



text / melody tan
photo of daryl / ooi boon keong
photo of james / irene leong

From left: Daryl Lee, James Lee
and Mr Ben Ferris

head to the land of Oz



Australia has long been a favourite education destination for Singaporean students who want to pursue tertiary education in business, engineering, medicine and the arts.

But the continent's rich creative culture is fast gaining recognition worldwide.

Mr Ben Ferris, director of the Sydney Film School (SFS), noted that Australia's film industry has come a long way.

"Not many people know that the first feature film ever made, *The True Story of the Kelly Gang*, was an Australian one," he noted about the industry's humble beginnings. The film was made in 1906.

He added that a number of Australian filmmakers have since moved on to work in Hollywood — a result of its strong historic ties with the American film studios.

SFS is one of a number of institutions that aim to groom creative talents for the local and global industries.

Students can choose from a range of diploma, certificate and short courses that will offer them a strong grounding in filmmaking and eastern and western film cultures.

SFS diploma graduates can apply to the University

of Sydney's Bachelor of Visual Arts and gain a year of credit upon entry.

Under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), there are several educational pathways open to students seeking higher qualifications, whether their strengths lie in academic theory or practical application.

The AQF is a unified system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training (TAFEs and private providers) and the higher education sector (mainly universities).

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is also emphasised, allowing students to utilise diplomas, certificates, portfolios or even working experience to full advantage when gaining admittance to institutions for higher learning.

Mr Ferris added: "Our Cert IV and Diploma of Screen are nationally accredited programmes based on the training packages devised by CREATE, a national advisory body for the art industries."

"Increasingly, the film industry is a global one, and a lot of the skills that you learn at the SFS can be applied to the Singapore film industry," he added.

James Lee, a Sydney-based Singaporean photographer, is one student who gave Australia's unique creative atmosphere the thumbs up.

The 24-year-old photographer, who manages the photography portal Jazer Studio, obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Visual Communication at the KvB Institute of Technology in Sydney.

Said James: "Sydney has a multicultural environment. It just gives you the extra exposure that's so much more valuable. I do a lot of location photography, and Sydney offers such a huge backdrop — gorgeous world-class beaches are just 10 minutes away from the city."

While on a shoot for a personal project, James stumbled upon volunteers working to restore the John Oxley, a 70-year-old steam ship. His photo essay on them was commissioned and exhibited by the Sydney Heritage Board.

The commission not only became a milestone in his career, it also inspired him to produce a book on the long-term restoration effort.

Opportunities are also present for Daryl Lee, 24, who is in his final year of a bachelor's degree in mass communication (public relations and journalism) at Murdoch University.

"It's a change of pace from the local education environment," he said of his decision to study in Perth. "I think the way they approach anything in Australia is a bit different. They emphasise more on the process than on the end result."

One of Daryl's modules, specialty journalism, allowed him to indulge in his love for sneakers and street fashion.

"I surfed the net and shopped for my research," he laughed. "My first article was on how the '80s are back — sweaters, and stuff like that."

Given this creative freedom, Daryl is enjoying every moment of his education abroad. He said: "I would stay for another two years if I could!"

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