

news education

Student from Indonesia says studying biotechnology in MDIS is a hands-on experience

Her dream? To end animal testing

ISABELLE LIEW

She has big dreams to improve medicine and wants to find a way to reduce the need for animal testing.

Miss Diana Fransiska, 21, is confident she can accomplish all that with the skills she has learnt from pursuing a Bachelor of Science (Hons) Biotechnology from the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS).

The international student from Indonesia came here four years ago to pursue a degree in the course, which is awarded by Britain's Northumbria University.

She told The New Paper: "I wanted to challenge myself and improve my English."

"I knew I wanted to major in science, but I wasn't sure what to specialise in. MDIS' biotechnology course covers a range of topics, that was why I chose it."

OFTEN CONFUSED

Biotechnology, often confused with biomedical science, not only covers the science behind the human body, but animals, plants and even food as well.

"We even learnt how to brew beer. It has become my hobby now," she said.

What stuck with Miss Fransiska the most was the bioinformatics modules she took as part of her degree.

"In bioinformatics, we learn how to design new drugs, about the proteins that go into them and how to improve them. That

is what I want to do in the future," she said.

Developing new medicine, however, involves testing, and Miss Fransiska, an animal lover, wants to find a way to work around that.

She said: "I want to find an alternative for animal testing, to reduce the need for it."

Miss Fransiska has ideas for a software that runs tests on a computer instead.

The inspiration for the software, she said, came from the bioinformatics modules, where she learnt how to use biological databases for analytical purposes.

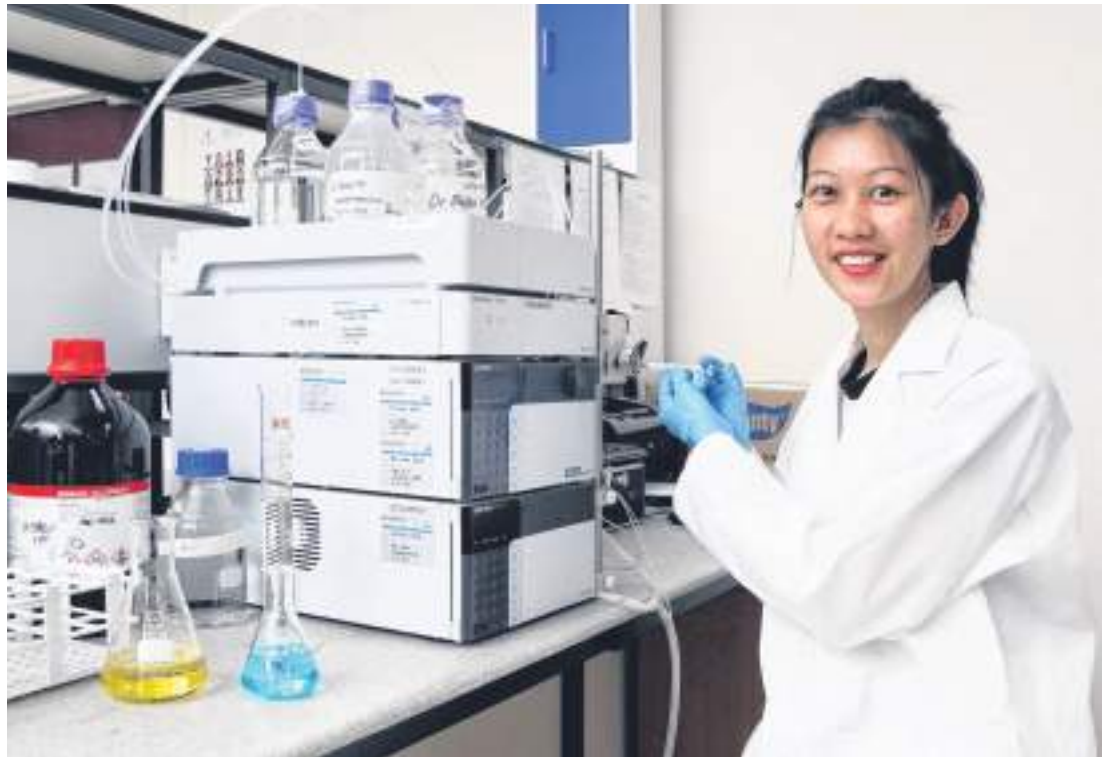
Miss Fransiska said the practical aspects of the course helped her learn better.

"This course is not only theoretical but practical. It is very hands-on. We even have to go out to collect our own lab samples," she said.

In her third year, Miss Fransiska was appointed president of MDIS' science club, Biognosy, where she honed her leadership skills by organising both internal and external science-related events.

MDIS also offers a Bachelor of Science (Hons) Biomedical Science, and it covers modules such as cellular pathology, medical microbiology, analytical methods and applied genetics.

Head of School of Health and Life Sciences, Dr Kelvin Wong, said the two honours degrees give its students a hands-on experience with the school's four well-equipped biological labo-



Miss Diana Fransiska chose MDIS' biotechnology course as it covers a range of topics. TNP PHOTO: PHYLLICIA WANG, USING THE CANON EOS M5

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— Miss Diana Fransiska

ratories. This is useful when students apply for further studies and research or lab technologists positions.

"The laboratory exposure we provide students enriches their educational journey. This is because we have four labs, each with a different focus on a specialised area of biology," he said.

MDIS is the first private education institute here to be certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Assessment Systems 18001, an international occupational health and safety management system standard.

Dr Wong added that the lecturers play a big role in the students' journey in MDIS.

"There is a high contact rate between the lecturers and students. Our staff are dedicated, and we maintain an open-door policy," he said.

"We're approachable so the students are unafraid to ask for the support they need."

"Our lecturers also guide and impart life skills... and these are valuable even outside the classroom setting."

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