



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Closing the gap

Having a master's degree in real estate helps Lawyer Wong Ee Kean relate to her clients better

How does postgraduate study help a lawyer who has been in practice for some time?

Ms Wong Ee Kean, 34, a partner at law firm WongPartnership, graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) in 2007. After working for a few years, she decided to pursue a part-time Master of Science (Real Estate) at NUS from 2013 to 2015.

She tells us what the programme was like and what she enjoyed about it:

What does your work entail?

My areas of practice include real estate investment trusts (REITs), business trusts, initial public offerings, listings as well as secondary offerings.

MASTER OF SCIENCE (REAL ESTATE)

- National University of Singapore
- Full-time: One year
Part-time: One-and-a-half to two years

In the REITs and business trusts space, I work closely with our firm's real estate, banking and tax practices to assist our REITs clients with the setting up, structuring, financing and capital markets funding of REITs.

Why did you choose to further your studies?

As a corporate finance lawyer specialising in IPOs and listings of companies and REITs, I wanted to relate closer to my REITs clients and gain further insights in their decision-making process. Finding out that some of my clients were also graduates from this programme reinforced my decision.

What did you like about the master's programme?

I have since realised that real estate is indeed a "brick and mortar" industry as a lot of learning is gained in the field. In this respect, I found the curriculum to be an optimal blend of academic theory and hands-on project experience.

The school regularly organises site visits and invites industry professionals and esteemed alumni to share their work experience.

We also worked on projects based on live case studies, and in 2014, as part of the annual study trip, we flew to Da Nang in Vietnam where we were introduced to foreign property developers and visited development sites.

Through the programme, I've met coursemates who are property developers, valuers, architects, surveyors, asset managers, fund managers and bankers.

Virtually every stage of the life cycle of a property — from brownfield to real estate funds, asset investment and management — is represented in the class demographic. Today, I continue to act for and advise fellow alumni in IPO and M&A transactions.

Last year, we completed the listing of Sasseur REIT, the largest IPO in Singapore for 2018.

This programme has opened up new doors for me as a lawyer. By giving back to the school's bursary fund, I hope that others would be able to benefit from the opportunities I had.