

Vaishnavi, Regional Programme Innovation Advisor for East Africa at the WFP Regional Bureau in Kenya, graduated 2020 International Development



Vaishnavi Pavithran has graduated Summa Cum Laude in International Development. She is Regional Programme Innovation Advisor for East Africa at the WFP Regional Bureau in Kenya.

What skills and/or strategy helped you to succeed at PSIA?

As this was something really important to me, I genuinely focused on every single assignment. It isn't only the maximum weightage exams that matter but also the smaller assignments that can help you up the score. Picking courses I really liked definitely was key as I really enjoyed what I was learning - both from the class content but equally from the professor and my fellow students. This naturally meant I enjoyed pushing my boundaries and exploring different perspectives to write assignments. Last, I would caution one to not be too hard on yourself. I remember feeling extremely upset when I scored poorly in one course as I thought it would wipe my chances of graduating even cum laude and since I still managed to graduate summa cum laude, I would hope everyone takes the time to enjoy everything SciencesPo has to offer and not give up if you score poorly in one or two courses

What part of your PSIA experience do you think will be of greatest help in your career?

Undoubtedly, the practical courses. The reason I chose SciencesPo over some other institutions in this range of ranking was because SciencesPo lets us really tailor the courses to our needs and pick the professors that interest us the most. Early on, I knew more than academics, I liked hands on learning and studying courses that had a real-life immersion/ scenario approach. I think working in that kind of setting gave me a good feel of what I ended up choosing career wise - humanitarian work. The inter disciplinary nature of SciencesPo's courses really helped me have transferable skills and a good grasp on a range of subjects. While this may not be what a PhD aspiring in-depth student may want, it worked out really great for me - especially coming from a business and finance or non- humanities background.