

Dream of sports and studies fulfilled

It's tough but these athletes have aced the paper chase

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SERDANG: It took 10 years, but national diver Cheong Jun Hoong, 29, is now a Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) graduate.

The Olympic silver medallist beamed as she walked out with her Bachelor of Communications scroll in her hand.

It felt like it took forever but finally I have completed my course, she said.

"Being a student athlete is different, it is difficult to balance our training," she told reporters yesterday after the ceremony.

The Perakian became Malaysia's first diving world champion after winning the 10m platform event at the 2017 World Aquatics Championships.

Though she had to drop some subjects along the way, she said the challenge was worth it and credited her lecturers for their relentless support.

"I pursued communications because I wanted to try something different.

"Right now, I want to focus on

recovering from my injuries and on my diving.

"I want to push myself to return to high intensity training and competing in national competitions again," said Cheong, who had both her knees operated on last year.

The convocation ceremony yesterday saw a total of 6,015 graduates receiving their respective degrees from UPM.

Meanwhile, Olympic shooter Jonathan Wong said he almost quit his course in Aerospace Engineering within the first year.

But the 27-year-old persisted with the help of his lecturers and graduated within six years.

"I'm proud, happy and relieved. Time management was my biggest challenge," he said.

Wong won gold at the 2017 South-East Asian Games in the 10m air pistol event and silver in the 50m pistol event.

Battling tears, shot put athlete Bibi Nuraisyah Ishak, 24, dedicated her degree to her mum.

"We were very poor and she worked as a tailor after my father's passing.

"She has struggled so much to



Proud achievement: Cheong (centre) with Wong (left) and Bibi looking at each other's degrees at the 43rd University Putra Malaysia Convocation ceremony in Serdang.

bring up my sister and me, so now, I want to provide for her," she said, adding that her focus now was on building her career as a teacher.

Bibi graduated with a Bachelor of Physical Education.

Meanwhile, UPM chancellor Selangor Ruler Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah presented AirAsia group chief executive officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes an honorary doctorate in management.

"I would like to congratulate Tan

Sri for his contribution and service to the community and country," said Sultan Sharafuddin.

Thanking UPM, Fernandes called it the most historic moment of his life.

"It's the first time I am being awarded an honorary doctorate in management," he said.

Fernandes shared with the graduates four key tips for success in life based on his experiences.

"Follow your heart, university is

not all about getting a first-class degree, opportunities do not come very often and never be afraid of failure.

"It is my hope that the graduating class of 2019 will take the initiative to improve their knowledge, skills and competencies not only in their careers, but also in managing their financial resources so that they will not be caught up in debt that could affect their career and future," he said.