

Game on

For Gavin Yeo, 26, the Media Education Scholarship from Media Development Authority has put him in good stead as a game developer

What made you decide to embark on this career path?

I was inspired by old games, such as Lufia 2 and Theme Hospital. They were masterpieces of their time and after playing them, I wanted to create similarly engaging games that players around the world can enjoy. So I signed up for a degree in computer science and game design.

What attracted you to DigiPen Institute of Technology Singapore?

I wanted to acquire advanced skills and DigiPen boasts an impressive portfolio of award-winning games that its students had made while studying there. The institution also has close ties with the gaming industry in Singapore, which is an added benefit when it comes to job seeking.

Tell us more about your course.

The Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Game Design course covers the technology and design portions of game development. This taught me to look at games from all directions so that as a technical designer, I would not propose unachievable designs.

As budding designers, we are taught to conceptualise and communicate the game's vision and design direction to the development team. We also strive to make the game engaging for players.

The programme showed us how to make games from scratch using a game engine. This encourages us to start our own independent studios in the future.

What was your favourite module?

It was the Game Project Courses where we formed teams to make games. It was closest to the experience of working in the game industry and was one of the main reasons why I enrolled at DigiPen — to create games hands-on.

Driven by passion, teams willingly stayed back in school late into the night to provide amazing game experiences for players.

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How did the lecturers enhance learning?

DigiPen lecturers are from all over the world, like the United States, China and India. Many of them have valuable experience from their years in the gaming industry in globally renowned game companies, such as Nintendo, Ubisoft and Wizards of the Coast.

They taught me how to excel both as an individual game designer and as a member of a team. The lecturers also constantly challenge us to push ourselves to greater heights, all the while supporting us and giving us full creative control. They even sent the best games we made to international competitions to help us gain exposure.

By the time I graduated, I was a two-time finalist in the prestigious Independent Game Festival China, with the second one attained while in DigiPen. The entry submitted greatly strengthened my portfolio while adding a significant achievement to my resume.

Were there other educational opportunities?

Yes, I did an internship at Unity Technologies Singapore, a company that specialises in developing the well-known and versatile Unity game engine. From understanding how the different systems of the game engine were made in the company, I learned to use game engines better and improved my programming and technical skills.

I also served a three-month Overseas Immersion Programme (OIP) in Redmond, Washington. The highlight was a tour at the

Valve studio in Bellevue, Washington. It was where highly successful games such as Dota 2 and Team Fortress 2 were made.

What do you like about studying at DigiPen?

DigiPen provides an assisted and safe environment for me to refine my design skills. I was surrounded by like-minded individuals with different skillsets. We could exchange ideas and tap on one another's expertise to create bigger games than we could have done on our own.

While I could have learned these skills on my own, it was so much faster to do it through DigiPen as the school has taught me what the industry requires.

How did the scholarship help you achieve your dream of becoming a game designer?

Apart from providing financial support then, the scholarship from Media Development Authority (MDA) helped me settle into a relevant media job in Singapore, according to my competencies.

MDA also works closely with most of the game studios in Singapore. As a scholar, I had an edge getting into a prominent game studio here.

MDA continues to provide opportunities for scholars by organising events and networking sessions with other scholars and professionals from the media industry.

- **Occupation:** Game designer • **Scholarship:** Media Education Scholarship
- **Course:** Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Game Design
- **Institution:** DigiPen Institute of Technology Singapore