Getting more than just a degree

For Vietnamese national, studying in S’pore earns him friends and prepares him for working world

Arriving in a foreign land with little knowledge of the local language is a daunting prospect.

For 22-year-old Nguyen Hoang Long (below), the need to step out of his comfort zone was a necessary step towards fulfilling his dream of working in the finance industry.

“My country’s developing very quickly, and I’ve always wanted to get into the finance sector, so coming to Singapore to study was something I thought would be important,” he said.

After completing high school in 2011, Mr Nguyen arrived in Singapore in 2012 to begin his university education.

While heading overseas to study is an experience that typically excites many, he recalled that his first few weeks in Singapore were quite stressful.

“Coming to a new environment, I was surprised and scared at the same time,” said the Vietnamese national, who spoke little English before coming to Singapore.

More than three years later, Mr Nguyen has managed to learn more than a new language.

He has just completed his final classes in pursuit of a Bachelor of Arts in International Banking and Finance.

The degree, a top-up programme offered at the East Asia Institute of Management (EASB), is conferred by Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

Mr Nguyen’s first classes at EASB were part of an English preparatory class. After completing a Certificate in Business English, he proceeded to do a Diploma in Banking and Finance, and then an Advanced Diploma in the same field.

“I wanted a good degree, so the reputation of the course and the institution was important to me,” said the native of Rach Ninh, a town 30 minutes away from the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi.

“I had heard of EASB back home, and I have friends who were studying here, so the choice of school was quite straightforward.”

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Mr Nguyen, who is on track to graduate with an honours degree, pointed out that his learning experience at EASB had been positive.

Speaking about his lecturers, whom he said brought a dose of industry experience to the classroom, he added that they looked out for students like himself, who were far away from home.

“Apart from always being willing to clarify our questions, they also often asked about our well-being and how we were coping,” he said.

Classes were also small, allowing Mr Nguyen to interact with his classmates on a deeper level.

“It was exciting to work with others from different backgrounds, and to hear their views on how we should do a project or on how things are done in their country,” he said.

He said that among his fondest memories of his time at EASB were the social activities that the institute organises for students.

“Sports Day and sometimes barbecue sessions for students. They let us get to know one another better. So it’s not all studies, making it a more enjoyable experience,” he said.

Mr Nguyen, who now hopes to advance his studies by pursuing a Masters of Business Administration at EASB, said while the studying environment was conducive, it was ultimately up to the individual if he or she wanted to do well in university.

“For me, it was a lot of self-study. Anything I was unsure about, I would talk to my lecturers,” he said.

“It was tough at first, but you get better.”

With his impending graduation, Mr Nguyen said he would miss the friends he made during his time at EASB.

“I’ve learnt so many things from my time here. It has given me a good sense of what to expect, and has prepared me for the working world,” he said.

As a practitioner in the financial markets for 26 years, I am delighted that this degree programme covers a wide range of specialisations that will help to build good foundational skills within our students. This hones our students into effective practitioners within the banking/finance and corporate treasury management industries.

Mr Roland Koh (above), Programme Leader and Assistant Head of School, Postgraduate Studies & Sheffield Hallam University programmes, East Asia Institute of Management