing and aerodynamics software. Systems and electronic engineering are also key disciplines in this field. Projects tend to be very complex and usually have very long lead times – sometimes running for more than ten years.

Graduates typically enter this sector by joining graduate schemes of larger, well-known employers. New graduates are typically given responsibilities early on and will work on elements of current projects alongside more experienced engineers.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT
The built environment is a broad sector that covers infrastructure (e.g. roads, highways, tunnels, railways, bridges, etc.), buildings, and its respective support systems, such as ventilation and plumbing. This sector employs engineers in civil, structural, environmental, and technical roles, as well as specialists in areas such as acoustics for concert halls and theatres.

Main employers in this field are consultants – who advise clients, develop designs, and oversee projects; and contractors – who carry out the actual building and maintenance work. Built environment engineers may also be recruited directly by developers, retailers, or the public service. Now a key issue, sustainability has translated into a heightened focus on reducing energy use and emissions on projects and whether it plays a role in revitalising surroundings.

Graduate engineers who are employed by contractors and consultants generally work on just one project at a time before moving on to manage several projects simultaneously.

CHEMICALS
Employers in the chemicals industry stretch from oil companies to manufacturers of “commodity” chemicals (e.g. ammonia and methanol), polymers, fine chemicals, or pharmaceuticals.

Project timescales can vary widely in this fast-paced and client-focused industry. For instance, issues at operational plants need to be solved in a matter of hours or days, whereas developing new processes or products and finding commercial outlets for them can take years. Engineers in this industry can expect to work on multiple “active” projects at the same time, which may suit those who enjoy multi-tasking and tackling challenges.

Aside from chemical engineers, graduates from disciplines such as control, electrical, or mechanical engineering are also needed. As an alternative, there are also specialised contractors who design and build chemical plants, or who perform the necessary maintenance work on existing plants and their processes. You will most likely enter this industry through a graduate scheme that will rotate you across different areas of the business.

DEFENCE
Defence engineering presents exciting opportunities to work on technologically-advanced projects that are far ahead of what is publicly available on the commercial market. Engineers in this industry can expect to work with a full range of products, services, and systems that support land, air, and naval forces.

The main activities of this sector can be split into research and development (R&D), platform and equipment supply, and services and support (training, maintenance, etc.).
Project timescales in this industry are becoming increasingly compressed. For example, some urgent operational requirements can have a lifecycle of only one year. Team sizes and structures are changed to adapt to the nature of the work at any given time. You can expect to work on multidisciplinary teams, and may be rubbing shoulders with mathematicians, computer scientists, physicists, or robotics experts.

In Singapore, almost all major players in the local defence industry are either in the public sector, or are government-linked corporations. While these employers do hire large numbers of engineering graduates on a rolling basis, the highly-classified nature of the work may be off-putting to those who can’t stand being under constant scrutiny.

ENERGY, OIL, AND GAS
The energy industry consists of these three key areas – upstream: the production of oil and gas, downstream: the refining of products such as petrol and chemicals, and alternative energy: such as wind, solar, and renewable fuels.

Specific types of companies operate within these areas. There are international oil companies such as BP, ExxonMobil, and Shell; national oil companies such as Petronas and PetroChina; smaller independent oil companies; oil service companies supplying specialist services such as drilling and sub-sea operations; and engineering contractors who design and build oil rigs, refineries, or drilling platforms.

The international nature of this industry allows for plenty of travelling opportunities. However, much of the activity occurs far from the actual oil and gas fields, and are located in “hubs” such as London, Houston, the Middle East and even Singapore. As a major refining hub, most oil and gas companies based here will typically hire engineers to work on oil refining processes, and non-engineers for trading roles.

FINANCE
Despite bearing the brunt of economic downturns, this remains a popular sector. Opportunities in finance continue to be available across a wide range of possibilities: accountancy, actuarial work, banking, regulatory bodies, derivatives trading, hedge funds, corporate finance, insurance, risk management, tax work, and venture capital are just a few examples.

All of these roles require good numeracy, strong communication skills, a commitment to study for professional qualifications, a highly-developed work ethic, and stamina for a very demanding lifestyle.

ACCOUNTANCY
Most accountancy firms are relatively immune to the economic woes of other areas of finance – all businesses require statutory audits, regardless of economic climate. Many firms are heavily involved in corporate recovery, insolvency, and administration work, which tend to be staffed by graduate recruits. Accountancy offers relative stability, variety, a decent salary, and a well-recognised professional qualification.

Graduate accountants typically join a firm as a trainee and then study for a chartered accountant qualification. The “Big 4” accounting firms tend to dominate the recruitment landscape, but you should also consider smaller or medium-sized firms when sending out applications. You may find what they have to offer to be a better fit and still gain exactly the same qualifications.

Chartered accountant qualifications can be obtained from international accounting accreditation bodies such as ACCA, CIMA, CPA Australia, and ICAEW, or from local accreditation bodies such as the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA). As of 2013, the Chartered Accountant of Singapore certification from the ISCA’s Singapore Qualification Programme (Singapore QP) is now mandatory for all graduates aspiring to be recognised as local chartered accountants. However, accreditation from international accounting bodies will certainly give you a leg-up if you plan on pursuing an accountancy career overseas in the future.

The Singapore Qualification Programme – www.singaporeqp.com
Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA) – www2.accaglobal.com
The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) – www.cimaglobal.com
CPA Australia – www.cpaaustralia.com.au
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) – www.icaew.com

ACTUARIAL WORK
Actuaries make financial sense of the future by combining financial modelling and other mathematical techniques with their legal and financial knowledge. They work in complex and technical areas relating to insurance, assurance, pensions, investment management, and other products involving financial risk.

Qualifications include a series of tough professional exams, which can take up to several years. Actuarial consultancies, insurance and assurance companies, major one-stop-shop financial services firms, and the public service are all potential employers willing to hire graduate actuaries from NUS. Trainee actuaries need a good numerate background, and the most popular degree disciplines among students looking to enter this profession tend to be maths, physics or economics – the minimum mathematical entry requirement is A-level maths.

Recruiters look for a combination of technical and mathematical knowledge with a consultancy skill set, good interpersonal skills to deal with clients and their employees, good analytical and problem-solving skills, writing and presentation skills, as well as the ability to work in a team. When selecting employers, consider the quality of training offered, the support given to trainees in tackling the demanding professional exams, and the range of work and clients involved, as well as the overall strategy and direction of the firm.

If you are interested, www.beanactuary.org is a good source of information about this profession.

The Singapore Actuarial Society – www.actuaries.org.sg
BANKING

The banking sector traditionally comprises global investment banks that provide a broad range of services, from corporate finance to trading. Graduates can look to enter specific areas of finance such as asset management, hedge funds, private banking and venture capital, among many others.

The recent global economic crisis has highlighted many major issues faced by the global financial system, and has significantly reduced students’ confidence in seeking a career in banking. However, the investment banking sector continues to be a popular destination among Singaporean students, and competition is likely to be fierce.

Internships are crucial to break into this sector. In addition, applicants should continue to build the strength of their résumés with extra-curricular activities. Join relevant societies and participate actively. Read the financial business press or consult news websites. Attend presentations and skills events organised by finance employers to get a better understanding of the type of individuals these companies look for.

And with regard to nearly all deadlines in this sector, the advice is the same – apply early.

The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) – www.abs.org.sg

The Institute of Banking and Finance (IBF) – www.ibf.org.sg

Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) – www.mas.gov.sg

INSURANCE

The insurance industry often undergoes constant change through mergers and acquisitions, new products and ideas, in which your clients could range from members of the public to huge commercial concerns. In spite of that, it offers a stable, well-paid career with ample opportunities to move on and up. A variety of graduate schemes are offered, most leading to a professional qualification.

NTUC Income Insurance Co-operative Limited, for instance, has developed the NTUC Income Graduate Trainee Programme to coach young talents in a 12-month programme that includes both on-the-job training and mentorship. Citi Singapore, too, offers several graduate programmes that prepare them for employment in the insurance arm of the company.

Local graduates can choose from a diverse range of employers, with Singapore being the leading insurance centre in Asia.


TAXATION

Careers in taxation usually involve tax collection (as a tax inspector with the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore) or as advisors to taxpayers in financial services and legal firms. Both routes will require professional accreditations and training offered by the Singapore Institute of Accredited Tax Professionals (SIATP).

Tasks are very knowledge-based as legislation is constantly changing and those in this sector will typically advise senior management in client organisations. Key skills required include problem solving, numerical ability, and good people skills, especially negotiation and communication.

Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants – www.corp.isca.org.sg

Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore – www.iras.gov.sg

Singapore Institute of Accredited Tax Professionals – www.siatp.org.sg

Tax Academy of Singapore – www.taxacademy.sg

FOR-MORE-THAN-PROFIT

 Want an altruistic and meaningful career? You can implement your principles and interests by embarking on an unconventional career path in social and community services.

Many graduates are happy to trade off the obvious rewards of higher salaries, better job security, and professional training for the opportunity to work immediately on social, community, or environmental issues. Placements and internships in business organisations should pay the minimum wage. Charities and NGOs are exempt from this requirement but may opt to do so if they want.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

Many graduates are attracted to working for organisations with primarily humanitarian, environmental or social objectives – these could be charities or lobbying organisations. Charities alone receive large amounts of attention both in Singapore and overseas and some popular examples include Mercy Relief Limited (international development and humanitarian aid) and Singapore’s Children Society (children and youth aid society), to Wildlife Reserves Singapore Conservation Fund (wildlife and habitats protection) and SPCA (animal welfare).

Some organisations depend largely on unpaid staff (though expenses are often possible); others have large numbers of paid employees, but look for people with experience, or those willing to gain skills through volunteering. It is crucial to demonstrate involvement to get a paid job, and sometimes volunteers receive training, which helps in job applications. Graduates who first acquire skills and experience in more commercial environments (e.g. in marketing or finance) are more marketable in this sector.

SOCIAL WORK

Without professional training, career prospects can be limited, especially in the state sector. Qualified workers tend to specialise in either adult or children’s services, and can move freely between the voluntary sector and social services departments of local authorities (the main employers). Among some of the settings in which social workers tend to work include residential and field contexts, education, and health.

A realistic understanding of what you can achieve with limited resources is vital; a mission to change the world is generally considered impractical. Despite the sometimes rather negative public profile of the nature of social work, committed professionals often protest that rewards and personal satisfaction can be high; and morale remains strong even in difficult areas such as child protection and mental health.
Graduates can opt to enter this field after obtaining either a Graduate Diploma or a Master in Social Work Programme. It is also supported by the VWOs-Charities Capability Fund, VCF Local Training Grant, and National Council of Social Service initiatives.

COMMUNITY WORK

Work in this line will involve reviving, building, and supporting communities through services to individuals or groups (e.g. youth clubs, clubs for the unemployed or mother and toddler groups), often financed by partnerships between local authorities and voluntary agencies.

The Ministry of Health is also a major employer in this field as a result of the development of community care for individuals. The provision of good advice – on welfare benefits and housing rights, consumer and legal issues, and equal opportunities – makes an important contribution to the development of individuals as well as communities, and offers interesting job opportunities.

Urban regeneration, when used in the context of community work development, carries the added implication of altering physical structures (e.g. housing regeneration projects). It utilises interdisciplinary expertise to benefit a community and graduates can benefit from public and private sector opportunities as partnerships develop.

Also look to the work of the police, criminologists, housing managers, residential caretakers for old or young people, psychiatric nursing, and paramedical work.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WORK

These fields place a high value on life and work experience; relevant experience is an essential prerequisite to joining a training course – of which there are many. Some psychology background is helpful though not essential. There is usually little funding for professional training, and most are expensive.

Opportunities are found mainly in the public service (including education and health) and charities. Experienced professionals can also find work in the health service, consultancies, and larger commercial organisations. Salary levels in the not-for-profit sector are modest, and paid opportunities are difficult to come by if you have limited experience.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RESEARCH

Social and political research involves policymaking and the research that underpins it. Sought after by government departments, universities, think tanks, research institutions, political parties, pressure groups and private sector consultancies, graduates will enjoy wide employment opportunities.

Without any experience, the need to establish credibility may mean starting with voluntary or modestly paid jobs – e.g. admin assistant in a pressure group, or an assistant in an MP’s office. This period should not last long and can be a part-time stint.

If you are interested in policy research, use your time at NUS to obtain relevant experience, e.g. through an internship, or to develop an area of interest through extra-curricular activities.

A role in research will demand specific qualifications or degrees, although social sciences are preferred. Additionally, employers will usually look for a BA or Masters candidates with a strong social research method component.

BUSINESSES WITH A DIFFERENCE

Organisations that do not fall under the charitable, not-for-profit or public sector categories, such as social enterprises – including fair-trade companies, international development consultancies and design co-operatives – all need to run profitable businesses.

Often keen to attract innovative graduates, they may promote themselves as “businesses with a difference”, an innovative type of enterprise that uses tenets of entrepreneurship to generate economically sustainable social value.

Look carefully for what sets certain organisations apart from their competitors (e.g. ethical responsibility, social regeneration, environmental concerns, or other issues) so that you may work for a company that propagates a cause you are passionate about. Sometimes, there is additional emphasis on individual fulfilment, challenge, and a good fit between the organisation and the individual.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK

While many fields of employment have clear routes, this does not. It’s important to find out about the available career options, as well as about your preferred role – and most importantly, be realistic about what you, a new graduate, can really expect to do. Remember, you don’t have to be a water technician or an HIV/AIDS specialist to help alleviate poverty.

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HEALTHCARE

Healthcare encompasses many fields, including medicine, dentistry, nursing, and psychology. Job prospects fluctuate across these professions, so check carefully. It offers a variety of job options—from patient “interventions”; to the management, organisation, and delivery of health services; and the formulation of policy. Scientific and clinical research will entail postgraduate training to at least a Masters, but more commonly to the PhD level.

MEDICINE

The medical sector provides four-year graduate schemes as well as “conventional” five-year courses; NUS sticks with the latter with the belief that this course structure will better equip medical students for the professional world. It includes a period of internship—some universities allow you to do it locally or overseas— that will start you off on the road of a medical intern/resident medical officer.

The basic medical education provided during a student’s undergraduate medical programme is enough to equip them for the position of a general practitioner in Singapore, but it is necessary for them to first be registered with the Singapore Medical Council to acquire a Practising Certificate. Most students who pursue medicine as their preferred profession are, however, ready to dedicate time to postgraduate studies in order to specialise in a particular field.

While there exists a common perception that there is wealth to be had for anyone who manages to enter the medical industry, the workload is not for those who are unable to withstand pressure. Also, the fee for the four-year graduate courses in medicine is not a small amount, but scholarships and student loans are often made available.

Doctors who are more adventurous in nature and find their calling in voluntary work may want to seek a career in charity groups, such as the Mercy Relief or Mercy Corps. Calling in voluntary work may want to seek a career in charity groups, such as the Mercy Relief or Mercy Corps.

One of the more people-oriented domains of the medical field, pharmacists not only need to possess a solid knowledge about the chemistry and biology of drugs, but also good communication and interpersonal skills. It is an interdisciplinary field that requires some basic knowledge of other medical subjects, such as human pathophysiology and microbiology, and even laws regarding the use of drugs and medicine!

Your training as a nurse includes four main branches: adult, child, mental health, and learning; and it prepares you for more than just a position in a medical institute. Having achieved a postgraduate qualification, you may—aside from hospitals and GP practices—look forward to advancement in the line of education, research fellowships, and even industry.

DENTISTRY

Like most medical courses, an undergraduate course in dentistry takes (at least) five years to complete. Dentists are also medical doctors—except they are responsible for oral health. If you intend to pursue a career in this field, expect to study similar basic medical modules taken also by the medical students. Students will also be required to take courses on dental surgery and anaesthesia, and classes include tutorials and clinical demonstrations. As a result, the tuition fees for dentistry are usually on par with medicine, but scholarships are offered.

In order to be a practising dentist in Singapore, make sure to register with the Singapore Dental Council. Depending on your level of education, you may either be a general dental practitioner, a dentist, or a dental specialist. Some may opt to do a residency programme to gain advanced training.

One other way to gain an early entry into this field is through graduate training schemes, such as the Undergraduate Elective Programme offered by the National Dental Centre of Singapore. Programmes like these allow you an early chance to observe procedures and work culture at diagnostic clinics. This is also accompanied by the occasional opportunity to attend seminars and case presentations with other dentists and dental clinicians.

Do note, this industry is not only populated by dentists! Dentists are often assisted by assistants, especially before, during, and after surgical sessions. If you are keen in this field but prefer to be an aide instead, you can opt for positions such as dental assistants, nurses, dental technicians, or admin officers.

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Not only that, pharmacists are also sought after as health counsellors who formulate and dispense medicines, as well as advise on correct drug usage. This calls for good ethics and high professional conduct. However, it is important to note that pharmacists in Singapore do not prescribe medications.

Entering this field in Singapore requires a basic science degree in pharmacy, as well as a practising licence obtainable upon registering with the Singapore Pharmacy Council.

Upon registration, graduates who intend to work in a hospital or clinic will have to go through a one-year mandatory training prior to registration. Those who wish to work in pharmaceutical
institutions, however, can opt to bypass the training, but will have to pass a national competency exam set by the Singapore Pharmacy Council instead. Pharmacists can then follow up with additional practical training if they intend to obtain specialised recognition from the Council.

Pharmacy is far more exciting than just sitting in a research room, counting pills into packages and bottles as you can branch out into various other positions, such as being an academic pharmacist, industrial pharmacist, or even nuclear pharmacist, depending on your preferences.

Singapore Pharmacy Council – www.spc.gov.sg

PSYCHOLOGY

A B.A. in psychology grounds you in subject matters like mental health and human development, as well as social and cognitive processes – which then prepares you for a myriad of positions in the industry. Among some of the career paths that psychology graduates can go for include early employment in ministries such as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education, and even the Singapore Police Force; assisting mainly in research and investigations.

In fact, you can find various positions that are related to psychology. Clinical psychologists, for instance, conduct research and engage in the assessment and treatment of patients, mainly in healthcare settings. Health psychologists, on the other hand, use behavioural understanding to promote changes in people’s attitudes towards health.

Occupational psychologists apply psychology to people at work and to organisations, including selection and assessment, training, work design, and organisational change; whereas educational psychologists apply psychology to improve the learning difficulties of children and young people and advise parents, teachers and schools.

Forensic psychologists (prison and probation services), in contrast, work on criminological and legal issues including the assessment and treatment of offenders. Other new and developing areas of psychology include sports and counselling psychology (which is different from counselling itself).

Some of these occupations, however, may require postgraduate qualifications. For example, Clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, and forensic psychologists have to obtain a specialised MA before commencing practice in Singapore.

In Singapore, practising psychologists are encouraged to register with the Singapore Psychological Society and the Singapore Register of Psychologists, as it offers recognition and other various benefits to registered members.

Funding in the field of psychology is, however, somewhat rare – except for clinical and educational training.

Singapore Psychological Society
– www.singaporepsychologicalsociety.org

HOSPITALITY, SPORT, AND LEISURE

Traditionally, this is a sector that attracts non-graduates and students from vocational courses such as hotel management, catering, leisure, and sports management. Some large hotel chains, pubs, and food service management (contract catering) companies, however, run graduate programmes to produce a body of staff that is specially tailored to their organisation’s business needs.

The sport and leisure sector is also a high growth area; and it includes subsectors such as health and fitness (e.g. sports and leisure centre management), cinema/theatre, and casinos/gambling. Gambling is the largest out-of-home entertainment sector, with Casino Sentosa and Marina Bay Sands Casina being two of the larger casinos in Singapore. A growth in the health and fitness industry, too, has led to a number of new occupations such as personal/trainer and sports development officer.

Due to this, career opportunities are usually plentiful, but employees who do get onboard will need to be prepared to face challenging tasks as jobs are people-oriented and focused on customer service, which means that patience is a necessity.

Relevant experience in the “leisure industry” (holiday jobs do count) is a plus; as well as strong communication skills (high-quality service in key customer-facing roles is vital to a company’s success) and ability, if not experience, in promotion and marketing.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Tourism is a major industry in Singapore, filled with an abundance of sights and places of interest. With various activities such as shopping, island resorts, nature sightseeing, and an extensive dining experience to be had, Singapore attracts tourists from countries such as China, Malaysia, Australia, and India. Other major markets include Japan, the Philippines, the UK, and the USA. Singapore’s two major casinos, the Sentosa Casino and the Marina Bay Casinaore also major market contributors.

Recent trends include the rise in internet travel companies and budget airlines, as well as an emphasis on sustainable tourism. The latter opens up career avenues in areas such as corporate responsibility as travel companies become increasingly aware of the need to respond to public concerns over environmental damage. Another area of tourism that the Singapore government is attempting to promote is the medical-tourism industry.

Business tourism is also another important and underrated element of the industry. It includes five main areas: conferences and meetings, exhibitions and trade fairs, incentive travel, corporate events, and outdoor events.

Employers in this sector include travel agents, tour operators, airlines, airports, car hire companies, and cruise and ferry lines. Graduates are often able to find interesting niches in specialist tour companies (e.g. art, historical or classical cruises, and safari camps), often based on their previous vacation work or an initial work stint.
Larger organisations, such as Hilton Hotels (Hilton Worldwide), the InterContinental Hotels Group (I-Grad Future Leaders programme), and Singapore Airlines run their own graduate schemes. You may also even apply for the International Air Transport Association (International Graduate Internship Programme (IGIP) and Undergraduate Internship Programme (UIP)) if you are looking for a more inclusive and international experience. In such companies, there are career opportunities not only in travel-related roles, but also in support functions such as IT, finance, human resources, sales and marketing, PR, and – in the case of the airlines – engineering.

Clear entry and career progression routes are often not evident, but this encourages greater job mobility – attractive to people who thrive in fast-moving environments. Some graduates may also look into taking up a postgraduate degree in international tourism for a wider work scope.


INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

The IT industry utilises technology to boost the efficiency of business processes. Different organisations will require IT, either as a core part of their business operations or as a service supplied to other businesses. As such, this creates a large and diverse range of work opportunities for graduates, ranging from highly technical areas such as software engineering and programming, IT consultancy to sales and marketing.

Software houses, for instance, are responsible for building new, one-off systems or products for customers needing anything from a hospital management system to mobile phone apps. Such organisations will usually look to hire graduates from computer science and numerate disciplines for software engineering roles, and graduates from any other disciplines for systems analyst roles.

IT, internet, and telecommunication equipment manufacturers, on the other hand, provide IT products to run modern organisations effectively. Companies may range from small, specialised developers to multinational giants. These businesses are usually willing to hire graduates from any discipline into sales, marketing, customer support, and management; and from engineering and technical disciplines into their research and development teams, as well as manufacturing functions.

The social media revolution has also seen the growth of job opportunities in companies such as Facebook and Google, where rapid application development is key. The route in to these companies can be very direct; often, you will find job offers being posted on the websites of organisations themselves rather than on third-party sites.

Most public or private sector organisations that supply products or services, on the other hand, use IT and the internet to run essential aspects of their infrastructure. Therefore, they tend to recruit graduates into IT support and IT management roles. Their employment needs and criteria are often very similar to those in software houses, but the working environment will differ in many respects.

Finally, job opportunities can also be found in IT consultancies, where the designing and development of new systems and the meeting of clients’ IT needs take place. Firms typically train new analysts and software engineers as associate consultants, and look out for individuals who are comfortable in a commercial environment where they may assume significant responsibility in dealing directly with clients.

With Singapore being committed to developing its IT sector, there are numerous organisations that have emerged to cooperate with the government in certain efforts, as well as to guide the rising number of IT specialists.

Information Technology Standards Committee – www.itsc.org.sg

Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation – www.sitf.org.sg

Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore – www.ida.gov.sg

Ministry of Communications and Information – www.mci.gov.sg

LANGUAGE

Fluency in one or more languages other than English is an advantage in an increasingly international employment market. However, it’s not easy to gauge in advance how much you might have to use your languages in a particular job, unless you are a linguist about to become an EU translator, a French and German teacher, or an assistant on the Chinese desk at the BBC Monitoring Service. Your use of languages in a job may vary from an occasional conversation with a client from Munich to being posted to Russia for the setting up of a joint venture business project.

Some employers will look for particular language skills at specific levels, e.g. fluent German; while others may want evidence of an ability to learn languages without being specific about which ones because they then feel confident that you can pick up others as needed.

Mostly, knowing languages alone won’t get you the job – but complementary skills and genuine interest in the job and the employer probably will. Think about how you want to use your language ability, and research your preferred jobs carefully. If banking bores you, then expect banking in Spanish to bore you too.

Sectors where language skills are sought after include law, management consultancy, finance, engineering, manufacturing, sales and marketing, and many others. A growing number of jobs in some of these areas are in customer services. Organisations from news and advertising agencies to NGOs, libraries, and arts organisations may also advertise jobs that are looking for multilingual speakers.

Singapore recognises four official languages: English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil; most Singaporeans are capable of speaking at least two of these. As the country continues to grow internationally, those who are able to communicate in other foreign languages, such as Japanese, French, and German, may have an added advantage – especially when applying for a position in foreign business organisations.
BECOMING A LAWYER

Human rights groups, oil companies, governments, charities and banks – practically all organisations (and some individuals) will, at some point in time need to employ the services of lawyers. They can be practising lawyers working in barristers’ chambers, solicitors in law firms, in-house legal counsel and so on.

It is the responsibility of a lawyer to counsel and represent their clients, such as advising a government that is restructuring its foreign debt, helping a company form a subsidiary, or even assisting Mr Smith in getting custody of his children and Mrs Jones in setting up an educational trust for hers. As such, the range of interaction with people and different subject matters that you will encounter as a lawyer is enormous.

While the UK distinguishes between a barrister and a solicitor, Singapore does not. The essential qualities that are needed are, however, similar; legal service providers need to possess good research ability, communication skills, and engagement with clients’ interests.

The recruitment pattern for law differs from that of other professions, and from country to country. Law students aiming to go straight into the profession usually need to begin their research as early as in their second year, whereas non-law students usually start after. Some law firms even see it fit to offer information events and work experiences to first-year students.

Aspiring lawyers need to first obtain a law degree (LLB) from approved universities as a full-time internal candidate for at least three academic years; and then attend a postgraduate law course (the Bar Examinations) that is inclusive of a 5-month training period. Foreign-qualified lawyers who wish to practise in Singapore will need to take a different exam called the Foreign Practitioner Examinations (FPE).

Scholarships are usually available from the enrolled university and other organisations, but students may also find financial assistance from potential employers in the form of bonded funding. Outside the corporate and commercial sectors (e.g. human rights specialists), however, becoming a lawyer can be relatively expensive. Most funding will require you to possess a certain level of academic success, as well as some relevant (ideally legal) work experience – so if you intend to apply for scholarships, make sure to maintain your grades from the start.

The initial pay for a starting lawyer in Singapore is less predictable and regular, but as they climb up the ladder, it is possible to earn six-figure incomes. The legal sector is, however, quite demanding in terms of work, and may require some sacrifice of your personal time. There is also strong competition for the well-rewarded positions, and getting a tenancy (a permanent place in a set of chambers) is quite tough. As such, you must be prepared to network extensively.

Ministry of Law – www.mlaw.gov.sg
The Law Society of Singapore – www.lawsociety.org.sg

PATENT WORK AND TRADEMARKS

Individuals or organisations that have invested extensively in research and development do not want competitors exploiting their inventions, be it a new type of vacuum cleaner or a novel gene construct. One way to protect such intellectual property is to patent it. Similarly, distinctive logos, slogans, and so on, can also be trademarked.

Graduates or postgraduates in science or engineering can train to become patent agents (also called attorneys) in professional partnerships, or as patent examiners who work in the public sector. A patent agent describes scientific discoveries or technologies, whereas an examiner grants a patent if something novel has been described.

Because the description of trademarks need not be technical in nature, graduates from any discipline can train to become trademark agents. Successful candidates in these professions will need an eye for detail and good writing skills. Knowledge of additional languages is also highly desirable. In Singapore, patent agents and examiners can find continuous educational support from the IP Academy, an institution that provides various training programmes for those in this sector.

In addition to these professions, a number of lawyers may also specialise in the field of intellectual property, for example in intellectual property litigation or work in connection with the sale or licensing of intellectual property rights.

IP Academy – www.ipacademy.com.sg

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION WORK

The roles of library and information professionals are similar in many respects, except for the context in which they operate. In essence, all these professionals are involved in the acquisition, organisation, and use of information; working with paper-based, electronic, digital – and increasingly – web-based products and services.

What skills do you need if you intend to pursue a career in this line? A logical and organised approach to problem solving, attention to detail, intellectual ability, tenacity, and IT skills are just some of them.

Good interpersonal and communication skills are also important, as many roles in this industry are client facing in nature. Additionally, you’ll also be tasked to manage budgets and staff.

LIBRARIANSHIP

Librarians work not only in traditional public or academic libraries, but also in a wide variety of specialist libraries, e.g. music, press-cutting, business, law, prison, and school libraries. In Singapore, you will need a basic degree in Library Science in order to obtain librarianship; but for those who come from other academic backgrounds, it is also possible to become

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a librarian by doing a Master’s or a postgraduate diploma in Library Science. The National Library Board of Singapore offers both undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships in order to assist promising and keen applicants.

Practical experience is important as most postgraduate library and information course providers require their students to have had a period (up to a year) of involvement in library activities before entry. You can acquire experience by participating in holiday and part-time jobs in the local public or university libraries.

Library Association of Singapore – www.las.org.sg

ARCHIVE WORK

Archivists deal with information and records that are no longer active – they can be from organisations or individuals. Often, these articles are unpublished materials that require compliance to particular conservation standards. To qualify for this profession, you’ll need a degree in either history, political science, information studies or computer science, coupled with 5 years of experience.

Typical employers include museums and national archives, but you may also find employment with research firms, private collectors, as well as professional and conservation organisations. Some, on the other hand, may offer work on a contractual basis.

INFORMATION WORK (INFORMATION SCIENTISTS AND INFORMATION MANAGERS)

A relatively new concept, Knowledge Management (KM) recognises that knowledge is one of any organisation’s key assets. KM programmes usually require systems for the acquisition, codification, storage and retrieval of information – all activities within the scope of library and information professionals.

As such, information professionals can often find employment in libraries; archives; and organisations providing services such as current awareness bulletins, literature searches or extracts, or helping fellow professionals introduce new systems where they are given the responsibility to manage and supervise the flow of information.

These professionals are essential to the success of most organisations in the commercial or not-for-profit sectors as effective record management can have a major bearing on the efficiency of an organisation. In view of this, library and information science has much room to grow in Singapore as it begins to develop itself as an information centre.

Posts in record management are usually available in some sectors to those with degrees in disciplines such as history and information science, but postgraduate courses are also available.

MANAGEMENT

If you have ever organised a party, handed in an essay on time, set up an experiment, edited a magazine, produced a play, or participated in a treasure hunt, you’ve practised management.

Essential qualities for those in managerial positions include being forward thinking, progress-oriented, discerning, and driven. Good managers are also logical planners, accurate listeners, clear explainers, confident delegators and thorough record-keepers. Being imaginative, strategic, lateral thinkers who possess a clear vision of their goals with an ability to inspire cooperation from others are bonus attributes of the best.

How involved you are in the managerial functions depends on the size of the organisation you’re in. If you are, for instance, a sole entrepreneur or a member of a four-person group, then you may have to double up and assume more than a single responsibility. As a rule of thumb, the bigger the organisation, the more specialised the roles of its managers.

Graduate management training schemes and specific management roles exist across virtually every sector, such as industry, manufacturing, retail, not-for-profit, financial services, utility companies (water, gas, electricity), services, and the public sector.

General graduate training schemes can last about a year to two-and-a-half years, involving three to six months of practical placements across departments, theoretical training, and intermittent “off-the-job” training. At the end of the training scheme, you will then take on management jobs that are more complex and last a longer term, e.g. managing the organisation’s finances or real estate; or managing quality assurance, information services, or information technology. Some organisations recruit directly into more specialised management roles (e.g. human resources, logistics, marketing and sales, purchasing or procurement).

HUMAN RESOURCES

Human resources (HR) work is about helping organisations employ the right numbers of well-motivated, competent people in the right positions, and at the right time, enabling optimal firm performance. You could be involved, along with managers of the company, in setting staffing strategies, resource planning, staff recruitment, development and training, staff support, conflict resolution, personnel record management, performance issues, recognition, compensation, redundancy, and staff negotiation. HR work can be complex and demanding, and requires excellent people skills, technical know-how, resilience, and personal integrity.

HR professionals may find ample hiring opportunities with all types of employers, but specialist opportunities are usually located in recruitment consultancies and companies that provide training services. Graduates entering HR can look forward to the Continuing Education and Training (CET) – a set of plans that helps them advance their career as they develop new skill sets along the way. This will contribute to the national credentialing system, the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ), which will then assess and recognise the individuals for the skills that companies are looking for.
Graduates intending to work in HR will need to apply early and widely as most companies tend to accept only one or two graduates annually into their HR trainee posts. For those who are not yet in their final year, finding some HR vacation work can make a crucial difference to your later marketability.

An alternative (and in many respects, preferable) approach to an HR career is to secure a place on a broad-brush management traineeship where one of the rotational placements is in HR. This could lead to later specialisation in HR, but as a manager.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – Singapore branch – www.cipd.co.uk
Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI) – www.shri.org.sg

LOGISTICS

Logistics is the integration of parts of supply chain management – goods, labour, information, capital and facilities, mainly aspects of transportation, stock control, and warehousing. It is central to the smooth running of any business, particularly organisations which embrace the concept of “just-in-time” manufacture and supply. Logistics can be an in-house function or be contracted out to a logistics service provider and the job scope can involve setting strategies, planning projects, managing day-to-day services and staff, monitoring progress, computer modelling of flows of materials, forecasting, and negotiating with other contractors. The Singapore Logistics Association is one organisation that caters to promoting professionalism within the logistics sector.

Singapore Logistics Association – www.sla.org.sg

MARKETING AND SALES

Marketing and sales are key activities for all businesses, from manufacturers of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) to banks, publishers, retailers, and charities. Misconceptions about both activities are abounding. Marketing is assumed to be creative, strategic, and glamorous; but in reality, it is more often likely to demand rigorous analytical skills and a liking for data collection and number-crunching since you will have to prepare budget spreadsheets and constantly check what your competitors are doing.

Sales, on the other hand, is often ruled out as a more strenuous and less-rewarding sector. Graduates often forget that magazines and vacation packages are also viable commercial products, and that sales management often requires a high degree of strategic and creative thinking as well.

Retail sales and marketing often open up opportunities for employees to get involved in sourcing products or to concentrate on display and design, and a spell in sales is frequently the quickest route into marketing. Both job areas can involve overseas travel.

In order to work in either sector, you need to be socially confident, well-organised, independent, and geographically flexible. Employers will also want evidence of “commercial awareness” – perhaps from previous experiences such as running student societies.

Sales vacancies (which appear all year round) usually outnumber marketing vacancies; entry into marketing is also fiercely competitive. Graduates will need to be alert to advertised opportunities, but networking will also help.

PURCHASING

This is an area of work that has become increasingly complex in recent years. These professionals are responsible for procuring or purchasing the required quality and quantity of goods and services at the lowest or most competitive rates to meet user needs. Their job scope is tremendously wide as they have to deal not only with clients and suppliers, which include market research, tendering, negotiating, contract preparation, and managing relations with suppliers; but also preparing purchasing strategies and policies, writing specifications and standards, and making sure that their supply complies with the organisation’s required standards.

Training for graduates entering this field is mainly practical and tends to be “on the job”, augmented by short courses in related skills. Many trainees learn by working closely with senior staff members.

RETAIL

This sector is becoming increasingly popular among graduates, in part because of the exposure it has received in recent times, but also because of technological advances, competitive forces, and consumer demand that have transformed the sector. Online shopping, in particular, has drastically changed the landscape of the retail market.

For those who are looking for action, excitement, and the unexpected in their job, international retail businesses could be the place to work. The range of jobs available is wide and may include an assortment of duties from other management sectors (such as marketing and sales, and purchasing). It may also include roles like merchandising and buying.

The largest number of opportunities can usually be found in store management. Retail is a meritocratic business and a successful manager moves fast and far. Settings vary from the fiftieth outlet of a multiple chain to a mail-order company, a luxury boutique, a supermarket, or a fine wine shop.

Internet retailing is also becoming increasingly important. Most major retailers run an e-tail operation, and these often offer additional career opportunities. The ease of set-up also means e-tail can provide useful opportunities to new entrepreneurs without requiring massive investments.

Most degree subjects are usually acceptable for positions in the retail business. Mobility, on the other hand, is an important requirement to have for rapid career progression, especially in large national chains.
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY

Management consultancy firms have many different specialisations, such as strategy, process/operational, IT, economic, and environmental. Most employers want recruits with several years’ experience in a management or technical function, but many also recruit new graduates and postgraduates.

PROCESS OR OPERATIONAL CONSULTANTS

Primarily concerned with solving specific problems and implementing change, these establishments typically recruit graduates as systems analysts, IT consultants, or business process consultants. This area of work involves analysing specific client problems that are frequently related to their working systems, e.g. production control or logistics.

Inevitably, there is often a strong interest in the application of computer systems to business problems. You will need to demonstrate considerable analytical ability and be computer literate.

STRATEGIC CONSULTANTS

The core work of strategic management consultants is to advise corporate clients on strategies to improve profitability and/or shareholder value. They may recruit graduates to start as research analysts, business analysts, or associate consultants. Rewards are high, but so is the level of commitment expected, and working hours can be long.

Typical projects last about two to three months, with teams of three to four consultants based either at the office or with the client. Employers tend to look for extremely high levels of achievement, both academic and extra-curricular. Underlying their assessment of you is the question “what would the client think of you?” To this end, you are likely to be asked to discuss case studies to see how analytically and creatively you can think on your feet.

Competition for jobs is intense. Doing an internship is helpful, but these are still few and far between.

MANUFACTURING

In the modern digital age where information and knowledge rule the day, it is all too easy to take the industrial sector — pharmaceuticals, defence, energy, production and distribution as well as manufacturing of technology products — for granted.

Competitiveness, globalisation, the shortening of product life cycles, energy, climate change legislation, and rapid technological change have, however, added on to the list of interesting and demanding challenges faced by future managers; making this sector one of the most intriguing to work in. This is particularly true in the case of Singapore as one of the most industry-friendly countries in Southeast Asia.

Entry into this field is usually by one of three routes:

- **General traineeship** offered by some large companies covering a variety of roles over two years or so, allowing you to see the whole company before committing yourself to one area.
- **Direct hire into a specific management role**, such as personnel, marketing, sales, production planning and control, logistics, supply chain, IT or finance; where many jobs are open to graduates from most disciplines. This however, happens infrequently.
- **Technical, research, or engineering roles**; which usually require a relevant science or engineering degree, and are often advertised as specific training programmes that lead to professional qualifications.

Regardless of your route of entry, career progression will almost certainly involve movement between different roles, and you will have to assume general management functions.

MEDIA AND PUBLISHING

Journalism (news, magazine, broadcast and online), TV, radio, film, media management, and all forms of publishing fall under this category. Despite the media’s reputation as a notoriously difficult career area to get into due to its competitive nature, graduates still find ways in every year.

A high-profile industry where short-term contracts and scarce training opportunities are fast becoming the norm, and coupled with a lack of financial rewards, the creative buzz of this field remains endlessly attractive. Don’t overlook media’s management aspect, which promises better pay. Some big media firms run graduate business management training schemes and there is also a rising demand for graduates with sales, marketing, legal, financial, business development and consultancy backgrounds.

JOURNALISM

It’s important to be multi-skilled in journalism, and to be willing to embrace new forms of media as they challenge existing ones. There are various ways to get into the field, such as doing a postgraduate training course that typically takes one year or shorter (invaluable for work placements and contacts, but funding can be a problem); obtaining traineeships with newspaper and magazine groups (limited openings, however); persuading an employer to take you on (e.g. a radio station); as well as gaining experience in another field first (e.g. finance, business, or science), then using your expertise to enter journalism.

Stints of work experience, mostly unpaid, are essential and often the way to your first paid job. Competition is tough, so it is necessary to start acquiring experience at university and elsewhere. Also, make contacts with media people wherever you can. Networking is an essential skill for journalists (and can be learnt!), but if you are really uncomfortable with the idea of networking, then you might want to reconsider working in journalism.
BROADCASTING, RADIO, AND TELEVISION

Volatility shifts in structure and technology will affect this sector considerably – shake-ups at major global media producers, mergers among independent production companies, mobile TV, and podcasting are just among the few.

Training opportunities tend to be limited and new entrants will find themselves competing for work with a surplus of experienced freelancers as long-term contracts are becoming less available.

What this means is that as an aspiring applicant, you will have to build up a strong and credible résumé. For the radio and television industry, you will need to have very wide interests, and start seeking practical, hands-on, media-related involvement as soon as you can. You can obtain experience by joining university media societies, directing plays, picking up technical skills, working in hospital radios, applying to be a DJ, and also writing for local newspapers.

Seek inspiration and form opinions by watching lots of TV programmes or listening to the radio shows in genres that you want to work in. Identify also the kind of content and approaches that you like, and network with people – persistence is an important trait.

In addition, be flexible and prepared to take on a large variety of roles. Frequently check the websites of major production companies for jobs and work opportunities, and for available training schemes.

FILM

In order to successfully break into the Singapore film and video sector, you will need steely perseverance, luck, talent, and a passion for film. Take every opportunity during your student days to be involved in amateur filmmaking; try your hand at writing, directing, acting, helping out behind the scenes, and even editing the videos.

Alternatively, join film societies, enter competitions, gain work experience, or apply to volunteer as a script reader at festivals such as the Singapore International Film Festival. You can even network with other aspiring filmmakers and help them with their filming sessions to gain experience.

Film schools typically require experience in the form of portfolios – some graduates work for several years (eg. in theatre or television) before applying.

The Media Development Authority of Singapore is quite supportive in promoting the works of local filmmakers, forming the Singapore Film Commission to supervise the administration of various initiatives. Among some of these are the New Talent Feature Grant, the Film Mentorship Initiative, and the launching of the SGFilm Channel – all of which serve to encourage the local film production sector.

Media Development Authority Singapore (Film)
- www.mda.gov.sg
nuSTUDIOS – www.nustudios.org
Singapore Film Society – www.sfs.org.sg
Screenwriters Association of Singapore
- www.screenwriters.org.sg

PUBLISHING

Publishers have often stressed that “publishing is a business”. Products need to be profitable, and are aimed at specific markets. The business of publishing is primarily about marketing information and entertainment. A huge product range, covering nearly everything from business reports to DVDs, occasionally results in an annual oversupply of thousands of new product lines. Electronic products account for the most vigorous growth – websites, online study guides, computer games, text-bases, DVDs and real-time financial information.

Many positions in the publishing sector are similar to those in other industries: sales, marketing, finance, production control, and distribution, with the exception of editing. Commissioning (deciding what to publish) is usually a responsibility of senior staff; but in a small firm, you could have your ideas adopted within months of joining. Detailed editing of texts in academic and reference publishing, on the other hand, tends to be assigned to out-of-house freelancers.

Most editorial jobs available are for people with knowledge of web languages, MS Office, Quark or other desktop publishing packages. These skills, plus technical knowledge, usually gained from a course, are also in demand for production jobs – an area that faces labour shortage quite often. Once you have the skills, you can use them in other, often higher paying, professional contexts. With reasonable experience, you could move on to more technical tasks, such as designing a mail-order catalogue, writing the staff training manual, producing charity appeals, or editing company publications.

If you intend to pursue a career in this line of work, start looking out for opportunities to obtain relevant (but often unpaid) work experience, such as doing vacation work and editing the college magazine. There are very few graduate schemes available, and most vacancies are for people who are ready to start work. Your job search may, however, be eased by the fact that the publishing sector is less competitive than the other facets (journalism, broadcast, TV, etc) of the media industry.

Being computer-friendly is a must, especially if you are applying for editorial roles. European languages are also a plus. Science graduates are also in demand. In the case that you have little to no previous experience, a postgraduate publishing course will help.

The publishing industry is a good place to be if you want less pressure than in, say, banking or commercial law. You will also find that your colleagues often share much of your interests and values, and that the nature of management is frequently informal. It can be an exciting profession in the long-term if you are a natural entrepreneur. Moving around is also common.

The Singapore Book Publisher Association has further taken the initiative to develop the publishing industry of Singapore by launching the Content Digitisation Programme for the advancement of digital publishing.

Singapore Book Publishers Association
- www.singaporebookpublishers.sg
The Book Council – www.bookcouncil.sg
Media Publishers Association of Singapore (MPAS)
- www.mpas.org.sg
SURVEYING

The traditional route into a career in property and land management is by training to become a chartered surveyor, but there are many other entry points into careers connected with property and land use. These include town planning, civil engineering, and land management. Opportunities in property tend to pop up throughout the year, and most firms are keen to receive applications and letters of interest from graduates.

Becoming a chartered surveyor involves taking professional examinations, such as the Assessment of Professional Competence by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), involving a structured training of 24 months, during which you must complete a minimum of 400 days’ practical experience. Despite that, most large international firms are willing to accept applications from “non-cognate” students, i.e. those without a relevant degree.

The surveying profession offers a great variety in size, nature, and location of employers. There are major international firms with thousands of staff in offices spanning the globe, developing major sites in city-centres worth several million dollars; and small firms in rural market towns where you’ll be sharing an office with one of only two partners, dealing with the sale of hundred-acre farms.

Global firms also actively recruit international students to work in their home countries, especially in the Middle and Far East. Talk to any chartered surveyor and the majority will praise the pleasant working style, good colleagues, and variety of work.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Asia – www.rics.org
Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers – www.sisv.org.sg

PROPERTY

PUBLIC SERVICE

This sector is a broad one, and includes major organisations, such as the Civil Service and its agencies, the non-departmental public bodies, the local government, and the National Health Service; as well as grassroots communities, such as the teachers in state education, librarians in public libraries, social workers, police departments, probation and prison services, and the armed forces.

THE CIVIL SERVICE

The Singapore Civil Service comprises the central governing bodies that help ministers to devise and deliver government policies. Organised into ministries and statutory boards, public officers will help with the formulation of national policies and ensure that they are being implemented correctly.

The Public Service Division (PSD) guides the HR policy direction of the civil service industry by developing the frameworks for the various ministries. It is also in charge of cultivating and maintaining the quality of civil workers, as well as proposing solutions and platforms for strategic inter-departmental issues and discussions.

For those of you who intend to work in the Civil Service, the PSD is a good place to start as you can get an objective look at the human resource issues in different ministries. There are numerous areas of interest to choose from due to the PSD’s extensive involvement, with three chief positions of interest: analysts, strategists, and executive roles.

For job-advancement purposes, you are often encouraged to arrange your job postings so that it allows you to experience both policy and operations work. You will also be rotated every three years to gain more exposure to the other ministries in PSD. Depending on your work performance, some civil workers may be seconded to a secondary ministry or statutory board for one to two years for further exposure.

Individual ministries also hire graduates but do take note that recruitment practices vary between ministries and functions, which make their timing and availability less predictable. You may want to check with the individual ministries from time to time.

Public Service Division – www.psd.gov.sg
Careers@Gov job portal – www.careers.gov.sg

THE NATIONAL HEALTH SCHEME

Often ranked among the world’s most efficient, Singapore’s healthcare sector is considerably open to the entry of new staff. Public interest tends to focus primarily on doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. Non-clinical roles, too, are crucial for the sector’s success.

Managers, for instance, play an important role in healthcare organisations; their job scope spans a wide range of duties, including strategic planning of healthcare policies, as well as supervising services that are accessed directly by the public. Most non-clinical managers are hired through the hospital organisation’s graduate training scheme culminating in specialised jobs in general informatics, financial, and HR management; but there are other routes of entry as well.

Another less clinically-inclined role position in the National Health Scheme would be that of the medical social worker. This role requires a substantial amount of medical knowledge as they will sometimes need to assess and formulate certain treatments, but their duties tend to veer more towards the job scope of a social worker. They are responsible for helping patients and their families cope with medical crises, including helping them reintegrate into society, cope with life transitions and grief, as well as assisting in referrals and access to social, financial, or legal aid.

Often, you will have to frequent the websites of the relevant health organisations in order to find such job opportunities. Alternative routes of entry would be through the internship/training and scholarship programmes that organisations provide to graduates. ►

Health Promotion Board – www.hpb.gov.sg
Ministry of Health – www.moh.gov.sg
**ARMS FORCES**

Owing to their National Service stint, most Singaporean male graduates would have already been exposed to the career opportunities within the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) by the time they commence their tertiary education. Careers in the SAF are diverse as it is divided into three distinctive branches (the Singapore Army, the Republic of Singapore Air Force, and the Republic of Singapore Navy), and have recently been made even more attractive by the enhancement that were made to the Officers and Warrant Officers career schemes, as well as the addition of other equally appealing schemes, such as the new Military Experts scheme.

It is also important to remember that the SAF is not made up entirely of soldiers and combatants; there are also non-uniformed careers for those who want to contribute to Singapore’s defence without getting involved in frontline battle. You may apply to enter as a defence executive officer or an information communications and public affairs executive if you fall under this category. Singapore’s intelligence service is also housed within the SAF.

Aside from direct application, you may also gain entry into this sector via various internships and scholarships that are offered by the SAF.

*Singapore Armed Forces – [www.minfed.gov.sg](http://www.minfed.gov.sg)*

**THE HOME TEAM**

The Home Team encompasses the various essential public security and emergency response units of Singapore. It falls under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) offers both uniformed and civilian career roles. Uniformed roles as police officers typically comprise a combination of desk and practical training, as well as street duties. Entrants to civilian roles join to undertake specialised roles such as crime scene specialists, forensic examiners, psychologists, management executives, and commercial affairs officers – many of which are de facto graduate-level posts.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) is responsible for fire and emergency rescue services, while the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) is Singapore’s primary drug enforcement agency. Both organisations typically recruit graduates to fill either uniformed roles as senior officers, or civilian roles as senior executives.

The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) oversees local border security and immigration issues. They typically recruit graduates as senior officers, with rotations across various branches and command centres of the organisation.

The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) manages incarceration and rehabilitation of convicted offenders. Graduates may find opportunities within this organisation as either senior prison officers, guidance counsellors, or senior management executives.


**SCIENCE**


**‘HANDS OFF’ SCIENCE**

Employers are interested in science graduates for many roles, not just as experimental scientists. Science graduates can also find employment in various other fields like scientific publishing, teaching, museum management, as well as patent work. These positions require more than a science degree; you will need excellent communication skills in order to excel.

As a science graduate, you may find that by improving your computing or numeracy skills, your marketability will increase in the IT and finance sectors as well. Other sectors you can consider include human resources, marketing and sales in food, oil or pharmaceutical companies – where you will need to utilise much of your scientific knowledge. Retraining in a healthcare profession or as a lawyer are possible occupational routes too.

**EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE**

Experimental scientists can be involved in research, development, or analysis. For career ideas related to your particular discipline, do use the relevant professional bodies, such as the Institute of Physics Singapore for physicists and the Singapore National Institute of Chemistry for professionals in the chemical industry.

Research scientists need to generate results to publish papers – often an essential hiring requirement in academia, or patents, and important in commercial organisations. Development scientists look for improved ways of carrying out a procedure (e.g. making a product or running an assay) and their achievements include decreased cost, greater customer satisfaction, improved safety, and reduced waste. Analytical scientists strive for increased efficiency or accuracy, and their progress is more likely to be the result of increased management responsibilities than original science.

Experimental scientists work in a broad range of settings. These include academic institutions, government and independent research institutes, large industries, and also small companies. They can be funded in diverse ways, including trade subscriptions and charitable donations; as well as by public money, and the research and development budgets of commercial organisations.

**IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

Much of your time as an experimental scientist in academic institutions will be spent in the office as you prepare reports, proposals, and curriculum papers for your superiors and lecture classes. Producing academic and conference papers is important for those who are working in academic institutions as this will, often, determine the credibility and quality of your work.

Most science graduates start in academic institutions as a graduate research assistant. In order to progress beyond this position, you will generally need to obtain a PhD.


IN RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Working in a government or independent research institute, with or without a postgraduate qualification, allows you exposure to an environment similar to academia, only without having to teach. If your research is publicly-funded, you are likely to have more freedom to change direction and follow unexpected lines of inquiry. The aim is usually to get work published in competition with other scientists. Science funded by corporate bodies is profit-driven, and you may have to drop interesting projects if they do not seem financially viable.

IN HOSPITALS

Healthcare scientists often work alongside clinicians, helping to diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate patients. Their work also involves developing new techniques to improve the service. With Singapore being one of the more advanced biomedical sciences and translational clinical research hubs in Southeast Asia, science graduates interested in applying their expertise to the healthcare industry may find it to be an ideal place to start with.

This is further encouraged by the various collaborations that were established between the Singapore Economic Development Board and the Ministry of Health, such as the Health and Wellness Programme Office.

IN LARGE INDUSTRIES

Through a career in industry, you can engage in research that leads to commercial application. All work is usually tightly budgeted, and you may have to drop interesting projects that do not seem profitable. You may also get the opportunity to attend conferences, but will need to strive to respect company confidentiality while you are at it. Your success may be measured more by patents than by publications, and you are more likely to write for non-specialists than for an expert audience, so this means that you will need to possess excellent language and explanatory skills.

Expect to work in interdisciplinary teams – it will not be odd to find physical and organic chemists, polymer scientists, as well as mechanical and design engineers all working together on a single project. Hence, teamwork is crucial and career progression often involves increased management responsibilities.

Many industries recruit new graduates, but a relevant PhD may increase your value to a company. If you want to work in industry, start by getting some early exposure to see if it is the appropriate profession for you. As an undergraduate, you may be able to get vacation work, or choose a project supervisor who has links with industry. If you intend to or are doing a PhD, discuss potential projects with industrial scientists, and find out how your supervisor can help you collaborate.

IN SMALL COMPANIES

Many small scientific companies have links with a university. As in any companies, your research will be profit-driven and responsibilities may be wide-ranging as there will be fewer supporting departments (e.g. marketing or IT). Small scientific companies are often located in science parks and may belong to networks, as one might notice within and around the fringes of Singapore Science Parks. They often recruit from nearby universities, saving on both advertising and relocation costs.

Do check their websites regularly for vacancies, but also send in speculative applications to specific companies.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESSES

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

An entrepreneurial culture runs throughout NUS, with no shortage of support for students (and staff) to research potential markets, develop ideas, confirm their viability, and launch them to the world – particularly through club/society activities such as fundraisers and campaigns.

Unlike self-employment, the intention is to grow the business. Setting up your own business not only requires total dedication, long hours, and strength of personality to survive the setbacks and skepticisms you might encounter; but also carefully thought-out, well-researched business plans and a watertight legal framework. Most graduates prefer to acquire business skills and knowledge of the market elsewhere (usually with a large organisation working in finance, sales, consultancy, or accountancy) for three to five years before setting up their own businesses.

SPRING Singapore, also encourages entrepreneurship by offering several start-up schemes to help new entrepreneurs.

Graduates who are interested in entrepreneurship can also test out their ideas and get a taste of life as an entrepreneur by participating in competitions such as the annual Start-Up@ Singapore. They offer sponsorship and prizes for business ideas and bring entrepreneurial-minded students (whatever their ideas) together with academics, practitioners, and alumni who run their own businesses.

SPRING Singapore – www.spring.gov.sg
NUS Enterprise – enterprise.nus.edu.sg

WORKING FOR A SMALL BUSINESS

Although not widely promoted, graduate-level vacancies can be found in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). You’ll quickly become a key member of their small team and be on first-name terms with the entire company in no time.

Work is usually varied due to small manpower, which will enable you to gain experience rapidly, but trade-offs will come in the form of a non-concrete job description or the lack of a three-month induction programme reminiscent of those in bigger firms.

Being in such a small team also means that you will make an immediate impact on the company’s success, and your job will follow the roller-coaster ride of the company’s highs and lows.

A career in SMEs can be great fun and a very rewarding experience. Networking and making speculative applications will usually land you work opportunities.