

Scholars' experiences about CY1500 Introductory Research Methodology

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I had the honor to participate in the 7th international physicists' tournament that took place at the University of Warsaw, Poland, from 6th – 11th April 2015. For this tournament, teams of up to 6 students are given a list of 17 problems some time before the actual date of the tournament. These problems require a combination of experimental and theoretical approaches for their solution. The problems often have no exact solution available and are not described directly in available literature. Eleven countries participated this year including Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Iran, Denmark, Poland, China, France, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine. Our team consisted of 6 students and 2 trainers from Physics and Applied Physics (PAP). I was the only year one student participating in the tournament.

During the tournament, one team acts as a reporter, who presents their solution to the audience, another team acts as an opponent, who challenges the reporter's solution and another team acts as a reviewer, who attempts to evaluate both the reporter and the opponent's views. I had the chance to present in two rounds, one round as a reviewer and another as the reporter. It was a great experience presenting to a panel of around 10 jury members that consist of PhD students and Professors from the various participating universities.

The Singapore team eventually came in 5th place for the competition.

The role of CY1500 in the tournament:

Research Skills: Out of the 17 problems, 2 were assigned to me. As mentioned before, each problem has no available definite answer. As such, I viewed each problem as a mini research project. CY1500 equips students with research skills like how to search for scientific literature, how to evaluate the literature and sieving out relevant information from scientific papers. As a year 1 student, these skills were new to me. I would not have been able to find the relevant scientific papers if not for the programme.

Presentation Skills: CY1500 also teaches us how to make good scientific presentations. Presenting to an international audience, including Professors and PhD. Students was no mean feat. CY1500 prepared me for such presentations by equipping me with the relevant skills. Our mentors also gave us important pointers during the course. The practice in CY1500 gave me a feel of how presenting a scientific topic to relevant audience was like, and I was able to keep calm during my presentation in the tournament. I was also able to think quickly on the spot when asked difficult questions from the audience.



Figure 1: The Singapore Team, with our guide for the week from Poland.



Figure 2: How each round of the tournament looks like: Over here, my team member (in red sweater) takes the role as a reviewer.



Figure 3: Working with my team members preparing the slides for the presentation



Figure 4: Photo with the other teams