

# BRIGHTSPARKS

by careerbuilder singapore

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## Top 4 Trends to Anatomise Scholarship Organisations Accurately

Learn how to dissect sponsors to  
understand if it is the one for you.

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Education Survey  
Report 2017

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# The Future at Your Grasp

BY MARTHA LEE

**SkillsFuture Work-Study Degree Programmes (WSDP) is run by the Singapore Institute of Technology, in partnership with several companies and agencies, and supported by the Ministry of Education. Two professionals share the benefits of this scheme that one can enjoy personally and professionally.**



## NATALIE TAN

*SkillsFuture Work Study Degree  
Programme Recipient  
Project Manager  
NU Systems Pte Ltd*

*Civil Engineering Degree  
SIT-University of Glasgow*

Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) places a higher level of collaboration between academia and industry partners to provide prospective students with deep industry knowledge and meaningful career opportunities for the workplace. The programmes are delivered in either two modes: Term-in/Term-out where students alternate between spending one to two trimesters in university and at the workplace; or a 4-day Work/ 1-day Study or 3-day Work/2-day Study arrangement where students alternate between working three or four days in the partner company, and studying in university for the remaining days of the week.

Justin Kang was one such undergraduate from WSDP. He is currently a project coordinator at Samwoh Corporation Pte Ltd, where his role includes maintenance and pavement works of runway, taxiway, and aircraft aprons in the Changi International Airport. As for Natalie Tan, she is a project manager at NU Systems Pte Ltd., where her responsibilities involve managing contracts and job scopes with client and contractors, evaluating progress on site, resolving site-related issues, and closing the final account upon completion of the project. We go in-depth into the progress of their studies and how it has helped them to excel further in their roles.

## A HOLISTIC PROGRAMME THAT ASSISTS AND SUPPORTS

Justin wanted to further his studies by getting a degree but as a first-time father with a new born baby just one year ago, he was unable to afford it financially. With the new responsibilities and commitments, it was crucial for Justin to manage work, studies and family concurrently. Samwoh Corporation offered Justin an opportunity to undertake a work-study scheme where he is able to accommodate both his lifestyle and responsibilities. He is able to work from home before classes commence which benefits both himself and his company.

For Natalie, she has always wished she could study part-time while upgrading her skills. In her industry, it is necessary to keep learning, as there are different roles in a company, and one must strive to fit into those different responsibilities. This scheme allows her the convenience of studying and working at the same time. She appreciates not needing to jeopardise her job which she has worked hard for, while furthering her education.

**JUSTIN KANG**

*SkillsFuture Work Study Degree  
Programme Recipient  
Project Coordinator  
Samwoh Corporation Pte Ltd*

*Civil Engineering Degree  
SIT-University of Glasgow*

**RIDING WITH THE WAVES**

It was not always smooth sailing. Justin shares that he contemplated whether he should return to school. Being in a highly demanding job, he did not want to sacrifice family bonding time with his son. Coupled with his apprehension of not being in school for the past 15 years, Justin is extremely thankful to be accepted and for the opportunity to further his studies. With the support of his understanding wife, his classmates who have helped him with revisions, as well as colleagues who graciously cover his work duties while he is out of office, he has been able to excel in his programme.

Natalie shares a similar experience. She was hesitant about embarking on her studies because of the heavy workload in the construction industry, and her ability to manage her time. She was particularly worried about handling work meetings and going on site, while studying and attending classes. Subsequently, she also found it tough to focus on the modules she was learning, while resolving crises on sites. At times, she even had to leave classes to attend to urgent site matters.

Fortunately, her classmates helped her to catch up on assignments, while SIT provided recorded lectures so she would not miss anything. Natalie also sings the praises of her professors who helped too by checking in with students regularly, so they could clarify any doubts. On top of that, she is grateful to her company for being supportive of her studies, granting her full salary and benefits, along with sufficient time-off for

her studies. "For example, an assistant was appointed to me to ease my daily work load until graduation," she elaborates.

**ASPIRATIONS LOOKING FORWARD**

Justin explains that the WSDP scheme has helped him to greatly improve and sharpen his skillsets in the industry. After completing his degree, he is anticipating for a chance to take up a higher responsibility job in the company. Natalie shares similar aspirations of moving upwards, working towards being a Qualified Person (QP) while aiming to become a Professional Engineer (PE). With this degree, she wishes to focus on the design aspects to add value to the expertise she already has.

**ADVICE TO FOLLOW SUIT**

The reason why Justin feels the WSDP is an amazing prospect is because professionals can pursue higher education even if they have missed past opportunities to do so. "This is a valuable chance to upgrade and get a degree, which helps one to advance their careers," he muses.

Natalie concurs, "This scheme offers flexibility for working adults, while helping them to balance work and studies. In fact, quite a few of my peers prefer to work first, and further their education later in life. Thus the WSDP is a fantastic opportunity to upgrade skills and move forward towards a more lucrative career."