

STUDY  ABROAD

# Singapore sojourn



**NITESH MAKKAR,**  
a mechanical engineering student at the Management Development Institute of Singapore, on rediscovering his love for engineering, being a movie buff and missing home cooked food

emphasis on practical training. We also get the opportunity to work on a wide range of cutting-edge equipment. Everything that is taught here is relevant and fresh graduates find themselves job-ready from day one. To make things interesting for us, the teachers encourage us to work on fascinating projects which we have to conceptualise and build on our own. For instance, the first-year students have to create robots with Lego sets to learn the basics of mechatronics. We programme the robot, all by ourselves. These robots can do simple things like walk on a tightrope or solve a rubik cube puzzle.

Another good thing about the programme is that we don't have excessive pressure. We just have to attend on an average three hours of lectures a day. However, it's mandatory to attend at least 60 hours of lectures a month and the rules are quite strict here. But for students from India it seems slow paced as we are used to mugging and



**C**oming to Singapore was a last minute decision for me, as I'd failed to get into any top engineering college in India. Even though I had joined a reputed tutorial class in Kota, Rajasthan, for the IIT entrance test after Class X, I couldn't ace any of the engineering entrance exams. I also messed up my Plus Two board exams (CBSE). However, my parents were able to admit me in a private university in Udaipur, Rajasthan, but I was not happy with the course and the college. So when my aunt — a Singapore citizen — suggested that I try my luck here, I immediately grabbed the opportunity. I came here with my parents four years ago.

I faced quite a few setbacks when I landed here. No good engineering college was ready to accept me since I had poor grades in Plus Two. Some of the institutes asked for over 95 per cent marks. But the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), the oldest and one of the top five institutes in Singapore, suggested that I enrol for a nine-month diploma course at their institute to brush up on my basics and then get admitted to the four-year degree programme. Since the course is run by the University of Bradford (UK), one of the star-rated global institutes, one needs a solid foundation to gain an entry. Refusing to accept defeat, I decided to reinvent my career. I was determined to work my way via the diploma course. I toiled hard and eventually emerged the topper in my class. My professors at MDIS feels I am "naturally inclined" towards engineering. And I was offered a scholarship of Singapore \$10,000 (around Rs 5.3 lakh). Now I am in the third year of the mechanical engineering course and have been immensely enjoying my study here.

The best part of the programme is the degree — bachelor of engineering BE — which will be awarded by the University of Bradford. Bradford's BE programmes are accredited by professional bodies in the UK and are recognised by the signatories of the Washington Accord. This means it will be easier for me to go for a master's or a PhD in the US, the UK and a host of other countries. The graduate employment record is one of the best in the UK. At Singapore, I am going to get this degree at a fraction of the cost. Moreover, the teacher to student ratio (1:20) is far better here than that of the UK campus.

We get to learn a lot of things hands-on at the School of Engineering (SOE), at MDIS, which places a lot of



HOW I MADE IT 

■ As I didn't score well in the Plus Two exam, I decided to go for a nine-month diploma programme at the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS). The course reinforces a student's foundation in mathematics and physics and enhances problem solving skills and techniques

■ The diploma course offered me an opportunity to learn the topics I wasn't good at and brush up on my weak areas. I had skipped many of these topics out of fear while doing my Plus Two in India. This also helped rebuild my confidence as I was beginning to feel that I was not cut out for engineering

■ Students like me, who fail to crack the tough IIT entrance or other joint entrance exams, should not lose heart. If you've got high marks in the Class X board exams, and have studied in an English medium school, you can apply for the diploma course straight away. In nine months you'll be able to get into the degree course and save time and money. Besides, you won't have to go through the pressure cooker situation that most Plus Two students face in India

■ If you did manage to get good marks in Plus Two, you get to join the three-year degree course at MDIS directly. Thus, you save a year of studying. If you know somebody at Singapore it helps. Otherwise, education advisers such as The Chopras, Foreign Studies Bureau, Trans Globe, and so on, can help you choose the right institute in Singapore



put in longer hours of study. Lower workload helps us chill out a lot. Singapore is a wonderful city, full of parks, museums, colonial heritage and a vibrant nightlife.

An impeccable public transport system with a lot of buses, cabs and mass rapid transport railway connects the entire city. I love to go for walks and watch movies as I am kind of a movie buff. Nowadays, all Bollywood movies are released here on the same day as they are in India. Last year, some of us at MDIS got the opportunity to host Bollywood stars Farhan Akhtar and Shahid Kapoor at the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards. It was a great experience to hobnob with top stars.

FOREIGN FUNDAS

VALUE FOR MONEY

■ The Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), founded in 1956, is Singapore's oldest not-for-profit educational institute. MDIS provides accredited courses in a number of disciplines such as business and management, engineering, fashion design, information technology, life sciences, mass communications, and so on.

These are offered in collaboration with highly acclaimed universities in Australia, France, the UK and the US. The courses are offered here at a fraction of the cost in Singapore. The hostel and living costs are also much cheaper than those in the UK, the US or Europe. Further, MDIS offers substantial scholarships and grants to meritorious international students.

The procedures for applying for a student visa are very simple. The institution in which you get admitted to acts as your local sponsor and files the visa application for you.

Even though a picturesque city state, law and order in Singapore is quite strict. Spitting, littering and chewing gum are treated as offences and carry a hefty fine. Drug abuse and drug trafficking can lead to a life sentence or even death



Campus life is quite exciting. We have a spectacular panoramic view of the bay area. The 15-storey hostel can accommodate over 1,600 students. We have a dance studio, a music room and a big auditorium. There is also a swank swimming pool and a sports arena close to the hostel. I love playing badminton. Before I took a seat here, I had to travel from a hostel outside the campus which was cheaper but quite far away. Now I save a lot of time and enjoy living in a vibrant student hub. Unlike in India ragging is unheard of here.

One of the reasons why I chose this city is that it's pretty close to India, especially Calcutta. It takes less than four hours to fly here. This is why we have a lot of Indian students (nearly two out of five).

In an MBA class last year, nearly 90 per cent of students were from Calcutta. It's almost like home. The only thing I miss is good food. Our student council recently decided to change the cook and find out someone who can cook the best Indian food.

As told to Prasan Chaudhuri