

# Well equipped for a trading career

Cheng Xin Kai tells **CHUANG PECK MING** he enjoyed every minute of his international trading programme during his business management studies at SMU

**H**E WAS going to do a finance major but the Singapore Management University (SMU) student was not keen to end up working in a bank. "I wanted a career in which no two days were ever the same," says Cheng Xin Kai, a final-year economics and business management student. "And I wanted a career that would give me a great deal of satisfaction, independence and learning opportunities."

In other words, the 25-year-old was leaning towards a career in trading. And so when SMU introduced an international trading programme – the International Trading Track offered under the university's Bachelor of Business Management degree programme – Mr Cheng jumped in.

He completed the programme in two years – and loved every minute of it.

"The trading programme gave me a great deal of exposure to various elements of a trading career," Mr Cheng says. Courses like energy and soft commodities trading opened his eyes "to different fields of trading and the specific knowledge required in each field".

The programme has a number of compulsory courses that include derivatives, shipping business, enterprise risk management, international law and trade finance.

"Most of the courses are useful regardless of what career we pursue in the future," he says.

Often, the courses are taught by practitioners. "They were more than willing to share with us their experiences, which were really interesting and beneficial," Mr Cheng says. And as many of them are working professionals, they provide up-to-date materials and information about the different industries.

Of course, there were also field trips, such



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as the study mission to Shanghai and Dalian last year. They were again an eye-opener and Mr Cheng got to learn how commodities such as coal and oil are processed.

He put what he learnt in the International Trading Track to use during his internship with commodity trader Olam in Shanghai.

"My project involved business development and I had to recommend a business model that's most suitable based on the company's strengths," he recalls. "In order to recommend a business model, I had to first understand the risks faced by the company and the industry in question. I also had to understand the supply chain as well as the various trade terms such as INCOTERM."

The knowledge gained from the trading track programme at SMU provided him with the tools to build a framework to tackle the

project. At the same time, he could understand and communicate with his bosses and clients more effectively.

"I believe this knowledge will continue to be useful when I pursue a trading career," Mr Cheng says. "And even if I choose not to pursue a trading career in the long term, the trading track programme is still very rewarding as much of the knowledge learnt will be relevant in other parts of the financial industry."

He says the international trading programme taught him the various elements of trading. His internship in China has given him practical experience of working in a trading-related job. "All this knowledge will come in handy when I embark on my trading career," he says.

Mr Cheng starts work at Cargill International Trading next month.