

Scholarship Stories: Ms Nur Amirah Bte Abdul Latiff

Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance)



Can you tell us how you became involved with Youth Corps Care Corner and what your role was?

I volunteered as a befriender at a social service agency called Youth Corps Care Corner which runs a mathematics programme at student care centres across Singapore. This programme was targeted mainly at Primary 1 and Primary 2 students and designed to allow these students to learn about mathematical concepts using creative and fun mediums. In the session I attended, students were given puzzles and riddles based on mathematics to solve a 'mission'. My role was to befriend the students and help them with these puzzles.

What did you observe during the mathematics programme?

I learned students perceived themselves and their proficiency in the subject seemed to affect their self-confidence in completing tasks. Students who lacked confidence in their ability to solve mathematical puzzles appeared to give up on their tasks more quickly than others who thrived on solving these riddles and puzzles.

How did your training in counselling inform your approach to interacting with the students?

I learned that it was important to help build up students' confidence so that they feel competent and motivated to continue to grow in that subject.

There were two things I did to increase the students' confidence. One was to affirm their efforts and to commend their perseverance, especially when they were learning a new topic that was challenging to grasp. The other was to encourage them not to compare themselves to their peers, especially those who managed to finish the task much earlier. Instead, I highlighted to them the important progress they have made throughout the session.

Through this experience, what are some of your learning points?

In any classroom setting, students would compare their abilities against their peers. Thus, it is important to encourage all students to positively reflect on their own progress, and to highlight achievements in whatever they do.

My second learning point was the importance of acknowledging that all children learn at a different pace and develop at different rates. Assisting a student who may be progressing at a slower pace and emphasizing the importance of peer support, can ensure that the struggling learner can be supported.

The third point involves the opportunity for students to apply the concepts they learnt to everyday life. This can make learning more relatable and fun as students will be able to see the relevance and usefulness of learning new mathematical concepts.

How has this volunteering experience influenced your perspective on education and teaching?

Through these befriender sessions, I found that youths and adults can play their part in helping students see the importance of education. Taking time to help students understand certain concepts would help them understand topics better, thereby increasing their confidence and interest in the subject. This role should not be restricted to schoolteachers, but it should include other people in the student's life (e.g. parents, relatives, tuition teachers, and student befrienders). The more help people can give to students in their attempt to become competent at understanding academic concepts, the higher the chance they have of gaining mastery in the subject matter.

What prompted you to pursue a Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) with NIE?

Around my 4th year as a social worker, I realized that I enjoyed the counselling aspects of my work and wanted to learn more. There were times when working with my clients I found that I needed certain counselling skills such as conceptualizing cases which I did not have then.

NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) appealed to me because it offered a wide variety of courses that could help me build a solid foundation in counselling. The two practicum courses gave me ample opportunity to apply and practice my counselling skills, giving me more confidence to be a better counsellor once I graduate.

How have the knowledge and skills gained from NIE's programme improved your confidence and competency as a counsellor?

Through the wide range of courses – from play therapy with children, to mental health issues, the programme gave me exposure and knowledge to work with different social groups and populations. Course assignments required students to know how to do their own research on the subject matter. This method of independent learning through research and individual assignments allowed me to review my own learning and fill in potential gaps in my knowledge.

Specific courses like 'Theories of Counselling and Psychotherapy' helped me improve my assessment and case conceptualization skills. Through the knowledge gained, I feel more confident in my role as I now have the tools and the necessary skillsets to be a competent counsellor.

What advice would you give to social workers or aspiring counsellors considering the Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) programme?

I highly recommend NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) to aspiring counsellors. The programme is recognized by the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC) and provides a variety of courses taught by knowledgeable and experienced professors and academic staff. This programme gives students an opportunity to explore their own personal interests within the vast counselling arena and develop the necessary skillsets to practice counselling with greater confidence.

Ms Nur Amirah Bte Abdul Latiff is a graduate of NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance). NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) is a course-work oriented professional degree designed to prepare new entrants into the fields of counselling and guidance as highly competent and caring counsellors.



For more information on the Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) programme, please visit [https://www.ntu.edu.sg/education/graduate-programme/master-of-arts-\(counselling-and-guidance\)](https://www.ntu.edu.sg/education/graduate-programme/master-of-arts-(counselling-and-guidance)).