

RIGHT TALENTS, SPECIALISED EXPERTISE



FTI's Executive Certificate in Structured Trade and Commodity Finance programme trains talents for the fast-growing sector

As an international trading hub, Singapore has a lot going for itself – a robust ecosystem of trade services such as financing, logistics and arbitration, and incentives like tax breaks and a strategic location along key trade flows.

It is no wonder then that the Republic has been drawing international trading and natural resources companies to locate their regional or global bases here. Singapore has long been an important trading centre for oil; now, it is set to become a leading trading hub for other commodities as well.

As Singapore becomes a significant player in global oil and commodities trading, it is crucial that the industry is supported by professionals with the right knowledge and skills to structure complex commodity financing deals.

According to banking veteran and SMU adjunct faculty Mr Yong Meng, local universities such as SMU have trained a sizable number of aspiring traders for trading companies, but banks and financial institutions still lack professionals with specialised expertise to service the commodity trading industry.

The Executive Certificate in Structured Trade and Commodity Finance, offered by the Financial Training Institute@SMU, addresses this gap. The programme is aimed at equipping participants with the practical skills to analyse, structure and present commodity financing proposals and to control risk exposures.

Mr Yong is one of the three trainers for the programme, which has completed two successful intakes since its launch in March 2013, drawing participants from key local and foreign banks. He has had a distinguished banking career spanning 30 years, during which he headed the trade and commodity finance desks of banks such as AMRO Bank, Rabobank and UOB.

***First things first:
Imparting knowledge and skills***

He said: "I wish to pass on my knowledge, experience and skills to those who aspire to develop a career in structured commodity financing. To do well in this business, not only do they need to understand financing techniques and skills at a higher level, they also need to appreciate the peculiarities of applying these skills to various commodities and countries."

The course adopts an industry-specific, real-world case approach. Besides Mr Yong, the other trainers, Ms Bernadette Cenzone and Mr Poon Churn-Yuen, are also industry veterans who share their deep experiences of applying various structures for financing agricultural commodities, oil and metals in Asia.

Mr Yong continued: "All of us have a lot of experience to share; we know what can go wrong, the risks and peculiarities of each country. Our course is practice-oriented, focused on Asian cases. This is the unique proposition of the course."

One of the senior bankers commented: "What I really liked about the course were the real-life examples and case studies. Speaking from their personal experiences, the trainers shared with us what could possibly go wrong so that we could avoid the same mistakes."

Another aspect that the participants appreciated was the balanced yet varied mix of participants from both the trading and banking sectors who were able to share how deals were cut and the risks involved from different perspectives.



Mr Yong Meng,
Adjunct Faculty, SMU



Ms Bernadette Cenzone,
Programme Faculty



Mr Karim Akbar Sulaiman,
Trader at Bero Coffee Singapore



Ms Jammie Wee,
Structure Trade Finance Officer
at Gunvor Singapore



Mr Karim Akbar Sulaiman, a trader at Bero Coffee Singapore, said: “As a trader, I am exposed to only trading most of the time. I gained a holistic view from the course, and I am now able to understand the points of view of bankers and colleagues better. It has been helpful to my work as a trader.”

Ms Jammie Wee, a structure trade finance officer at Gunvor Singapore, agreed. She said: “The way I think about my work has changed thanks to the big picture I gained from the course. Now that I know what catches the bankers’ eyes for deal proposals, I can work better with them to meet our common goals.”

Room for continuous improvement

As Asian economies and their demand for commodities grow, the structured trade and commodity finance industry will continue to develop at a fast pace. Besides gaining the necessary knowledge and skills through formal continuing education, how can practitioners stay ahead?

Mr Yong has this advice for them: “Do a lot of research on your own, learn how deals are made, and be a ‘busybody’ in getting contacts. Always be on the lookout for knowledge, information and experience. You will go far this way.”

SMU FICS Certificate in Commercial Banking

Passport to the enriching world of corporate banking
Inaugural Intake: 12 Feb – 17 May 2014

Asia is poised to become the largest and fastest growing region in the wholesale banking universe by 2015. Competition has intensified amongst global and regional banks jostling for a stronghold in Asia. With increasing sophistication among clients, banking professionals need to have the relevant knowledge and expertise, to bring value to clients and grow market share.

The war for talent favours those who are well versed with the workings of the industry. The SMU FICS Certificate in Commercial Banking, newly launched by the Financial Training Institute, provides an excellent platform for aspiring professionals, and for financial institutions to groom talent and build capabilities to capture the myriad of opportunities.

The course is designed for entry-level hires and professionals with up to three years’ corporate banking experience. The curriculum focuses on the principles of commercial lending, credit evaluation framework and practical approaches in structuring credit facilities. Benchmarked to industry best practices under the Financial Industry Competency Standards (FICS) framework, this course is aimed at providing a structured training roadmap to acquire critical competencies in commercial banking.

FTI can customise the course for banks and financial institutions seeking to differentiate their bankers from the competition, to meet both business and professional certification objectives. For more information, please contact FTI at Tel: 6828 0563 or Email: fti@smu.edu.sg.