

My kids want to study arts

An arts education can equip students with creativity and innovative thinking – two tools which are essential to navigate an increasingly complex world

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Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

Q Both my daughters, despite being academically strong, want to go on to study arts in university. One of them is interested in performing arts and the other in visual art. Arts education overseas is expensive so I can't afford to send them there. What are the avenues locally? I am still trying to get them to consider other options, as I am worried about their job prospects.

A Like your daughters, an increasing number of young Singaporeans are keen on pursuing degrees in arts.

You are right – an arts education in some of the top universities overseas comes with a hefty tuition fee tag.

But the good news is, in response to the growing interest in the arts here, the Government has in recent years opened up more pathways for young people who want to take up fine art degrees.

The Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Nafa) and Lasalle College of the Arts, which offer diploma programmes in the arts, also offer degree programmes in partnership with overseas universities.

Both have degree programmes in various Asian and Western art forms, in partnership with reputed overseas universities, including Goldsmiths and University of the Arts London.

They offer a wide range of degree programmes in different forms of art, design, media and performance. There are also degrees in art management, art therapy and art education in instrumental and vocal teaching.

The good news is, while these private institutions' degrees are offered in partnership with overseas universities, Singaporeans and permanent residents pay subsidised fees, comparable with those at autonomous universities here.

Both have seen healthy demand for their degree programmes in recent years, with Nafa reporting an intake of 130 Singaporeans and permanent residents across its degree programmes last year, while Lasalle had about 300.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that another new university of the arts will be formed by an "alliance" between Nafa and Lasalle.

The new university, supported by MOE and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, is expected to be set up within the next three to four years, and more details will be announced in time.

Tapping the strengths of Lasalle and Nafa, the new university will offer cross-institution modules and projects, joint academic collaborations and sharing of learning resources.

Parents often worry about the job prospects of their children going into the arts and they have reason to. Graduate employment surveys show arts graduates often lag behind in job offers and salaries.

Lasalle's graduate employment survey for 2019 showed that about 84.7 per cent of its degree graduates found jobs within six months of completing their degrees, but only 40.9 per cent found full-time permanent employment.



The median gross monthly salary for full-time permanently employed graduates was \$2,550, but for graduates in performing arts, the figure was higher – at \$3,200. Performing arts graduates also had a higher employment rate of 90 per cent.

The interdisciplinary nature of arts degree programmes enables graduates to work in a variety of fields and careers. Besides being practising artists, arts graduates can go on to become art historians, arts administrators, museum or gallery curators, journalists, art teachers, conservationists and designers.

Jobs and salaries aside, an arts degree education prepares students well for the 21st-century environment and workplace.

One of the skills most valued by employers these days is creativity

and innovative thinking, something which arts schools are good at fostering in their students.

According to several studies, including a major IBM Global Study, chief executives from various countries and industries believe that creativity – more than rigour, management, discipline, integrity or even vision – is required to successfully navigate an increasingly complex world.

Arts students develop a range of practical and creative skills, including the ability to develop individual ideas and collaborate with others; strong observational, research and analytical skills; the ability to communicate ideas, visually, orally and in writing; and creative problem-solving.

They also develop strong entrepreneurial skills as most arts schools encourage them to build

their arts practice into a business.

They are taught how to generate opportunities through networking; collaborate with other creatives; budget management skills; and market, price and sell their products.

I can understand your concern over your children's job prospects, but take heart in the fact that arts graduates find a lot of satisfaction in being able to practise their craft.

Artists are among the happiest professionals, according to several international surveys.

Those who regularly engage in their artistic pursuits report higher levels of overall satisfaction, confidence about the future as well as higher positive self-image and social outlook.

sandra@sph.com.sg

* For more stories on how to help your child succeed in school and life, go to the Smart Parenting microsite at str.sg/smartparenting



A visual art course (above) at Lasalle College of the Arts and a dance performance (below) by Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts students prior to the pandemic. Both institutions offer degree programmes in different forms of art, design, media and performance. PHOTOS: LASALLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, ST FILE