

Developing Young Futurists

Centre for Strategic Futures
Internship Programme 2020





Futures Thinking in the DNA of Singapore's Nation-Building

There are practical men who maintain that such speculations are a waste of time and they have no bearing at all on solutions to immediate day-to-day problems. This may have been so in earlier periods of history when changes were few and minute and were spread over decades and centuries.

But we are not only living in a world of accelerating changes but also of changes which are global in scope and which permeate almost all aspects of human activity...[and since] change is about the future then only a future-oriented society can cope with the problems of the 21st century.

S Rajaratnam, 1979



The world that we live in does not unfold in a predictable and linear fashion. While we cannot predict how the future may play out, foresight allows us to exchange points of view across backgrounds and disciplines, challenge one another's assumptions and generate insights that can help us all make better decisions.

– Peter Ho, former Head of Civil Service and Senior Advisor to CSF

What is Futures Work and Why is it important?

Our world is becoming increasingly complex and uncertain. Good policymaking requires, more than ever, anticipation of future trends and developments. Futures work broadens minds to the changing operating environment.

Who are futurists?

Futurists, also known as foresight practitioners, are strategists on the forefront of developments in technology, society, economy, among other domains. Futurists identify and contextualise emerging strategic issues to support high-quality decision-making.

What is CSF?

The Centre for Strategic Futures (CSF) is a think tank and foresight unit in the Strategy Group of the Prime Minister's Office.

CSF's mission is to position the Singapore government to navigate emerging strategic challenges and harness potential opportunities by building capacities, mindsets, expertise and tools for strategic anticipation and risk management; developing insights into future trends, discontinuities and strategic surprises; and communicating insights to decision-makers for informed policy planning.



Internship Programme (12 Weeks, Full-time)

CSF is on the look-out for high-calibre and skilled interns to join our research efforts.

Eligibility Requirements

- Singapore Citizen enrolled between Years 2 and 4 in a university undergraduate programme, i.e. the internship programme must be completed full-time over a period of 12 continuous weeks, between Year 2 Semester I and your graduation date. We do not accept applicants at the pre-graduate and post-graduate levels.
- We look out for applicants who demonstrate both critical and rigorous thinking and relational ability. Futures work requires both the head and heart. Our interns analyse complex issues and interact with thought leaders, experts, and policy-makers.
- We value applicants with backgrounds in emerging disciplines (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Biotech) and traditional disciplines, like the arts, sciences and social sciences (e.g. History, Sociology etc.) Applicants with previous work experience in public agencies are also encouraged to apply.
- We expect our interns to possess excellent writing, presentation and administrative skills.

Internship Period	Application Opens	Closing Date
Jan – Apr	Oct 2019	25 Oct 2019
May – Aug	Feb 2020	14 Feb 2020
Sep – Dec	May 2020	15 May 2020

How to Apply

Please submit your CV and latest transcript

- Addressed to Inthira_MAILVAGANAM@pmo.gov.sg and Gurubaran_SUBRAMANIAM@pmo.gov.sg
- With the subject header “CSF Internship 2020 (Name) (University) (Degree Course)”
- In the main text of your email, please indicate preferred start and end dates for the internship (within only one of the three internship periods listed in the box above, over a period of 12 continuous weeks, full-time) and your expected graduation date
- The selection process includes a 48-hour take-home test, and if shortlisted, a face-to-face interview with members of the CSF team. Successful applicants will be notified directly by our Human Capital team in the Strategy Group. Please note that upon selection, it may take up to 12 weeks for confirmation on admission into the programme.

Why Apply?

Cutting-edge Foresight and Policy Research

You will be part of an exciting team

For the duration of your internship, you will be designated as a Research Assistant in the CSF team. You will participate actively in research projects assigned to you, and also get to propose your own research projects relevant to futures work.

You will also have opportunities to work with other teams in Strategy Group, namely the Economy & Sustainability, Socio-Economic Policy, Technology, Urban Liveability & Sustainability, and Geo-Strategic Policy teams, as well as the National Population & Talent Division (NPTD) and National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS).

At the end of the internship, you will have the opportunity to present your work to our senior management.

You will gain exposure to strategic decision-making at the centre of government

You will have opportunities to work closely with strategists and policy officers to scope and develop your research. Beyond the team, you will have opportunities to interview senior public service officers, private sector leaders, civil society, academics and more.

Projects that previous interns have worked on:

- AI and Public Health Surveillance
- AI Ethics and Governance
- Token Economies
- Climate Change
- Social Credit System
- Portable Biologics
- The Rise of Post-fact Politics



Meet Our Team Leaders



Liana Tang
Deputy Head,
CSF

Policy (Libraries &
Archives) and
Strategic Planning,
MCI

Innovation & Service
Development, NLB

China Office,
Infocomm
Development
Agency

Futures and Strategy
Division, Ministry of
Trade and Industry

Lee Chor Pharn
Principal
Strategist, CSF



Meet our Interns



Chiu Chai Hao

Natural Sciences (Biological),
Cambridge University

MOE Teaching Scholarship

Why did you apply for the internship programme at CSF?

Having worked a little in the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Futures Group, I really enjoyed and was really interested in futures and foresight work, and decided to have a glimpse of how the similar process works at a higher, whole-of-government level where perspectives beyond the economic lenses are considered. This also came at a time where significant biotech breakthroughs and developments are happening - which can impact not just the economy, but also other areas of policy too.

What were your first few days at work like?

I think what stood out the most for me in the first few days was how flat the structure is in PMO Strategy Group, and how everyone is friendly and approachable. This is probably the only place in the civil service where Directors and Deputy Secretaries actually sit in cubicles even though they have a room allocated to themselves! 😊

What was your greatest challenge?

Possibly working and writing about food/farming transformation, because the pressure to disprove the case against agriculture in Singapore and making a case for its importance got quite overwhelming. It has always been difficult to argue a case for it. Similarly, as the only scientist among the interns, it was challenging and interesting to bring a more scientifically-informed view of genetic engineering and genetic modification issues.

It sounds like you took on the responsibility to bring the scientific perspective to the table! Would you like to share what you personally took away from the experience?

Mmm... Well I was pushed to think at a whole-of-government level in terms of effecting change and bringing perspectives to people. While the analysis of an issue is pretty much a science - it is rigorous, fact-based, and methodical, the packaging to convince policy makers to regard the most important insights is an art. I think it is something I have learnt to be more comfortable with.

What advice do you have for future interns?

Have an open mind, and revel in uncertainty! But also have tools to critique news and signals, so you can sieve out the real signals from the noise. It is not unusual when something is overly hyped, but don't be afraid of using your technical knowledge, or asking people with the technical knowledge - to ascertain how impactful a particular development is.

Why did you apply for the internship programme at CSF?

I applied for this to experience something that was more centre-of government. I've only ever done government internships, and previously I was in a ministry that specialised in a very deep silo, so I wanted something different. My interests are also very broad and I wanted the exposure to different fields.

You study Global Studies at NUS, which spans a pretty broad curriculum. Could you share some applications from this discipline to your work at CSF?

Oddly, the application doesn't come directly from the discipline but rather as a product of how the course is structured. It's a very flexible course and we are allowed to curate our own curriculum. And although it is extremely broad and all-encompassing, I've actually managed to religiously avoid a few fields, such as economics, psychology, and history. When I got to CSF, I got tasked on a climate change project, and I was made to delve into these domains. So actually, my already-broad education is being further broadened at CSF!

What projects have you done so far?

I've been here for a little over a month, and so far I've done a science piece on fertility issues, and of course I'm currently working on my climate change piece. The whole point of these research pieces is to find good and rare angles, so often we have to consider the second or third order impacts.

The work of "finding rare angles" must have been quite new to you; how do you personally interpret it now that you've been doing this for a month?

Well, the point of the research is to influence policymakers to think differently about the future. Policymakers often have many day-to-day concerns and the future does not occur to them often, if at all. So each research piece needs to convey why this particular concern should be more pressing than other concerns. We need to think out of the box as to how to frame it, and how to communicate it.

What are the must-haves on this internship?

Be extremely open minded and have a good learning attitude 😊



Jasmine Tan

Global Studies,
National University of Singapore

University Scholars Programme



Apply to our Internship Programme today!

“The future is a realm of freedom, of power and of will. It is at once a land to be explored and a land to be built on.”
- Bertrand de Jouvenel

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