



ADMISSIONS BLOG

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: YAN XIAOXI

Yan Xiaoxi, Entering Class of 2017, PhD in Integrated Biostatistics and Bioinformatics (IBB)



Tell us about your path to Duke-NUS.

Hello, I am Xiaoxi from Duke-NUS PhD Entering Class of 2017, under the PhD in Integrated Biostatistics and Bioinformatics (Biostatistics concentration) programme. Prior to joining Duke-NUS, I spend 6 years in the UK studying and working. I completed an undergraduate degree in Biomedical Sciences and Medical Physics at University College London (UCL), during which I had the opportunity to do a biostatistics internship at UCL Institute of Child Health. The internship allowed me to work on epidemiological data where I experienced first-hand the importance and wide application of statistics in the health and biomedical field. That was when my interest in statistics deepened and I went on to do a Master's degree in Statistics at UCL.

After graduating, I worked as a statistician in the R&D unit of a London-based health tech start-up company, where I delved into the digital health industry, initiated and led a large-scale research project. I then decided to apply to a PhD programme in order to improve and gain more skills in statistics research.

How did you come to know about the Duke-NUS PhD IBB programme and what made you apply?

I first came to know about the Duke-NUS PhD in Integrated Biostatistics and Bioinformatics (IBB) through the Duke-NUS e-newsletters that I receive. I was drawn to the fact that the Centre of Quantitative Medicine (where the IBB Biostatistics programme is based) has a very strong focus on methodologies, which fit with my interest. I also found out about the programme just as I completed my work research project and started thinking about pursuing a PhD. Joining the pioneer batch of the new programme would also allow me more freedom in the way I can shape my research. The IBB programme also includes an internship which is quite unique, and will be very useful for a biostatistician to gain the right work experience during the PhD. -

Would you tell us about how your day/week is like in the IBB programme?

I am only four months into my PhD now. For the first semester, I have two core modules, one on concepts in biostatistics and another on methods in population health. This adds up to about 8 hours of classes every week. Apart from reading the study material for the core modules, I also spend my time reading up on PhD research topics that I may want to pursue and meet with potential supervisors to discuss and further develop my PhD research direction.

What topics are you interested in?

I am still undecided, but would like to work on solving methodological problems in clinical trials, adaptive designs and integrating big data technology into these designs. Eventually, I would like to be able to apply my statistical skills and new methodologies to a variety of clinical problems. I hope to also be able to bridge the gap between theory and practice of new methodologies.

Do you have any advice to students thinking about pursuing the Duke-NUS PhD (IBB)?


There are 2 different tracks in the PhD IBB – Biostatistics and Bioinformatics, and you have to be sure which track you want to be in before applying, because the research focus is very different. For those who do not have any background in statistics or bioinformatics, it's good to get some research experience in the relevant areas first. Before you apply, do also find out more about the strengths and research interests of the two centres for biostatistics and bioinformatics at Duke-NUS.

Want to know more? Contact Xiaoxi at xiaoxi.yan@u.duke.nus.edu

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