



PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

NO BIMBO: A former beauty queen and model, Ms Tan was one of the top 20 post-graduate Practical Law Course students last year.

The brainy beauty queen who excels in law too

BY ELENA CHONG

FORMER university tutor Stella Tan Wei Ling has both beauty and brains. She has been a beauty contest winner and model, and has a masters in cell and molecular biology.

Last Tuesday, the 29-year-old, who took up a law course, learnt she was among the top 20 candidates in last year's post-graduate Practical Law Course. To practise, she will have to do six months' pupillage in a law firm before she can be called to the Bar.

It was "very, very tough", she said of the three-year course which she did because she believes in being multi-disciplinary, but "I totally enjoyed my time".

"There's a lot of stigma attached to beauty queens and models," said Ms Tan, who began modelling in 1994 when she was a first-year student at the National University of Singapore and stopped in 2000. "People usually think that beauty queens and models are stupid, bimbos.

"It's not true. But it's a very difficult image to shake off. That's why I had to work extra hard to prove them wrong," said the 1.8m tall beauty queen who was crowned Miss Internet in 1998, and represented Singapore in the Miss University Pageant in Seoul, Korea in 2000.

After her masters in 2001, she was offered a job as a television news presenter, but turned it down.

She had more difficulty choosing between pursuing a doctorate at Stanford University on a scholarship, and doing law here. She picked the latter.

Her course was sponsored by A*Star (Agency for Science, Technology and Research).

She is among a select five people who did a second degree in law under the approved graduate programme, which aims to have lawyers with training in other disciplines.

Another was accountancy graduate Quok Hwee Ling, 25, now a Justices' Law Clerk, who obtained a first-class degree in law.

She said she became interested in the subject when she was taught company and contract law during her

second-year at Nanyang Technological University.

She was very tempted to switch course at the end of that year but decided she would finish the last year of her accountancy course, which she graduated from with first-class honours.

She was fourth in the law class and also won the F A Chua Prize for best student in criminal procedure.

The award for the course's best student went to Mr Yap Zhi Liang, 26, now a pupil at Wong Partnership.

Out of 192 students who sat for the examinations, 184 or 95.8 per cent were successful. Eight students received conditional passes.