

## For the love of chemistry

Ministry of Education scholar Klement Foo hopes to spark passion in students for his favourite subject

By Lynn Seah

TEACHER-TO-BE Klement Foo's choice of a career can be said to boil down to chemistry.

While no sparks flew the day he stepped in to a chemistry laboratory, he did fall in love that day – with a subject that was to have a major influence in his life.

“One reason I decided to teach is my love of chemistry. I had wanted to read chemistry in university since I was 14, when I was first introduced to the chemistry lab,” says the former student of Chinese High School and National Junior College.

The choice of **Imperial College in London** – where the 21-year-old is now studying on an Education Merit Scholarship – was also dictated, in a sense, by the subject.

“**Imperial College** is world renowned for research in chemistry. And I had some advice from seniors who were doing chemistry at Imperial and University College London.”

“It seems that **Imperial** offers a more intensive course, with a large part of the education being in the research labs.”

Now a final-year student in the university's three-year honours degree programme, he is in the laboratory four days a week from 11am to 5pm, except for a lunch break. This is in addition to two hours of lectures each morning.

“Hectic” is an apt description of his life in the university.

In addition to chemistry lessons, he manages to squeeze time out for a non-credit course in Spanish as well as extra-curricular activities.

He is an active member of the **Imperial College Singapore Society**. He was in the photographer society in his first year, and even tries judo for a while.

He helped organize the Singapore Society's annual charity event for the last two years.

He represented the society in floorball at inter-varsity competitions for Singapore societies in the United Kingdom, winning a silver medal in a 2006 competition and a gold in another event last year.

In spite of spending a fair amount of time in activities outside classes, he is doing well in his studies. Last year, he won a 100 GBP (S\$279) prize from his college for excellence in organic chemistry.

He will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in chemistry this year and will be back in Singapore in July.

He says: "I used to think that if all my students got As, I would be a good teacher..."

"My perspective has changed in that I will now aspire to be a teacher who will look beyond examination grades with the aim of inspiring their love of chemistry."

"I hope that, ultimately, they will gain something apart from the final certificate."

[Source: Private Sector Scholarship in The Straits Times, 7 March 2008]