

THE competitive nature of today's globalised world has left many secondary school students wondering if they will be able to make their mark in life.

For those keen on making early preparations, UCSI University's A-level Academy provides the ideal learning platform designed to provide students with a practical curriculum that combines theory and hands-on learning.

Boasting an excellent track record of placing students at the universities of their choice, the centre has won international recognition and its students are frequently in the lime-light.

High achievers Ling Chen Jiet, Lee Chia Choon and Yong Sue Wen are the latest ones to make history by clinching Top 10 Achiever Awards in the GCE A-level June 2012 examinations.

The achievement was something to shout about as the trio had to outscore precocious students from around the world, proving that Malaysian students are no pushovers.

Bagging awards in Biology and Chemistry, Ling credits the academy's lecturers for their dedication, thorough preparation and commitment to equip students with the right mentality to face the exam in confidence.

In-depth discussions on past exam papers and extra classes were held regularly and Ling opines that these helped students overcome any difficulties along the way.

"Such exercises enhanced my familiarity with the exam terminology as pertinent subject areas are covered," he says.

"I found the past exam papers, revision lectures and lecture notes most useful."

The positive feedback is shared by Yong who has fond memories of her experience as a peer tutor.

"Being a peer tutor enabled me to increase my own understanding of the subject that I was tutoring and to review what I learned at the same time," she enthuses.

Like his coursemates, Lee is appreciative of his lecturers' efforts to take the pressure off students as the exams drew close.

Not just a prep school



The A-level Academy harnesses the strengths of bright students like Chen Jiet to help them go further.

Lee uses Ding Shun May – a Biology lecturer who incorporates forensic cases into her classes – as an example of gifted academics who manage to keep learning fun and interesting.

"Students are able to investigate and analyse cases based on evidence like DNA and fingerprints found at crime scenes and this kept us hooked on lessons," he opines.

Commenting further, academy head Dr Nalina Thurairajah ventures that it is important to relate lessons to daily life to ensure that students fully understand the subject.

Impromptu questions and pop quizzes from time to time, she adds, encourage students to develop critical thinking and resourcefulness.

Looking back, Lee recalls that quizzes were held regularly, often after a weekend or a holiday. "Like most students, I really dreaded the steady stream of quizzes," admits Lee. "But in hindsight, I would not be able to muster the determination to stay on track with lectures and to stop procrastinating in my studies."

"The application of biological principles in daily life was also emphasised in the course and I found this to be extremely relevant to the pharmaceutical industry that I am genuinely interested in," he said.

Apart from exam preparations, Lee acknowledges that the A-level programme had fortified his foundation in scientific knowledge, particularly in Chemistry.

"As I had already grasped the basic prin-

ciples in functional group chemistry, it was undoubtedly an easier transition during my first few weeks of tertiary life," he says.

Like Lee, Yong and Ling are now reading Pharmacy in Britain.

"My UCSI experience has certainly given me an added advantage as the modules in my current course closely resemble what I learned," says Yong, who is currently studying at the University of Nottingham in Britain.

"These include laboratory skills, Chemistry and Biology terminologies, as well as calculations, among others."

Ling also describes the Academy's A-level programme with much enthusiasm: "A-levels set the groundwork for my current studies and exposed me to e-learning in the form of a Learning Management System (LMS)."

"Generally, it's a relatively relaxed preparatory course to higher education with a well-organised curriculum that allows students some room to enjoy extra-curricular activities," he said.

The academy strives to produce graduates like these high achievers who possess more than book knowledge.

While excellent test scores are undeniably important, it is not the sole criteria that employers look for in today's graduates and these prodigious individuals know this by instinct.

■ To find out more about the centre's offerings, visit them any day from Monday to Saturday (9am-6pm) for course counselling. You may also contact the counsellors at 03-9101 8880 or visit www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry. You can also visit the centre's website at <http://lms.ucsi.edu.my/pre-u>