Top of the class at ITE, S’pore Poly and NUS

MR MOHAMED Akbar Khan Akhtar, 27, stands out among successful alumni of the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

He was not only among the top students in his class there, but he also went on to the polytechnic and then the university. He capped his education earlier this month with a first-class honours degree in electrical engineering from the National University of Singapore.

His primary and secondary school years had been unremarkable, he said, but his turnaround came when he took up electronics at ITE College West (Balestier Campus).

With his teachers there consistently encouraging him, he began to do well. They also encouraged him to take up fencing and pushed him to represent Singapore in competitions.

He said: “For the first time in my life, I was scoring As. I realised that I could do it if I set my mind to it. So I started studying hard and applying myself. After I started doing well, I didn’t want to give up since I had already put in so much effort to get to where I was.”

Mr Akbar was a guest at the ITE graduation ceremony yesterday because he was mentioned in a speech by ITE chief executive Bruce Poh.

The third of four children of a delivery man and a housewife was among the ITE’s top students back in 2002.

He went on to study electronics, computer and communication engineering at Singapore Polytechnic, where he continued his run of good grades and emerged as one of the top graduates.

Mr Akbar said his first-class honours degree came from sheer hard work. He put in at least four hours of revision daily and would turn down friends who asked him out as he wanted to spend his spare time studying.

Now, with a good degree under his belt, he hopes to become a research engineer in a government agency; in five years, he wants to go back to ITE – as a teacher.

He said: “My teachers taught me to believe in myself and I hope that I can do the same for other ITE students.”

AMELIA TAN