

ADVERTORIAL

Grooming accountancy talent

SIM Global Education develops accounting professionals for Singapore's financial centre ambitions

ACCOUNTING is the lifeblood of business, and SIM Global Education (SIM GE) plays a critical role in training graduates for the industry. The Asia-Pacific is the fastest growing region for international accounting networks, and Singapore hopes to ride on the trend to become the leading global accountancy hub in the region by 2020.

The government-convened Committee to Develop the Accountancy Sector (CDAS) report in 2010, among other things, is aiming to broaden the diversity and academic background of Singapore's accounting talent base.

Through the years, SIM GE has developed a strong reputation for its transnational education programmes such as those for students wishing to pursue a career in accountancy and audit.

Examples of such programmes are the University of London's Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance, RMIT University's Bachelor of Business (Accountancy), the University of Sheffield's Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Financial Management, and Diploma in Accounting offered by SIM GE.

Former students have gone on to the Big Four accounting firms and well-known international banks.

One success story is KPMG senior consultant Tan Chin Ni, who took an unusual route to his current role.

He chose to study for SIM-University of London's Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance programme because he was drawn by how the syllabus was designed by the world-renowned London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

"The banking and finance programme is a rigorous and well-rounded programme and equips its students with a strong understanding and practical view on the invisible 'mechanisms' behind any economy, as it was mandatory for students to study topics across multi-disciplines," he says.

Mr Tan graduated in 2010 with first class honours and was choosing between two jobs: one with a global bank as a portfolio accountant, and another with Grant Thornton LLP as an auditor. He chose the latter and pursued the Association of Chartered Certified Accountant (ACCA) qualification concurrently while working full-time. "I knew it was going to be tough, but I was looking for more exposure to different industries and wanted to acquire more accounting knowledge," he says.

After two years with Grant Thornton and having obtained the ACCA qualification, he moved to work for real estate firm Mapletree as a risk analyst, where he built financial models to track risks. He also performed investment reviews on projects in China and Hong Kong worth over S\$100 million.

Subsequently, Mr Tan applied for and gained admission into the LSE to pursue a Master of Science degree in Law and Accounting.

After completing his full-time studies in London, he decided to go into consultancy work. Now at KPMG Advisory, Mr Tan helps clients identify risks that could derail the organisation from achieving their strategic objectives. He then helps implement frameworks, processes and controls to ensure risks are managed within the organisation's appetite.

Looking back at the path to his job, Mr Tan says he is grateful that there are transnational education programmes like those offered by SIM GE. "I don't think I'd have gotten to where I am today without the degree as a stepping stone," he says.

Holistic education experience

SIM GE's programmes are also sought after by international students.

Jovita Kristina, a senior consultant at Ernst & Young who graduated in 2010 with a first class honours degree from the University of London's Accounting and Finance course.

Ms Kristina, who is Indonesian, was drawn by the holistic education experience offered by SIM GE.

"As a foreign student, I was looking for an institution which offers a self-sufficient campus, a recognised degree, diverse co-curricular activities as well as qualified and helpful lecturers," she says.

In her current role as a transfer pricing senior consultant, Ms Kristina helps her manager understand and analyse the business operations of clients, who come from various industries.

Ms Kristina adds that her time at SIM GE has prepared her well for a career in accounting and audit.

"I was trained to think critically and to be more logical and analytical, which is very important for



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Tan Chin Ni, a senior consultant at KPMG Advisory, helps clients identify the risks that could derail them from achieving their strategic objectives.



Jovita Kristina, a transfer pricing senior consultant at Ernst & Young, helps clients review and plan their transfer pricing policies.



Andy Wong, an internal audit senior associate at Ernst & Young, advises clients on their processes such as revenue, inventory management and human resources.

"Being keen learners and possessing key qualities such as passion, perseverance and having a proactive mindset, SIM GE graduates fit into our firm's culture and philosophy very well. We will definitely continue to look towards SIM GE graduates to meet our hiring needs."

Melvin Yong, Singapore country head for accountancy body CPA Australia, says SIM GE accounting graduates "are a driven group of individuals, equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills to support the needs of employers and industry".

CPA Australia is one of the world's largest professional accounting bodies, representing more than 150,000 members in 120 countries. It has more than 8,000 members in Singapore.

"Among SIM GE graduates who have joined us as members, we have noted that they tend to be culturally sensitive, adaptable and are able to communicate well," he says.

The transnational education model offered by SIM GE provides a number of pathways to building successful careers for students, he adds.

"The model provides higher education options for Singaporeans who are keen to enrol in an overseas university programme at affordable rates compared to the relatively higher cost of actually studying and residing overseas."

"As a global financial centre, Singapore is always in demand for graduates of business, finance and accountancy programmes."

"SIM GE, through its partnership with international universities, adds to the pool of expertise needed for the industry. This is highly positive for Singapore as a global financial centre," he concludes.

my current job. I also learnt leadership and business writing skills," she says.

To Ernst & Young senior associate Andy Wong Shun Ping, the valuable work-study experience during his time at SIM GE gave him a headstart over his peers.

Mr Wong, who has worked as a part time accounts assistant, enrolled in RMIT's Bachelor of Business (Accountancy) programme.

The programme comprised one year of full time academic studies and two and a half years of part time studies. Mr Wong was awarded the Nexia TS-SIM GE scholarship, which gave a one-time cash award as well as an opportunity to work at Nexia, a mid tier accounting firm. He spent several years in the firm's external audit department.

"Balancing school and work was not easy. There were busy periods, I worked often till midnight and had to go back on weekends," he recalls.

The work experience he accumulated enabled Mr Wong to start at a higher position compared to

his peers when he graduated in 2013. He then switched to an internal audit role within the firm, before moving on to Ernst & Young in September 2014 as an internal audit senior associate.

There, he advises clients from a broad range of industries on their processes such as revenue, inventory management and human resources.

"I find my work very satisfying. I feel that I help people," he says. "I serve as an independent pair of eyes to help organisations identify, minimise or eliminates risks. At the same time, I provide useful recommendations that will improve on their business operations and processes."

Well-grounded, adaptable and industrious graduates

SIM GE graduates like Ms Kristina, Mr Tan and Mr Wong are welcomed by employers for being technically skilled, driven to improve themselves, humble, and good communicators.

Jocelyn Goh, partner at accounting services

firm BDO LLP, says SIM GE graduates working with them are diligent, humble and committed – qualities which the firm values.

BDO is the world's fifth largest accounting and consulting network.

"They have showcased a thirst for knowledge, have a sense of responsibility, and possess a positive attitude. They applied the knowledge received during internal and external trainings well and have proven to be excellent team players," she says.

"As a coach, I enjoy sharing my experience with these young talents and look forward to more coming on board BDO."

Teo Cheow Tong, senior partner at RSM Chio Lim LLP, said the firm has been consistently hiring SIM GE graduates for its audit, tax and business processes entities. RSM Chio Lim is the fifth largest accounting firm in Singapore.

"SIM GE graduates have proven themselves to be well-grounded, humble and industrious. They bring with them constructive energy as they know how to work hard and play hard," he said.



This is the fourth of a five-part series on the employability of graduates from transnational education programmes

About SIM GE

- ◆ SIM GE is one of Singapore's largest private education institutions and offers over 70 full-time and part-time academic programmes such as accounting, IT, retail marketing, banking, finance, economics and management from 11 reputable global universities.
- ◆ Its total student enrolment is 22,000 where 19,000 are full-time and 3,000 are part-time students. There are 124,500 local and overseas graduates from SIM GE to date.
- ◆ SIM GE students often score top honours in its partner universities' programmes. For example, 167 SIM-UOL students graduated with first-class honours in 2014; the highest number of achievers in the world for UOL International Programmes.
- ◆ SIM GE currently offers 1 diploma, 3 undergraduate degrees and 2 postgraduate qualifications in accounting to cater to the development of accounting professionals.
- ◆ SIM GE has been voted by the public as "Best Private Institute" at the annual AsiaOne People's Choice Awards 2015, its 7th consecutive win since 2009.

SIM GE's University Partners

