

THE SMU CAREER GUIDE 2021



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Message for Undergraduates



Sim Cher Young

**Director
Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre**

We at the SMU Career Centre are dedicated to partnering and journeying with you in achieving your career success through these challenging times. While many of you will be embarking on your first internship this summer, others will be receiving good news of a full-time employment offer upon successful conclusion of the same. Although more than half of a year's graduates typically secure a permanent job offer at the end of their penultimate year's internships, the depressed marketplace brought on by COVID-19 is experiencing a sharp fall in internship and full-time opportunities posted for undergraduates.

The prevailing hiring landscape ups the ante on your employability preparation in 2021. Kickstart this investment by meeting your coach to align career aspirations and academic majors, fine-tune your target job and industry, and have your resume writing and interviewing skills critiqued with the aim of securing choice roles, especially in a leaner job market. Our latest profiling instrument, CliftonStrengths, lets you discover how best to tap on your top 10 of 34 themes to achieve professional and personal success.

Besides attending our employability clinics with small group interaction enduing participants with perspectives and critical insights from their peers, a series of seven career readiness workshops has also been specially curated to enhance your depth and reach of your job search strategies. The facilitators, as industry experts, will address higher-level strategies to be deployed during your job search and cultivate a mindset shift to unconventional possibilities such as starting your own business, becoming a freelancer and taking a gap year to travel or volunteer for a worthy cause.

Additionally, be on the lookout for our announcements alerting you to a myriad of employer engagements. Better yet, actively participate in the more than 100 career talks organised each term and our biannual career fairs, where over 120 employers attend in hopes of securing interns for the coming internship season, as well as final-year undergraduates for their full-time roles.

Above all, stay motivated, positive and tenacious as you make headway in your career choices during this brighter New Year.

Message for Postgraduates



Henry Yeo

**Head
Postgraduate Career Services**

Welcome to the 2021 edition of the SMU Career Guide. The past one year has been an extremely tumultuous one. On top of protracted issues such as climate change, rich-poor divide, trade wars and geo-political risks, the world has to grapple with a cataclysmic pandemic and a recession that continues to wreak havoc on most industries and countries. University students are not spared either – you may have already experienced disruptions to classes, social lives, internships and maybe even difficulty in securing a job offer.

But you need to stay focused and quickly adapt to the “new normal” that will inevitably come. Many firms are trying to transform and adopt new operating

models. The more you are able to articulate your contribution to their transformation journey, the better your chance of securing a role in their team. For example, how can businesses, such as restaurants or airlines, achieve maximum customers yet comply with the prevailing safe management measures?

Many jobs and roles will be radically transformed, and it is wise for students to understand the dynamics of these changes and be attuned to the skills needed. Perhaps, agility and the ability to constantly think out of the box may become highly prized attributes. Recruitment methods will also change as firms minimise face-to-face contact. Besides greater use of synchronous and asynchronous interviews, we may see recruiters adopt virtual reality and augmented reality for job interviews and assessments.

At Postgraduate Career Services, our experienced coaches will be available to guide you through this challenging period. They will continue to ensure that you are grounded on the basics of career management skills. They will continue to ensure that you have good self-awareness (much like understanding your passion and career interests), a solid resume, an ability to share your “stories” at job interviews and a clear idea of how to embark on your search (perhaps through LinkedIn, networks, recruitment firms or other creative means).

Postgraduate programmes are relatively short and we encourage those seeking a job to do so as early as possible. Anecdotal experience does suggest that the time taken to secure a role may be longer than you would expect, and more so in this *annus horribilis*.

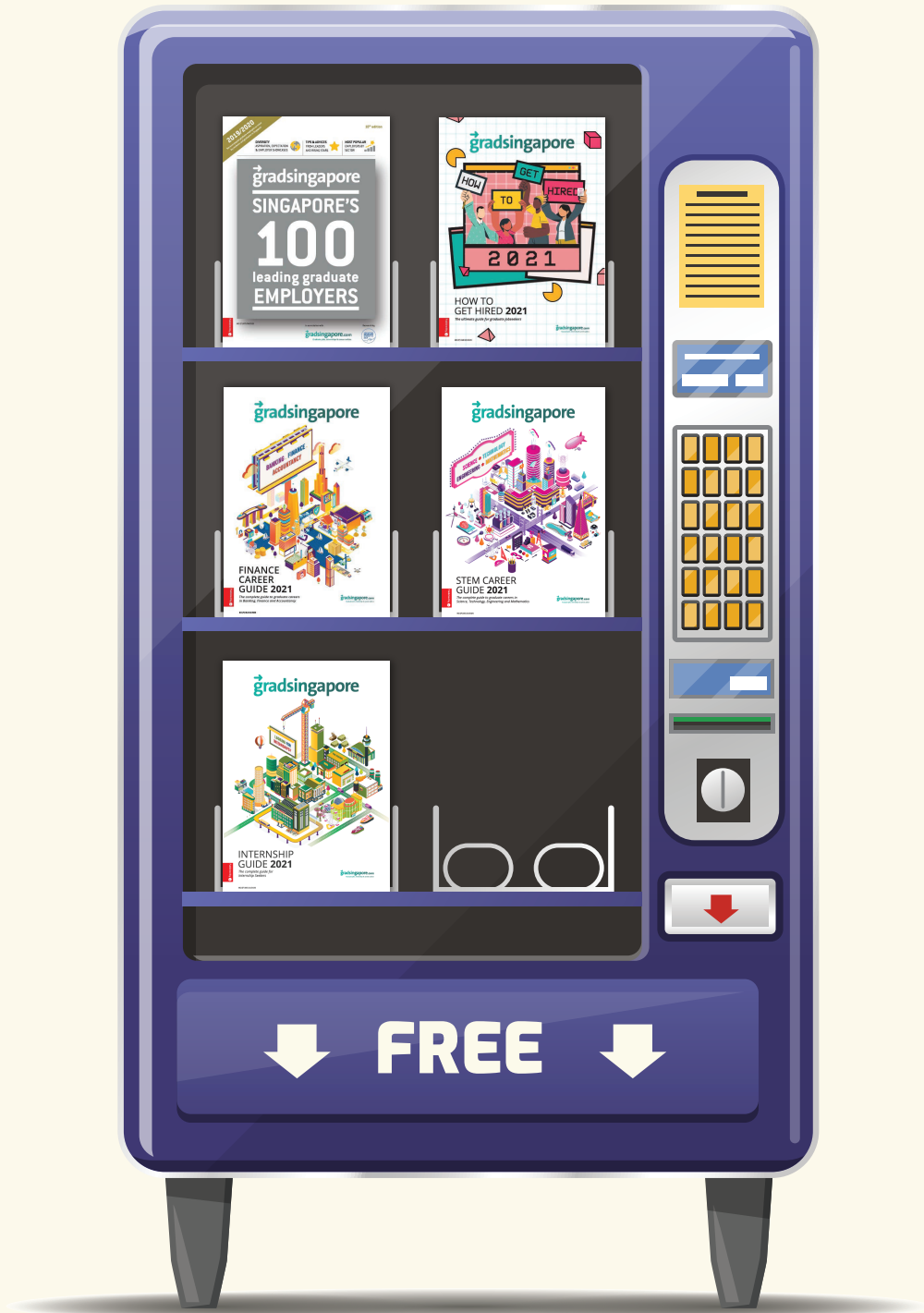
The services of the postgraduate career coach are available up to three years upon graduation. The coach will challenge, advise and act as your “sounding board”, but your drive and willingness to take the lead in your job search are critical success factors. Be resolute and optimistic in these times and remember to help those around you when you have achieved success.

I would like to leave you with two quotes:

“There is no education like adversity.” Benjamin Disraeli

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” C. S. Lewis

Stay safe and all the best!



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CAREER SERVICES AT SMU

The SMU Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre (DKHMCC) has been serving the student community and partnering with leading business organisations for hiring success since SMU's inception in 2000. We are proud of our programmes and activities which ensure that our students progress seamlessly to the working world.

Our services

The centre is an ideal place where both corporate partners and students can exchange valuable ideas and first-hand experience in pursuit of a professional life with each other.

Career coaching

All students are assigned to a Career Coach upon matriculation to support them in their career planning through the four-year journey at SMU. Our Career Coaches come from diverse backgrounds with rich industry experience and maintain strong ties with corporate partners to stay informed of the industry and the hiring landscape.

Keeping a watch on industry developments and changes in the recruitment landscape helps Career Coaches provide insights into current industry trends and organisations' hiring practice during career coaching. Career Coaches are available to critique cover letters and resumes, facilitate job search strategies, and hone interview skills through one-to-one mock interview sessions. All information exchanged between a student and a Career Coach is confidential.

Career coaching is also provided by student-peer advisors enriched with valuable internship experience. Career Champions are trained and equipped with essential skills to work alongside DKHMCC as paraprofessionals to serve the undergraduate community.

Students can make individual appointments with their Career Coach or Champions via OnTRAC II.

OnTRAC II

OnTRAC II is SMU's one-stop portal for career services, where students register for events, view job postings, submit applications, monitor their progress, and accept job offers.

Students only need a single log-in account to update and view their LinkedIn profile from OnTRAC II. Students may integrate their LinkedIn profile to their resumes on OnTRAC II by using its Resume Builder function to import their LinkedIn details into their resume in an instant.

Through these sessions, graduating students will have the opportunity for direct interaction with representatives from members of the top echelon, middle management, and line managers.

Networking events

The career centre hosts several networking events annually, bringing prospective recruiters and graduating students together under one roof.

On average, about 120 companies participate in each networking event. Recruiters will gain direct exposure to graduating students who are pursuing



On-campus recruitment talks, industry talks, and company visits

DKHMCC organises recruitment/industry talks and company visits every year. These include on-campus recruitment and industry talks by recruitment teams from global and regional banks, multinational corporations, government ministries, agencies, statutory boards, and small and medium enterprises from a variety of industries and geographic regions.

either a single or double degree in Accountancy, Business Management, Economics, Information Systems, Law, or the Social Sciences.

Students should bring along fine-tuned copies of their resumes (to which they can also add a QR code using their OnTRAC II > Documents > Portfolio) to these networking events.



UNDERGRADUATE CAREER SERVICES

Finishing Touch programme and career readiness workshops

As students progress to their junior and senior years, elective workshops will be offered at the crucial job application stage in their final years. These optional workshops are topic-specific to help penultimate-year and graduating students gain experience and understanding of the selection process in job applications.

Additionally, DKHMCC holds a series of complementary career readiness workshops to equip students with the critical skills and competencies needed to gain an edge in areas of career development and employability.

The Finishing Touch programme is one of SMU's distinguishing factors and is well recognised by employers and students in preparing our graduates for a seamless transition to the working world.

For more information, please log in to: OASIS > Career Devt & Comm Svcs > The Finishing Touch.

Internships

All SMU students are required to complete an internship before they

graduate, and DKHMCC oversees the administrative work for this programme. Internships allow students to apply their classroom knowledge to a real-world setting, hone their soft skills and cooperative abilities, and build their credentials before starting their journey into the working world.

Students can find a plethora of internship opportunities by logging in to OnTRAC II.

Career profiling tools

All Career Coaches at DKHMCC are certified in career development facilitation and able to administer at least one personality or career profiling tool. These tools help students better understand their own personalities, career profiles, core business competencies, and motivating factors of career success.

Personality and career profiling tools include:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®)
- DiSC Personality System
- Strong Interest Inventory
- CliftonStrengths

Career resources library and "Suited for Success" wardrobe

DKHMCC maintains a specialised library which houses career preparation and management literature, including the series of Career Insider Guides from Vault College Publications.

The "Suited for Success" walk-in wardrobe is a business wear loan service, offered to students who are attending career events and workshops. Accessible to all students, the wardrobe is stocked with men's and women's suits, shoes, ties, and belts for students to borrow.



Career publications

DKHMCC produces a range of publications to cater to each phase of the students' time at SMU. One such publication is the Majors and Careers Pathway Guide available for download via OASIS. The guide serves to provide a career's perspective for students when deciding on majors.

As students go through their educational and career journeys at SMU, they can also share their success stories by submitting stories and photos to placement@smu.edu.sg.

Graduate Employment Survey

The Graduate Employment Survey is an important survey that SMU alumni are encouraged to take. The survey is conducted annually by autonomous universities to ascertain the employment outcomes of their graduates.

The survey typically takes place about six months after senior-year students' final examinations.

The results of this survey are an important indicator of the performance of SMU graduates in the job market. More importantly, the survey results affirm the value of SMU as an educational institution and the worth of an SMU degree. The information provided will also inform policy-making at the national level for Institutes of Higher Learning.



POSTGRADUATE CAREER SERVICES

Postgraduate networking event

The annual postgraduate networking event features a large number of employers across different industries, offering various roles and opportunities for the postgraduates. This is the perfect platform for postgraduates to connect face-to-face with hiring managers and HR representatives from employer partners.

The Pathways series

The Pathways series is an initiative launched by the Postgraduate Career Services team where experienced finance industry practitioners meet up with and give SMU postgraduates insights into their respective job functions. These include technology and operations, wealth management, treasury, risk management, asset management, and corporate finance.

This series aims to enable students to make a more informed decision about their career pathways, thereby leading to a sustainable and rewarding career.

Anecdotal feedback on the series has been positive, with many students having gained a deeper understanding of the roles and attributes necessary to do well in their respective line of expertise.

The “In Conversation With” series

Launched by the Postgraduate Career Services team in June 2014, the “In Conversation With” series is a monthly lunchtime event held for postgraduates to interact with and learn from successful professionals at different stages of their careers.

Guests come from diverse industries, such as information technology, consulting, logistics, wealth management, finance, and fast-moving consumer goods. ■

MEET YOUR CAREER COACHES



The Undergraduate Career Services Team

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CAREER RESILIENCE FOR MILLENNIALS

What is career resilience? Why is career resilience important for a millennial entering the workforce? Here is a guide on how you can nurture and develop what it takes to be a resilient professional in an ever changing world of work.

What is career resilience?

You need both hard and soft skills to navigate the professional world, as well as strength and resilience to cope with unpredictable changes and switches to different career paths along the way. Maintaining a positive mindset, identifying how you can contribute to the industry and organisation, and being ever receptive to learn new things are all part of developing career resilience.

Why is career resilience important for millennials?

Although young professionals usually have new skills to offer to the market even in a changing economic environment, there is no guarantee that your career journey will always be smooth-sailing. Furthermore, transiting from school to the industry involves a big leap, calling for adaptability and self-awareness.

Do you have career resilience?

Check yourself! How many of these boxes do you tick?

- I am not afraid of failure and I see it as a learning opportunity.
- I embrace challenges and keep a positive attitude when faced with one.
- I am resourceful.
- I am inquisitive about how things work and enjoy learning about new perspectives.
- I am flexible with changes and adapt accordingly.
- I have good relationships with contacts in my industry.

Cultivating career resilience

1. Be Adaptable

Keeping up with change, be it macro-economic shifts or new events and manpower movements in your workplace, is key for any professional who wishes to remain flexible and positive. Change can be unsettling, but knowing that change is the only constant helps you to adjust your expectations whenever new situations arise, reminding yourself to stay afloat and fit in.

2. Build Relationships

Maintaining a good network helps you to get industry insights and support from those who appreciate your work, personality and ethics. While trends can move and shake the industry, nurturing valuable professional relationships often means that someone can lend you a hand in a time of need.

3. Commit to Personal Growth

Take charge of your own development by looking out for new courses to take, and be thirsty for new knowledge to gain. Other than asking your employer to offer you training, spend your after-work hours wisely to keep abreast with industry news and developments.



The Face of Future Employment

Turning to the gig economy

4. Embrace Change and Seize Opportunities

Changes which crop up in the professional realm are often unpredictable, as with other changes in life. Do you view changes as crises or opportunities to be tapped on? Remember that change is where opportunity lives and new possibilities are there for you to grab hold of or to create.

5. Maintain a Positive Outlook

In the face of failure, your ability to bounce back is crucial. In good times, set and crush your goals. Count your blessings and make sure your workload is manageable. Ask for help when you need it and remember to take care of yourself. When things go awry, take it one step at a time and stick to your guiding principles.

6. Have a Sense of Purpose

Working for a company whose mission aligns with your personal sense of purpose can be empowering. While the correlation between the working world and your personal goals might not be obvious at times, understand the value which you are delivering to others through your daily work. Your career is a form of service and knowing the impact which you are making leads to higher levels of job satisfaction.

7. Reflect Often

Taking a step back from your emotions and impulse to pause and reflect helps you to rejuvenate and make wiser choices. Reflexivity is a mark of mental agility, processing your stress, and encouraging you to flex your brain muscles to think about what matters in your career output. Maintain an internal rhythm to reflect often so that you keep things in perspective constantly, in the face of changes and even when things are status quo.

8. Develop a Sense of Foresight

It is impossible to rely on just one plan for the unforeseeable future. Cultivating a sense of vision and foresight to scan for future prospects, and forming a positive outlook are all part of how you can prepare yourself for the road ahead.

Chart your own path and maintain your own plan to adapt and succeed. You should understand emerging trends and be on the lookout for new knowledge to gain. Identify your advantages and risks in each possible scenario. If you have an idea of what could possibly happen, you can develop responses and action plans more swiftly. ■

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING CAREER RESILIENCE



Alan Chua
Vice President, APAC Junior
Talent Marketing
Bank of America



“Things will not always be smooth sailing and you will encounter things that you may not enjoy doing or be good at. However, as long as you persevere, you will see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Challenges of the present and future

The most recent batch of graduates had to commence their employment in a completely new environment, which was new for both graduates and their employers. This means both parties had to immediately adapt to this situation, and meant that we needed to be agile and resilient.

Here, tapping on your EQ becomes highly important. You need to learn how to be proactive but not be overly demanding; be collaborative, anticipate what's next and respond promptly; and communicate clearly and effectively but not be afraid to ask questions when you are in doubt. All this while most of us are still working remotely and face-to-face interaction is a luxury.

There is also an ongoing fatigue with conference/video calls. In order to become more effective, some teams have taken to organising such calls regularly. But the questions I would ask are: “Does it really improve productivity? Or has it merely become another way to clock in “face time” at work?” Let us ask ourselves if a call is really needed, or if can it simply be summarised in an email with clear action points?

I am not against such calls but sometimes, a virtual lunch, or drinks over a video call, where the team spends an hour just chatting about anything but work might actually be more productive, and can help to bring the team closer together.

Staying resilient and relevant

I graduated with a degree in Computing but during my second year in university, I knew that this was not for me. This was a different time, and I gave in to societal pressure and decided not to change courses but instead stick it out in a course that I had no interest in and graduate.

Thankfully, I managed to do so, but I think this was my first lesson in resilience. Things will not always be smooth sailing and you will encounter things that you may not enjoy doing or be good at. However, as long as you persevere, you will see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I ended up not starting work in information technology (IT), but after six or seven years of working, I decided that I needed to accelerate my career and pick up new skills. That was when I decided to pursue my Masters in Communication Management at SMU part-time.

Although I really enjoyed myself during the programme and found plenty of learning opportunities, doing this course part-time while still having my full-time job was also extremely challenging. I had to learn how to effectively manage my time and also be agile in learning. We had plenty of readings to complete, and I remember downloading an app which would read out the readings to me while I drove to and from work.

Advice to graduates

Be creative and do not be afraid to put your hand up. Always be on the lookout for stretch assignments or projects that can help you to network or add on to your repertoire of skills. You will become more confident of yourself as you start to acquire more skills and get to know more people.

Most importantly, make sure that you always (over)deliver on what you have promised as that is extremely important to build up your credibility especially in a new work environment.



Charis Chua
Talent Acquisition Partner
Sanofi Aventis

“Throughout my career journey, I have realised that the key to building resilience is to put yourself out there.”

Challenges of the present and future

One of the main challenges is balancing work and personal commitments in this “new norm”. In prioritising our health and well-being, aligned to one of our Employee Value Proposition pillars, “Dare to Care”, Sanofi shifted to remote working even before the implementation of the Circuit Breaker. More than six months down the road, most of us are still working from home with virtual meetings being the norm. It will likely remain this way for a long while.

While this has improved our productivity and lessened our commutes, the absence of physical interaction and blurring the line between work and life can be challenging especially for graduates going into full-time employment. In fact, those that start their career with remote working could find it isolating and may not be able to truly experience the company’s culture.

Staying resilient and relevant

The work-from-home arrangement in both duration and scale is unprecedented and personally, having a disciplined approach to my working hours has been

instrumental in helping me maintain a healthy work-life balance. Otherwise, we may find ourselves replying to just one more email even though we really should be finishing up for the day.

Throughout my career journey, I have realised that the key to building resilience is to put yourself out there. Do not shy away from new things and embrace change instead. Always seek growth opportunities to learn and improve.

You will find my colleagues and I taking up some of the skill-based digital learning courses from Sanofi University to equip ourselves with skills normally associated with other business functions as we discover how they can help us develop a better understanding of the business.

At the end of the day, it is all about having and cultivating a growth mindset; the more you learn and grow as an individual, the better you will be at accessing challenging situations from various vantage points. In fact, a growth mindset is able to see setbacks as opportunities to learn and improve while developing our character.

Advice to graduates

Graduates entering the workforce this year will have to be pragmatic and flexible in securing ideal jobs during these challenging times. In addition to that, there are also various government initiatives and traineeships that graduates could take advantage of, where gaining valuable skill sets from these could help propel their career forward when the economy and job market picks up.

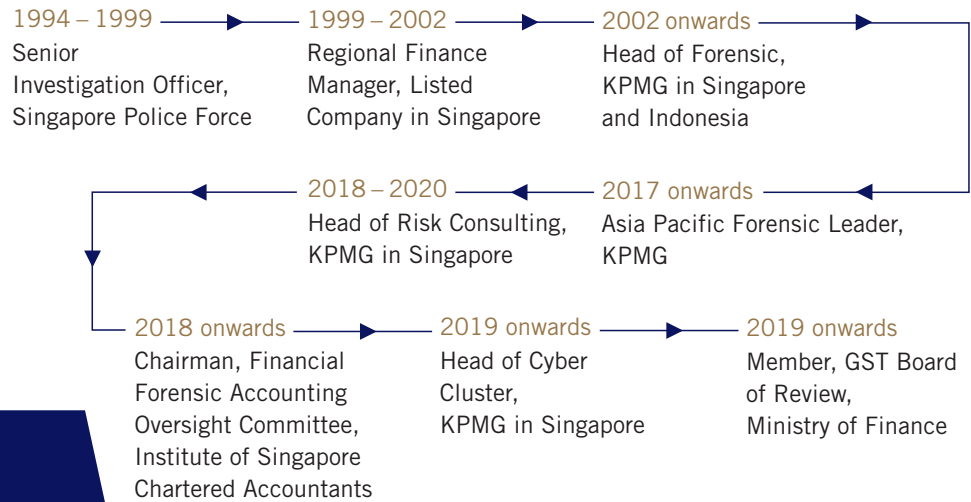
Ultimately, graduates need to realise that they are the ones in control of their career journey. My advice would be for them to network extensively within the organisation that they join and seek out collaboration opportunities.

One way they can do this is by signing up to be a member of interest groups. For example, Sanofi has active Yammer communities where people from offices all over the world can join and contribute, and comment on ideas. In the knowledge economy, the ability to collaborate transversely is a trait that can set you apart from others. Often, these relationships you build can open doors to other opportunities.



Chin Kok Lem
Partner

Head of Cyber, KPMG in Singapore
Head of Forensic, Asia Pacific



“We need to remain adaptable and move in tandem with changes in the environment.”

Challenges of the present and future

The new norm of working from home during this global coronavirus pandemic has proved that we do not actually need to work in an office. But what this also means for all of us is that if someone can work remotely in Singapore, anyone can work remotely wherever they are, whether they are in Malaysia, Indonesia or China, as long as there is internet connection. According to KPMG 2020 CEO Outlook COVID-19 Special Edition: Singapore Edition (“CEO Outlook”), 76 per cent of CEOs in Singapore will continue to build on the use of digital collaboration and communication tools to enable their employees to work remotely.

Because of this realisation, employers now may not always feel the need to hire graduates from Singapore and will begin hiring overseas graduates as well. In turn, graduates are no longer just competing with talent in Singapore. They will have to start competing with other graduates from all over the world. In fact, the CEO Outlook revealed that 68 per cent of CEOs in Singapore feel that COVID-19 will lead to a widening of the potential talent pool for businesses.

So, to get an edge, they will need to look at the bigger picture and pick up skills in areas they were previously untrained in, and get to know what is needed moving forward, such as accelerated technology adoption and digital transformation, which will become status quo after the pandemic.

Staying resilient and relevant

We need to remain adaptable and move in tandem with changes in the environment. For example, we see how the global coronavirus pandemic necessitated a need to quickly adapt to the use of technology and to leverage it in the right way. A majority of CEOs in Singapore (72 per cent) have seen their new digital business models accelerate during this COVID-19 period, as shared by the CEO Outlook.

We have to keep up and move forward with technology. By understanding what technology is, the benefits we are able to gain from it and the importance of digitalisation, we will be able to remain resilient and relevant.

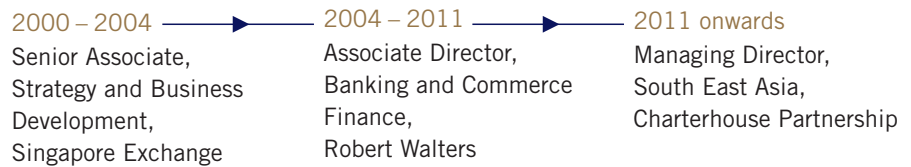
Advice to graduates

Going forward, I believe graduates will need more than English and their Mother Tongue. They will need a third, or even fourth, language. These are the different programming languages, such as JavaScript or Python.

Secondly, make an effort to understand technology and the power of machine learning. Artificial intelligence (AI) is something that is way beyond human intelligence. As a graduate, you will need to learn how to control or leverage this intelligence. The 2020 Harvey Nash/KPMG CIO Survey showed that small scale implementations of AI and Machine Learning (ML) have jumped up from 21 per cent before the pandemic to 24 per cent now.



Gary Lai
Managing Director, South East Asia,
Charterhouse Partnership



“For graduates to remain ahead of the talent curve, there is a need to be internationally savvy, comfortable around the use of technology and constantly hungry to gain further their skills and knowledge to improve their work.”

Challenges of the present and future

Singapore has traditionally been the regional headquarters for many foreign companies wishing to catapult into South East Asia or the wider Asia Pacific region. Due to a well-developed capital market, excellent infrastructure, political stability and where the rule of law is strongly adhered to, I expect this trend to grow even further. This is fuelled by the boom of Fintech companies looking for a base in the region and Singapore is often amongst their top location options.

To continue promoting Singapore as an international business hub, our local graduates must prepare themselves to compete with the best global talent who are looking to be based in Singapore. These international firms want the best talent.

In parallel, many PMET roles in Singapore will have regional functions and our local graduates must be prepared that a bigger role would often entail taking on larger geographical responsibilities, and having to make social sacrifices.

The competition for the global best talent in Singapore is real. Only if companies, which have their regional headquarters in Singapore, are able to attract such talent, will they likely continue to invest further in their operations locally.

The same applies to our local companies as they look to move out from a limited domestic market. Companies rely on a vibrant and now flexible pool of talent to complement their regional growth ambitions and our graduates must be prepared to compete in an international arena.

Staying resilient and relevant

For graduates to remain ahead of the talent curve, there is a need to be internationally savvy, comfortable around the use of technology and constantly hungry to gain further their skills and knowledge to improve their work.

Communicate more with your managers and peers. Often, you will professionally grow faster by interacting with other seasoned colleagues.

The global coronavirus pandemic has transformed how many companies now operate, from how staff communicate and work internally, and also externally in conducting business with clients. As more companies adopt flexible work arrangements – which may become an employee benefit for progressive companies – graduates must continue to remain self-driven, self-learned and self-responsible as their role becomes more autonomous.

Advice to graduates

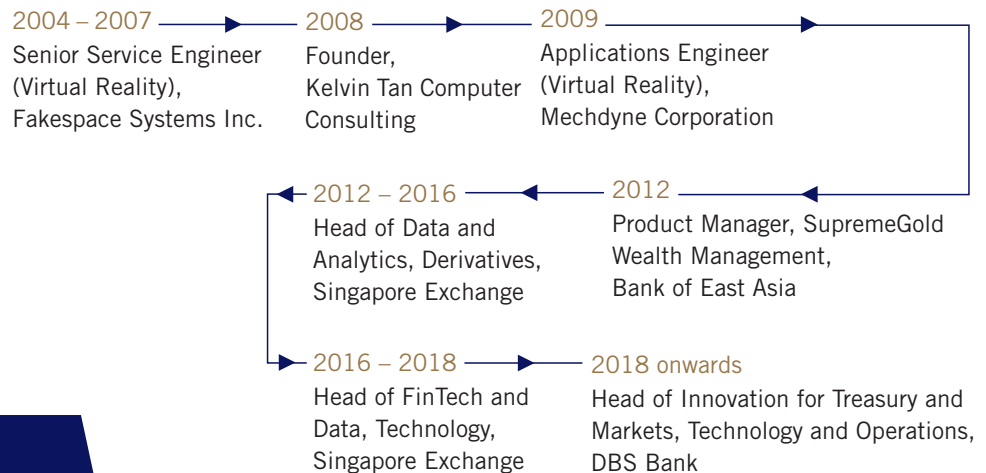
Graduates embarking on their career journey must first understand what types of jobs would suit their individual strengths, weaknesses and personality. Most jobs can be categorised into various forms within operational, analytical and/or relationship management. Do your research into what the job entails and establish if it is aligned to your longer-term career goals and personal interests.

Go into a role with an open mind and understand that every job has its ups and downs. As a graduate, take the opportunity to learn from your more experienced colleagues, and be proactive and versatile in taking on bigger tasks. Besides a can-do attitude and a positive mindset, doing your homework in finding a job which matches your personality will go a long way into building a sustainable career.

I firmly believe that if you find a job you are passionate about, the job will become a career where you will never need to work another day.



Kelvin Tan
Head of Innovation for Treasury and
Markets, Technology and Operations
DBS Bank



“I stay relevant by reading technology and financial news every day, reading white papers every so often and networking with industry professionals as much as possible.”

Challenges of the present and future

The global coronavirus pandemic has accelerated digitalisation in banking tremendously. While DBS had a head start, having started their digitalisation journey four or five years ago, the pace of adoption was rather slow comparatively. Moreover, five new fully digital banks will be entering the fray soon as new competitors.

Being digital does not just mean putting out fancy mobile apps or using new technologies; it is the ability to utilise data analytics in a superior way to serve customers with an individualised experience. Therefore, in order to be successful in the banking and finance industry now and in the future, this means that fresh graduates from “traditional” finance degrees will now need to be increasingly tech-savvy and data-driven.

The pace of change is also increasing and soon it will not be enough to just keep up – you will need to anticipate what changes could be coming, and perhaps even create and lead those changes in order to be successful.

Staying resilient and relevant

It was not easy to change careers in my mid-30s. I had to take a 75 per cent pay cut and start from the bottom again in a new industry. I managed to stay resilient through this difficult transition because of three things.

First and foremost was that my Christian faith would help me get through and bless me. The second was the emotional support from my family, and the third was the sufficient savings I had from prior real estate investments to tide me through.

Now, I stay relevant by reading technology and financial news every day, reading white papers every so often and networking with industry professionals as much as possible. While formal learning is necessary to have the basic foundations, it will not help you keep up with the changing times. The latest and newest ideas are in peoples’ heads – including yours – and networking is how you learn about it. A white paper often crystallises that thinking, and usually by the time it hits the press, someone has already done it.

Advice to graduates

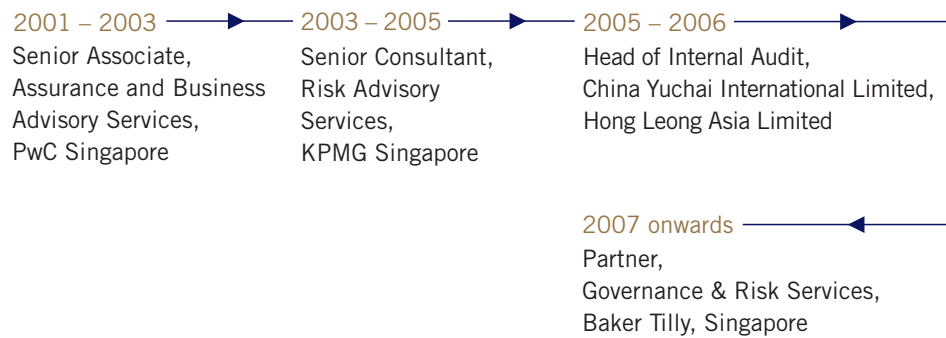
There are three skills that student should prioritise learning while in school so that they can be relevant and in-demand as they embark on their career journeys.

1. Learn how to learn fast
2. Learn how to adapt easily
3. Learn how to communicate effectively

The world is changing at such an increasingly fast pace with new technologies and innovation that people no longer have the luxury to spend years studying or learning something new. In two or three years, that thing that was new could have become obsolete or no longer relevant. Instead, you need to learn it in months or weeks in order to capture that opportunity.

And because things change so fast, the nature of many jobs will also change. You will need to adapt to new ways of doing things or even adapt to a new job or new career easily, without the old ways mentally or emotionally holding you back.

Finally, humans will forever need to communicate with each other, even if the medium of the channel might change. How will you ensure that what you are trying to communicate will be properly understood by others and vice versa? No one achieves success alone, so this is some food for thought.



Lim Wei Wei

Partner, Governance & Risk Services

Baker Tilly, Singapore

“It is important to adopt a growth mindset and experiment with different things as you embark on your career.”

Challenges of the present and future

The new norm has resulted in many firms curtailing new hires. As such, many graduates may not be able to land the jobs they desire, if at all. That, in turn, impedes their ability to be able to pursue relevant roles that can contribute towards meeting their long-term career objectives. Some traditional jobs may also be undergoing fundamental changes in terms of job design, with both employers and employees grappling with new work arrangements and customers' preferences in the new norm.

This has exacerbated the lull in new hires as firms adopt a wait-and-see attitude to assess how the post-pandemic economic situation pans out. I expect these effects to last two years at the very least and will have drastic impact on fresh graduates who will not have the luxury with respect to landing jobs in their field of choice.

The lucky ones who managed to land themselves positions in the professional services field will find themselves in a very different environment compared to their colleagues who joined the workforce years earlier.

The biggest challenge facing the new joiners will be the hampered ability to assimilate fast into the organisation and be able to effectively seek coaching from their colleagues in an almost virtual working environment. This situation nonetheless creates an opportunity for innovation, with

more leeway being given to creativity and failure to take place, which may hopefully give rise to new services, better ways of servicing clients and more efficient or effective ways of working going forward into the future.

Staying resilient and relevant

A key part of staying resilient and relevant has always been about having an open mindset, maintaining a healthy sense of curiosity and the constant desire to upgrade and update skill sets. This is increasingly important in this fast-changing and volatile business environment where knowledge tends to become irrelevant the day you step out of college.

In terms of building personal resilience, surrounding myself with positive and highly adaptable people has definitely helped as they would act as strong support during tough circumstances and increase my courage to face up to adversity.

One key way of staying relevant over the years has been the deliberate attempt to challenge the boundaries of my comfort zone by taking on different types of assignments, exploring new ventures and talking to various people in different fields and countries. That has helped expose me to insights from different industries and circumstances, and accorded me learning opportunities and different perspectives.

Advice to graduates

It is important to adopt a growth mindset and experiment with different things as you embark on your career. In spite of the tough circumstances with regards to reduced job options on offer, graduates should constantly be on the lookout for opportunities which allow them to stretch themselves, pick up different skill sets and be exposed to different cultures and people which could offer different learning experiences and perspectives.

Moving away from the traditional focus on gaining technical skills, which has now been very much regarded as a given, graduates should look to prioritising the enhancement of three main skills viz communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, and collaboration, which I regard as the most absolutely critical in the new norm.

To stay relevant, keeping in touch with your school and going back once in a while for classes to upgrade oneself definitely is a good and fast way to stay in the forefront of the latest thought leadership, industry trends and knowledge.

As a plus, schools also facilitate many networking opportunities amongst alumni and businesspeople alike, which could expose one to many different perspectives, not to mention prospective business and work opportunities.



Ramesh Selvaraj
Partner
Allen & Gledhill LLP

“The initial years just after graduation will be tough as you transition into the working world, but know that the formative years are when you will learn the most.”

Challenges of the present and future

Many law firms are coming to grips with the “new norm” brought about by the prevailing pandemic, and one can expect hiring across the industry to be somewhat negatively impacted. Fresh law graduates should be open to exploring alternative non-traditional paths and options. The skill sets that a typical law graduate would have been schooled in such as persuasion, communication skills, public speaking, analytical thinking and precision drafting/writing, would place one in good stead for an equivalent career in various other industries in the market.

Within the legal industry, the pace of change has been nothing short of frenetic with increasing information complexity and the advent of new technological advancements. Law firms have had to play catch up, adapt and develop a strong sense of resilience to remain competitive.

Staying resilient and relevant

Looking back at my career thus far, I feel that I have managed to stay the course because I set periodic short-term goals for myself. I would go about things a day at a time and set short-term targets and milestones to attain. Short-term targets meant I was able to see results much more quickly, which in turn motivated me to grow and develop as a young lawyer. Through all this, however, I kept an eye on the big picture and a long-term goal. But overall, it was the short-term targets that helped me keep on track and build resilience.

I also learnt that it pays to keep one’s eyes and ears open to emerging trends and developments abounding in the industry. Change is the one true constant and one must, particularly in this day and age, learn to embrace change wholeheartedly.

Advice to graduates

Be hungry. The initial years just after graduation will be tough as you transition into the working world, but know that the formative years are when you will learn the most. The more you put into the growth and development of your career, the more you will get out of it. It is as simple as that.

Learn to enjoy the work that you do and fuel your passion. You will, in time, reap the rewards. As you go about your daily work, have conversations with yourself, something I constantly do. Find out what your competitive advantage is and go about seeking to distinguish yourself.■

SECTORS ON THE RISE

Discover the different career sectors available in the job market and explore the various opportunities out there.



Accountancy and Financial Management

Accountancy and financial management qualifications open doors to career opportunities in various organisations, from the “Big Four” to smaller accountancy firms, as well as corporations and the public sector.

In recent years, businesses have embraced cloud accounting software and applications to increase efficiency for accounting and financial management. As a result, accounting professionals are often encouraged to upskill constantly to pick up data analysis and be well-versed in digital accounting.

Accounting firms offer a diversity of services, such as consulting, assurance, risk assessment, corporate recovery, tax and forensic accounting, aside from the customary accounting and auditing services. Because of this, employers are constantly on the lookout for candidates with good analytical skills, are meticulous and have an ability to convey financial data clearly.

Graduate accountants often join firms as trainees and will be required to take professional qualifications to enhance themselves. It is mandatory to go through the Singapore Qualification Programme (Singapore QP) in order to practise as a chartered accountant here.

Potential job options

- Assurance management
- Auditing
- Financial consulting
- Risk assessment
- Tax consulting





Analytics

Data analytics, the sector dealing with the collection and analysis of huge amounts of data, is very much an engine of growth for the future economy. As Singapore continues to prioritise digital transformation in its Smart Nation initiative, delivering high-value information technology services is of top-notch importance.

Analytics is significant for rising industry trends such as e-commerce, artificial intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT). The Infocomm Media 2025 masterplan, the government's road map for the information communications and technology (ICT) sector for the next decade, also considers big data a key strategic thrust of growth.

The demand for data analytics roles is ever growing as it is not only widely used commercially, as well as in public policy and non-profit organisations, but also for safeguarding cybersecurity, tracking user behaviour to maximise earnings, or using data to further social causes.

As work in data analytics is mainly of inference, experiments and visualisation are used to achieve goals for stakeholders, with data that has already been mined. Career pathways can be grouped according to management and specialisation, depending on the skill sets possessed.

Potential job options

- Business analysis
- Cybersecurity
- Data architecture
- Data analysis
- Data and analytics management
- Data science
- Data engineering
- Product management
- Statistics
- User experience



Banking and Finance

Some possible areas of work in banking and finance include asset management, hedge funds, private banking and equity, risk management, venture capital and corporate restructuring.

While the banking and finance field may be a volatile one affected by fluctuations in the economy, the vibrant financial hub in Singapore ensures it continues to be a popular career choice, causing stiff competition for graduate hires.

A good way to increase your value as a jobseeker is by seeking out internships during your university days to gain relevant work experience. It is also a good idea to actively participate in co-curricular activities and to join the relevant societies to develop the necessary skills required in the sector, much like problem-solving ability and excellent communication, organisational and teamwork skills.

You should also read financial business news regularly to update yourself on any changes in the sector. While numerical and business degrees are preferred by employers, they are not a necessary requirement.

Potential job options

- Business/Commercial banking
- Consumer/Personal banking
- Corporate finance
- Foreign exchange trading
- Investment banking
- Operations and technology
- Private banking
- Private equity
- Risk management
- Treasury
- Wealth management



Education

Teaching is a noble profession given its long hours and multifaceted demands, entailing the heavy responsibility of nurturing the future generation. A career in education is highly rewarding for the satisfaction of helping others to achieve their aspirations.

Major employers include the Ministry of Education, public and private institutions and tuition centres. Besides becoming a teacher, you may also consider roles such as a career counsellor, an educational psychologist, or even corporate and administrative roles in the ministry.

Upon graduating with at least a bachelor's degree, aspiring teachers will need to obtain a postgraduate diploma in education at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Graduates from all disciplines are welcome to apply.

Good organisational, time management, interpersonal and effective communication skills are crucial for this sector.

Potential job options

- Administration
- Curriculum and content management
- Coaching and counselling
- Teaching



Healthcare

Although most medical careers require specialist knowledge and training, non-medical graduates can join the healthcare industry as well. There are a number of options for applicants from other degree backgrounds, such as healthcare operations/management, medical and pharmaceutical sales/marketing, medical product management and healthcare informatics.

Long hours and heavy workloads are commonplace in this field. However, those working in administrative or research roles typically have regular and stable hours. A passion for serving and helping those in need is imperative, as well as being meticulous and patient, especially if you are in a services role in the healthcare sector.

Graduates keen on a career in this industry can consider applying to public/private healthcare providers, biomedical firms, research consortia, or local healthcare start-ups that focus on specialised products (e.g. hospital management software and medical robotics).

Potential job options

- Healthcare regulations
- Manufacturing and supply
- Quality management
- Research and development
- Sales and marketing



Hospitality and Tourism

Home to two integrated resorts – Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa – as well as world-renowned attractions such as the Singapore Flyer and the Singapore Zoo, the hospitality and tourism industry in the Lion City usually experiences steady growth.

Career opportunities are ample in the sector, ranging from hotel management, catering, leisure and events management. Support roles for this field, such as IT, marketing and HR, need to be filled as well.

Work in this industry can be trying, demanding a lot of patience, energy, diplomacy and EQ control. You should also expect work hours to go beyond the usual 9-to-5 during seasonal peak periods.

Traits that employers look out for in their candidates include excellent communication and interpersonal skills as many roles are client-facing in nature.

On top of that, most graduate employees start out from the bottom or through graduate programmes, obtaining training and professional qualifications on the job.

Potential job options

- Food and beverage
- Hotels and resorts
- Leisure and recreation management
- Meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE)
- Spa and wellness management
- Tourism and attraction



Innovation and Technology

Singapore, home to some of the best IT infrastructure in the world, also acts as an IT hub in the Asia-Pacific region. Given the pervasiveness of technology today, the expertise of IT professionals is not needed only in the tech sector, but in the non-IT industries as well (e.g. finance, health, media and legal services).

Among some of the more popular roles that graduate candidates can consider include technology consulting, systems analysis, network engineering, software testing and technical sales.

While numerate and IT-related degrees are preferred by employers in this sector, they are not mandatory – graduates seeking to enter this industry can take up technical modules in school or go for professional technical qualifications part-time as they work.

A common way in is through graduate programmes, especially if you are applying to major organisations. Many smaller employers prefer to hire directly, though.

Employers greatly appreciate candidates with good problem-solving and time management abilities in helping them meet project deadlines, as well as good interpersonal and communication skills due to the team-based nature of the work.

Potential job options

- Application development
- Cloud innovation
- Data analytics
- E-commerce
- Information security
- Infrastructure
- Project management
- Systems administration



Legal

Upon obtaining your law degree, you will have to first undergo a six-month training period after passing the bar examination to practise as a lawyer.

Joining a bigger law firm entails more structured graduate training and eventual specialisation, whereas working in a small law practice has its perks, such as exposure to business development.

Alternatively, graduates can also consider roles such as that of in-house legal advisors for commercial organisations. It is also important to remember that employers in the legal sector are also in need of support staff for departments such as finance, HR and IT.

As a graduate lawyer, you will face long and intensive hours at work, but job flexibility may increase with career progression.

Working as legal advisors to commercial organisations, on the other hand, typically affords you a less hectic schedule. An SMU law degree with a minimum GPA of 3 is required to find work in local law firms, and employers also prefer candidates with attention to detail and excellent problem-solving abilities.

Potential job options

- Arbitration and dispute resolution
- Civil litigation
- Conveyancing
- Corporate and commercial
- Criminal
- Intellectual property



Manufacturing, Logistics and Supply Chain

Manufacturing, logistics and supply chain are an essential part of many industries, especially in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and retail sectors. Manufacturing involves value to raw materials by turning them into products. Engineering graduates will then be responsible for the safe and efficient planning, management and maintenance of production methods and processes.

The logistics sector, on the other hand, includes tasks ranging from finding raw materials to delivering the finished product. Supply chain professionals work to help make the process more organised and effective, and ensure that there are no major disruptions.

The logistics and supply chain area of work typically welcomes applicants from all disciplines, and major organisations may even provide management training schemes to prepare their graduate employees for the job. These often include a series of job rotations to better appreciate the processes that affect an organisation.

However, those who are interested in manufacturing may need a relevant engineering degree as well as the technical skills required for the role.

Potential job options

- Operations manager
- Assembly engineer
- Customs management
- E-commerce
- Freight/Global forwarding
- Logistics
- Supply chain management and service
- Supply optimisation
- Transport management
- Warehousing



Media and Communications (Advertising and PR)

The media sector is vibrant and dynamic, encompassing areas of work in media and marketing (e.g. advertising, copywriting, digital/web marketing, media purchasing, social media management and journalism), as well as communications and events (e.g. public relations and events management).

However, despite the breadth of the industry, vacancies can be limited. As a result, getting these roles can be a very competitive process. While large organisations do run graduate schemes, most graduate applicants will likely have to apply directly for entry level jobs.

Having a solid portfolio can greatly increase your chances of a successful application. Networking is immensely important and may help you find a way into the industry. For this reason, it is a good idea to start working in temporary roles or taking up internships early on in your career in order to build your connections and portfolio.

While employers in this field may prioritise creativity over other traits, they are also on the lookout for applicants who demonstrate strong analytical skills, tenacity, resourcefulness and good data management skills.

Potential job options

- Advertising
- Copywriting
- Digital/Web marketing
- Events management
- Film/Stage production
- Graphic design
- Journalism
- Media purchasing
- Public relations
- Social media management



Social Service, NGOs and Non-profits

Graduates keen on helping the community can find their calling in social service, non-governmental and non-profit organisations. With around 140 international not-for-profit organisations in Singapore, catering to a variety of social, humanitarian and environmental issues, there are plenty of options for graduate employees.

Depending on the area of expertise and the role that you are considering, there may be a need for specialist knowledge, skill sets and certification.

Whatever your role is, employers in this sector look for a few definite traits: Passion and commitment to the cause. While salaried positions in this sector tend to be on the lower scale compared to the corporate sector, employees working with NGOs and non-profits derive their motivation from the intrinsic satisfaction gained from serving and helping others.

Potential job options

- Community relations
- Environmental activism
- Services (e.g. children, youth, family, elderly, special needs and healthcare)
- Social work
- Volunteer development



Public Sector

The public sector is Singapore's largest employer, consisting of different ministries, statutory boards, and a variety of organisations such as the Public Service Division, the Singapore Armed Forces and the Home Team. Employees in this sector often find their roles to be a satisfying and fulfilling one.

Depending on the role and ministry that you are hired into, your job scope and the skill sets required may vary. In general, though, all public sector employees must possess a passion to serve the community, good teamwork and communication skills, as well as the maturity to draw up and execute national policies.

As a public sector employee, you will benefit from frequent training for upskilling and job security, and may be offered flexible working hours should the need arise. However, do be prepared for longer working hours during peak periods, such as before project deadlines and launches of new initiatives.

Many graduate employees enter the public sector through graduate programmes organised by the individual agencies, but departments and organisations also hire graduates directly. Do regularly check in with the ministries that you are interested in for new positions available.

Potential job options

- Government agencies
- Ministries
- Statutory boards
- Uniformed services



Scientific Research and Development

Due to Singapore's vibrant biomedical sciences research ecosystem, there are plenty of job opportunities in areas such as clinical sciences, bioengineering, pharmaceutical, as well as molecular and cell biology.

Most candidates look to research institutes, academic institutions, or hospitals as some of the primary employers in this industry, but do not forgo the opportunities offered by the corporate sector either. For instance, the cosmetics, food and beverage and FMCG industry are also major employers of science graduates.

To join this industry as a graduate researcher, in-depth technical knowledge of your field is extremely important, and having a postgraduate degree under your belt may increase your employability.

Transferable skills are equally valuable to recruiters in this field, so take the time to develop soft skills such as logical thinking, problem-solving and numerical abilities. As you will often be working in a team, good communication and interpersonal skills, as well as efficient organisational skills, need to be prioritised as well.

Most major employers in this sector typically hire through online applications, but smaller research houses depend on word-of-mouth advertisements and speculative applications instead, so be sure to network regularly. ■

Potential job options

- Application development
- Cloud innovation
- Data analytics
- E-commerce
- Information security
- Infrastructure
- Project management
- Systems administration

JOINING AN MNC VS SME VS START-UP

Understand how the size of the company you join can offer different possibilities for your graduate career.

Whether you join a multinational corporation (MNC), small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a start-up right upon graduation, you will have to adapt to the unique culture in each company. However, there are some general characteristics for each type of organisation which you can consider, in order to determine the exposure you would like as a fresh graduate.

Multinational corporations

MNCs are large corporations with facilities and offices in several countries across continents or the globe. With operations spread out geographically, MNCs enjoy higher revenue with greater market share.

Pros of working in MNCs

- **Prestige and reputation**

MNCs usually have strong brand recognition and many graduates compete for coveted job opportunities in these reputable companies.

- **Global opportunities**

Joining an MNC gives you the opportunity to work around the world. Your employer may require you to go for a business visit or even relocate to another country where the organisation has a presence.

This can give you an insight into diverse working cultures and the experience of working with people of different backgrounds and nationalities.

- **Mastering your own trade**

You are more likely to get the chance to specialise in your area of work in a bigger company; job scopes tend to be quite fixed in comparison to those in smaller companies where employees are often expected to perform cross-functional tasks.

In short, a bigger company can offer specialised job scopes with more resources for training and upskilling opportunities.

Things to consider

- **Bureaucracy**

Organisational structures and workflows, such as standard operating procedures (SOPs), can be quite rigid in large companies. There is less flexibility in work processes, coupled with multiple levels of management which you will need to deal with.

For instance, you may have to wait for several rounds of approval from different managers before implementing a business proposal or settling a financial claim.

- **Competition to get the job**

Jobs in MNCs are not only sought-after by fresh graduates, but also by jobseekers with years of work experience as well.

The recruitment process can be quite competitive, so make sure you present a strong unique selling proposition to prospective employers for a successful application.

Small and medium-sized enterprises

SMEs are companies with no more than 200 employees or an annual sales turnover that falls below S\$100 million. In spite of their smaller size, SMEs employ two-thirds of Singapore's workforce and contribute to about half of the country's GDP.

Pros of working in SMEs

- **Exposure**

A lower headcount means employees of SMEs get to wear many hats and take on cross-departmental tasks and responsibilities. This promises wider exposure to different fields which graduates appreciate as a training ground to cultivate different skills.

- **Career progression**

In a smaller company, your competency and achievements are more readily noticed. For this reason, employees rise through the ranks faster in SMEs.

Graduate hires are also likely to receive early responsibilities at the start of their career, with more opportunities to learn on the job and be exposed to more challenging tasks.

- **Team spirit**

Graduates looking to join a smaller company can expect to be a part of a close-knit team. Due to the smaller teams and cross-departmental distribution of work, employees are expected to be adept with interdepartmental tasks and work in close collaboration with each other.

Such a culture means more opportunities for co-workers to get to know one another better and bring the company to greater heights.

Things to consider

- **Formal training**

Graduates joining SMEs should be prepared to be independent and proactive in order to progress in their career as smaller firms do not always offer formal training or graduate schemes. You will be expected to learn on the job and take responsibility for your development.

- **Work benefits**

Smaller businesses tend to have less to offer in terms of employee benefits in comparison to large corporations. However, SMEs can sometimes offer competitive salaries to their employees, depending on the candidate's skills and qualifications.

Make sure to do your research or get an insider's insight on whether or not the remuneration and benefits offered are reasonable for the role and industry you are applying for.

Start-ups

Start-ups are newly established businesses that have been incorporated for less than five years. They are also known to offer products or services not provided elsewhere in the market.

Pros of working in start-ups

- **Innovation**

Start-ups need to grow fast in order to keep up with bigger and more established businesses in the market. As such, the challenge for employees to break new ground and innovate can be exciting for graduates who appreciate a dynamic workplace.

- **Flexibility**

Start-up employees enjoy the perks of a less rigid company structure, which may include flexible working hours and a casual working atmosphere.

However, this does not mean that you can slack off! While you may be allowed to clock in late, your workdays may also entail long or odd hours as employees have to be on the ball at all times.

- **Independence**

You will likely work with minimal supervision, and be entrusted with a myriad of responsibilities – while the onus also remains on you to take charge of steering your own progress.

Although you may not be formally trained, you can expect to be guided by your manager or sometimes, even the big boss!

Things to consider

- **Job security**

Start-ups are newly established businesses, and this means that they do not have a proven track record in the market. There is a risk in signing on to work with a start-up as the business may underperform, affecting your job security.

- **The workload**

Graduates who want to join start-ups can expect to work long hours and take on multiple responsibilities.

This is because start-up companies must keep up with trends quickly in order to grow and remain relevant. Employees often work odd hours for this to happen, so be prepared! ■

JOB HUNTING DURING A RECESSION

Does the recession have you down about your job prospects? Take it as a chance to get your head in the game and get ahead once you graduate.

The coronavirus has hit the job economy hard. Really hard. Companies have had to get creative in order to stay afloat, and the hiring landscape is beginning to resemble a desolate wasteland.

If this looks like something out of your worst (hiring) nightmare, you are not alone. No one could have predicted what was going to happen. As a matter of fact, before COVID-19 hit and a recession settled over the economy, a survey done in 2019 forecast 2020 as “upbeat”.

But in this time, one of the most important things to do is to gain some perspectives about the job search process and manage your expectations accordingly.



Research, research, research

Before you start making plans about your career, research on which industries are the hardest in tough times and find relevant jobs accordingly. Keep in mind that job satisfaction should still be a priority though!

Liking what you do matters more in the long run than a short-term recession, so do not switch industries just because it offers more prospects.

If you still have some doubts to clear up, ask. Speak to a career coach or simply strike up a conversation with someone wiser and more experienced – they might be able to give better insight into what you should expect from the job market or specific industry once you graduate.



Start early

Even if there is no recession, the job market in Singapore is generally pretty competitive for fresh grads. As such, the best course of action is to prepare ahead: Start working on your network, call up possible leads and expand your resume with relevant work experience.



Do not stop (applying)

Even if you do not hear back from firms you have applied to, keep your momentum going and continue to send out applications. These companies may be dealing with some questions that may affect you if they bring you on, such as online training and working remotely.

Set a daily goal and reward yourself whenever you reach it, whether with a delicious mug of coffee, or sitting down to play your favourite video game. But one of the most important

things to remember when you are applying for jobs is to manage your expectations of what you will actually land straight out of school. Try and keep an open mind throughout the job search process, as you never know where an uncharted path will bring you further in your career.



Be patient

Interview processes are long and tedious enough as they are, but add in social distancing, and you have a whole different ball game. Keep in mind that most company hiring processes are not designed to be remote and there are new logistics to be addressed.



Polish your resume and cover letter

This is something we have all heard before: Make your resume and cover letter look professional. Tailor them to every employer you apply to.

Matching your skills to job descriptions is especially crucial right now, so make sure you send the best version of your resume to the employer you are applying to.

Remember: Tough times do not last. Tough grads do.



Prepare for video interviews

There is no better time to get familiar with video interviews than the present, especially with safe management measures. Practise by dressing like you are going for a face-to-face interview to get yourself in the mindset, and keep your tone cheery to get your enthusiasm across.



Try temp-ing

If you are looking to earn a little more while gaining some work experience, apply for temp or part-time positions at companies you are hoping to join. Alternatively, you can simply apply for relevant jobs that will give you some insight into your profession of choice – for example, a part-time role as an accounts executive.

However, do not sweat it if your part-time gig has little to no links to your chosen field of study; you will still be able to build on all the invaluable soft skills you have gained in future interviews.



Get creative

Take stock of all your skills and then look for opportunities wherever they may be, even outside your industry of choice. While this may not be ideal for you, when the job market has recovered and you can move into your preferred sector, employers will be impressed by your experience, resilience and ability to leverage your top skills in a different environment. Keeping your mind open to all the possibilities in front of you may even lead to great job satisfaction as well.

Do not disregard graduate internship opportunities either; work hard and see if you can approach your manager to convert you to a full-time employee when things begin to look up again.

If you have a hobby that could be turned into a short-term business, you can consider this option, too. Do you like to paint little pebbles? Sell them on the internet. Have a good grasp of English? Tutor children online or create online English papers.



Stay commercially aware

Above all, tough times are exactly when you should keep abreast of the latest news with regards to the economy, and especially the industry you are intending to enter. This will not only help you plan your job hunt better, but could also be the critical differentiating point to push recruiters to hire you instead of another equally qualified candidate.

Last but not least, trust that this pandemic will not go on forever. There is light at the end of the tunnel; we just have to find it! ■



RIDING OUT THE PANDEMIC AND RECESSION

Read on for some tips on how you can buckle down and ride out the storm.

The world has been disrupted in ways never seen before. Entire industries and businesses have ground to a halt, countries are only now tentatively reopening their borders and remote working has become the new norm.

As a graduate jobseeker, this may all seem incredibly overwhelming – especially when the prospect of finding your first job is already pretty nerve-racking in itself!

While we unfortunately cannot tell you when the coronavirus outbreak will finally be contained and life will go back to normal, what we can do is offer you a few tips to help you ride out what else might be coming ahead.

Be flexible with your long-term plans

Even though you may be set to graduate in the middle of this pandemic, remember: Keep holding on to your long-term plans to find a job, but remain flexible at the same time. No one knows how long this pandemic or recession is going to last, so be prepared to make short-term adjustments if necessary.

For example, even as you keep an eye peeled for a company and job that appeals to you, you can still look out for internships, short term contracts, or consider going freelance. These may not seem like stable employment prospects,

but think of them as short-term stopgaps until a longer-term opportunity avails itself. Plus, they are a great way to ensure you continue building and exercising employable skills.

But also remember, even in the midst of a recession, there will still be organisations hiring. Every recession brings with it winners and losers. Tech and logistics companies, for example, are doing great. You just have to keep your ear to the ground and find out who is still hiring.



Manage your finances and save up

It may take longer than usual to find a steady-paying graduate job this year, so you will want to watch your personal finances! Begin by trimming whatever expenses you do not need. Look through your expenses to find hidden ones you can do away with or start finding creative ways to encourage yourself to save.

You can also turn to a number of free apps to help you plan your finances. Some suggestions include Pocket Expense, Household Account Book and Spendee.

As a rule, try to plan for blocks of three months at any one point in time. Forecast your essential expenses for the next three months to the best of your ability, and do your best to ensure you have enough savings on hand to cover those.

Make use of online events and classes

Our bodies may be stuck at home most of the time, but that does not mean our minds have to be! Make use of your school's webinars and virtual events, or take offered online classes to upskill yourself.

Attend virtual events organised by your university to engage with employers during this time. These are fantastic ways to grow your professional network and stay in touch with what is going in the industries of your choice – all from the comfort of your own couch.

Subscribe to your dream employers' graduate mailing lists or social media feeds so that you will be alerted of any online events they will be having, or check in with your careers services centre to see if they know of any upcoming ones.

Take care of yourself

Last but not least, remember to take care of yourself. With looming graduation dates, a recession and everything else in between clogging up our to-do lists and newsfeeds, it can really be a lot to handle all at once.

Look out for signs that you are developing anxiety. These include: Fatigue, difficulty sleeping, feeling helpless and having trouble just managing what is presently on your plate because worries about your future keep distracting you.

Remember that anxiety is a normal response to the uncertainties we are all facing during this time. Everyone is in the same boat, after all. The key is not to let it overwhelm you by overthinking what may lie ahead, but to focus on what you can do each day – one step at a time. Focus your energy on what you can accomplish today and now, and let tomorrow's worries be for tomorrow. Rinse and repeat from there.

Still, if the anxiety feels too much for you to handle alone, there is nothing wrong with seeking advice. Talk to your university counsellor and your career coach. A fresh perspective may be just what you need to keep yourself on track mentally and emotionally.

At the same time, try taking up new hobbies or make time each day to do the things you enjoy, like playing online games with friends. You are more than just your job search. When all is said and done, this pandemic and its turmoil will pass. But you will remain – stronger, more resilient, and better-equipped than ever for your dream career. ■

YOUR CAREER AND YOU

Starting your first job and beginning a new chapter after graduation can be a daunting transition, especially now. However, adapting to the workplace can be an exciting and meaningful experience. Here is how you can prepare yourself best.

1 Dress the part

Every professional needs a wardrobe of work essentials – so here is your excuse for some guilt-free shopping. Think about what the recruiters or your future colleagues were wearing when you went for your job interview, and try to plan your outfits accordingly.

As a general rule, it is safer to overdress on the formal side for your first day at work. That said, put together a power suit which you are comfortable in and that will be your battledress in the workplace.

If you will be experiencing your first day working from home, dress up as well. Nothing will get you in the mindset to start work faster than dressing as if you will be going into the office physically.

2 Conquer your first day

Plan your commute to arrive on time. If your first day of work is at home, log onto the platform your employer uses early. Be friendly and approachable. And most importantly, build the foundations for good working relationships in your new environment by getting to know your colleagues.

3 Settle in well

Most employers usually facilitate an induction programme for new recruits to help them settle in and to learn about the job and the company, both virtually and in-person. This is usually a series of meetings ranging from orientation sessions to practical training, as well as social activities and perhaps even the assignment of a mentor.

But even if you are not assigned a mentor, you can find a role model in your organisation or through your network of contacts. He or she can be someone you turn to for any worries or concern about working life.

While all that is going on, get a feel of your organisation's culture. Take your lead from established colleagues, such as your immediate supervisor or line manager, when gauging how things are done. Ask if you are unclear, be accepting of your own mistakes and learn from them.

4 Make a good first impression

Take pride in your work, no matter how small or insignificant the task may seem. Show enthusiasm, commitment and a hunger to learn with every opportunity that is given.

5 Never stop learning

Learning does not end with your formal education. In fact, stepping into the workforce signifies the beginning of real-world learning for the rest of your professional life. Because of this, good employers usually fit in some form of training and development for their staff.

Continuing professional development helps you to do your job better and expose you to new areas of knowledge and technology, for instance. On the other hand, professional qualifications or postgraduate studies, as well as short-term training courses, are more formal avenues of professional development which you can consider.

Tap on the resources you have on hand to build new skills and capabilities to remain employable and passionate about what you do.

6 Do your job

Focusing on your responsibilities and deliverables is crucial for assessing your performance at work. Thus, if you have any obstacles and doubts, do raise them with your supervisor. Understand the business and find your way to contribute to its goals. ■



**GO FORTH
AND PROSPER!**

TOP 3 THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN A FIRST JOB

The right first job can kick-start a successful career journey.

You are just about to finish your final semester, your parents have been pressuring you to start job hunting and your friends are already knee-deep in churning out multiple job applications.

But where should you even start? What do you even look for in a first job?

To start off, begin your job search with a clear mind – otherwise, you might find yourself approaching your job search process the wrong way. Do not panic and take your time to really think about what you want.

To help you get started, here are three considerations you should make when taking your first step into the professional world.



Future opportunities

1

“Where will this career path or job lead me?” is a question that you should always ask yourself before you decide to apply for any job.

Your first job is a stepping stone and how it pans out may pave the way for your career ahead. It is crucial that your first job can lead you to more opportunities in the future and help you achieve your long-term career goals.

This usually translates to career advancement opportunities and higher-level responsibilities offered as you progress on the job with your employer. You can start by conducting some research on the typical career progression pathways for the position you want to pursue and in the specific field you want to work in.

If you already have a specific employer in mind, you can do some background research of the employees that currently work, or have worked, in the company.

Professional training and growth

2

Another thing to consider is how the job or your prospective employer can help you grow professionally.

Your first job should be a chance for you to learn as much as you can, so you might want to look for a company that provides training or mentorships to graduates and newcomers. You can ask about training opportunities during the job interview with your prospective employer.

Does your employer believe in spending the time and effort to show and teach newcomers how to succeed at what they do? Or do they think that it is more effective for fresh recruits to learn on-the-job by throwing them in the deep end and letting them swim on their own?

Figure out which method you prefer and understand the initiatives the employer practises to ensure that their employees continue to learn and grow.

Adopt other skill sets

3

Your course of study may have equipped you with a specific skill set, but while it is beneficial for you to expand on your existing skills on the job, it is also crucial to think about building other transferable skills.

Your first job is your golden opportunity to take in as much knowledge and skills as you can. You need to think about diversifying your skills, especially transferable ones, so that you become a more well-rounded and marketable individual.

One way for you to find out if your prospective employer or role will allow you to pick up other competencies outside your current skill set is to ask about how teams work in the company. Do departments work independently or together as a collaborative effort? Will your role involve interacting and working with other departments? How does working remotely affect your role?

Exposure to cross-departmental tasks will also allow you to pick up different skills, while repetitive, routine tasks may limit you to only one specific skill set. Hence, it is essential to have a good understanding of the role on offer. ■

ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATHS

Besides entering the working world, today's graduates are making new waves through positive change in other ways. Taking the path less travelled often leads to fulfilling adventures.

1. Take some time out

Taking “time out” (or a “gap year”) after your studies is a common route for many graduates in the West, and it is becoming increasingly popular here in Asia.

Although travelling may be challenging at this time, you can still aim for voluntary or paid work experience. Make arrangements with specialist organisations, NGOs, or even a company you are willing to complete a graduate internship in.

Taking these opportunities can also help you to make contacts which you can harness for professional networking.

Tips for taking a gap year

Your gap year should help you work out what you want to do next, and provide the experience needed to find a job. Along the way, make sure you develop useful career readiness skills such as adaptability, flexibility and problem-solving.

In the same vein, be prepared to find ways to sync up with the recruitment cycle upon completion of your gap year. Do also keep in mind that you will have to compete with new graduates in the job market when you start your job hunt.

2. Take up short courses

Short courses allow you to gain new skills or brush up on existing ones, be it picking up a new language or a new technology-centred skill.

Adding a new skill to your toolbox will not only impress employers, but can also help you meet the technical requirements for a role you are interested in.

3. Take up postgraduate studies

A postgraduate qualification could improve your career prospects, but you will still need to consider your options carefully, as this choice is both time-consuming and costly. Make sure you are clear about what you are heading into and seek out good advice before making your final decision.

Shortlist the courses and institutions which you are considering, and consult your academic advisor, professor, or career coach if you need tips on how to prepare a strong application.

Tips for further studies

When choosing a course, you will need to consider its content as well as mode of study. The content should align with your motivation for pursuing a postgraduate qualification. If you are looking to add value to your undergraduate qualification for a specific career field, consider the relevance of the course's content to the industry you aim to work in.

The mode of studying, whether on-campus or distance learning, full-time or part-time, also plays an important role in your eventual decision. Funding the cost of your further studies is another crucial factor.

If you are studying on a part-time basis and working a full-time job to service the tuition fees, make sure you are not overstretched. You would not want to take on additional debt for a course which does not advance your career pursuits.

However, if pursuing a postgraduate degree seems like overkill, consider a postgraduate conversion course for a career transition instead. ■



CRAFTING THE PERFECT RESUME

Your resume is your golden ticket to getting a shot at the job interview for the position of your dreams. Here is a guide to presenting a resume that stands out.

As hiring managers only have enough time to take a quick glance at your resume, you need to quickly hook their attention and reel them in for a second look.

Most importantly, you have to strategically customise every resume sent to employers. Here are some tips on how you can do so.



1. Understand each role you are applying for

Recruiters are looking for candidates with the best fit for the advertised role from the deluge of applications received. Your resume needs to be highly relevant and targeted to the role you are looking at.

One easy way to ensure this is by indicating your career objective or a key summary of your skill sets, or both, right at the top of your resume. After that, customise your career objective and summary of skill sets accordingly for each role you are applying for.

On the other hand, for a business management position, state the relevant areas of expertise such as executive-level communication, strategic planning, business analysis and client management.



3. Show relevant experiences

Include short-term gigs, internships or co-curricular activities related to the role you are applying for.

Spent a summer taking care of elephants in Thailand before the

pandemic? Put that in – you can talk about the emerging skills employers appreciate during your job interview, such as corporate social responsibility and cross-cultural fluency.

Similarly, part-time work in a services or teaching role indicates your ability to serve and cater to the needs of clients, including managing others' expectations – a key skill needed for any young professional.



2. Highlight your skill sets and expertise

When hiring managers sift through the huge stack of resumes received, they look for keywords shown in the job description. These keywords are often specific skill sets, which you can show as one-liner summaries with each work experience listed.

For instance, if you are listing a marketing experience, use a line or two to highlight the key areas of expertise that you have gained, such as market research, market sizing, interviewing, public relations and business development.





4. Reveal numbers and details about your accomplishments

Impact is often measured in numbers and details. If you helped to grow the client pool in your previous role, state the number of new clients you brought on board within a specific time period.

Similarly, if you gave tuition, state how you have helped your students grow, in terms of tangible results as well as the areas which you have focused on, be it targeting on improving their weaknesses or encouraging them to read more. This will let employers know that you are not just a doer but a thinker, for you can be a self-starter, coming up with your own strategy.

If you have led project teams in school or at work, show their sizes and include details of growth within the time period for the hiring managers to appreciate your capabilities through proven examples.



5. Highlight your strengths and weaknesses

Employers gauge your unique selling propositions and potential contributions to the firm by scrutinising your skills and interests.

For example, fluency in a second or third language could indicate your specialised knowledge of a certain geographic market. Your prospective employer would be keen to tap on your strengths for future plans such as expanding to new, or in existing, markets.

IT and technology skills are another valued asset these days. If you have a budding interest in coding or have taken up online courses to further your interest in this area, include the certificates which you have attained.

Besides stating your educational and co-curricular awards, achievements and leadership positions which you have attained, it is a nice touch to share your personal interests at the end of your resume.

While keen interest and participation in team sports indicate a high potential for success in a corporate environment, playing a musical instrument often illustrates an ability to focus with strong self-discipline.



6. Time your submissions

Last but not least, submit your applications as early as possible so that you do not miss out on popular roles. Your resume is the hiring manager's first impression of you, so make sure you give it your best shot. ■

Sample resume

ALVIN LIM	
alvin.lim@mba.smu.edu.sg • +65 1234 5678 • linkedin.com/in/alvinlim	
EDUCATION	
SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY (SMU) Master of Business Administration GPA: 3.6/4.0	Jan 2021 - Jan 2022
Bachelor of Science (Information Systems) GPA: 3.4/4.0	Aug 2011 - May 2015
EXPERIENCE	
PS INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT	Apr 2019 - Dec 2020
Product Specialist	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spearheaded projects in growth initiatives, keeping abreast of regulatory requirements and changes in policies and procedures Performed investment research and due diligence on global equities (with a focus on US, Europe, Hong Kong, and Singapore) to identify new suitable equity and exchange traded funds for clients Provided stock recommendations and advisory to wealth managers on portfolio allocation and executive of investment themes Tracked clients' investments across different product classes to ascertain mark-to-market values and P&L performance Attended client meetings with wealth managers to market and pitch equity ideas to clients; yielded conversion rate of 80% that led to execution trades of US\$15 million Prepared monthly statistical reports for senior management review, also customised account statements and valuation reports on an ad-hoc basis at clients' request 	
FREESCALE INC	Aug 2015 - Mar 2019
Project Manager (Jan 2018 - Mar 2020)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led a team of 12 in the migration from Unix to NT platform for five servers that serviced more than 50 offices in 10 cities in ASEAN Developed user requirements for pro forma profit and loss statement, return on investment and operating models for project savings; presented justifications and quarterly updates to Chief Finance Officer Performed operational risk analysis management and business continuity plan in the event of system breakdown 	
System Analyst (Aug 2016 - Dec 2017)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversaw and coordinated software updates to computer network headquarters; conducted User Acceptance Test for all end users in 10 offices in Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines Implemented online tracking tool to monitor billing and invoice which led to 20% improvement in on-time billing Generated monthly KPI performance reports on operating cash flow, receivable turn, and current ratio 	
CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	
Secretariat, SMU Students' Association	Jan 2013 - Dec 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced quarterly association publications; vetted and disseminated information released by the Council, the Executive Committee and convened annual general meetings 	
SKILLS & INTERESTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed CFA level III Working knowledge of R, SPSS, SAS, EIU database Effectively bilingual in English and Mandarin; Japanese (JLPT N4) 	

TIPS FOR COVER LETTER WRITING

An effective cover letter can bring you a step closer to that coveted job interview. Be sure to customise each cover letter to improve your chances.

What should a cover letter include?

An effective one-page cover letter needs to, minimally, contain the following:

1 Introductory paragraph

1 What position are you applying for? Where did you find the job opportunity?

2 Your motivations

2 Why are you interested in this field and company?

3 Your skills and strengths

3 How can you contribute to the company?

5 reasons to write that cover letter

- They are a good avenue for you to demonstrate your writing skills – unlike resumes, where you write in bullet points and short phrases.
- It is an opportunity for you to highlight your skills and motivations for your application in greater detail.
- Recruiters may use cover letters to gauge your level of interest in the position. Applicants who do not submit one may be seen as indifferent to the job.
- Some recruiters use cover letters to infer a candidate's personality, which can determine their fit for the role/organisation.
- The cover letter is especially important for a speculative application. The letter gives you the opportunity to introduce yourself to the employer, as well as to set up follow-up steps.

Tip: Internet-proof your cover letter

- Always export your cover letter as a PDF before sending it to recruiters unless the recruiter requests a particular file type. The PDF format lets you avoid any minor corruptions that word processor documents may experience during an online transfer (e.g. formatting errors).
- If you are submitting your cover letter and resume through email, write a short email message to introduce your attachments.
- You can also run an email test and send it to yourself first to check that the right documents have been attached.



Sample cover letter

123 Low Ridge Close
#12-300
Singapore (210123)

11 November 2021

Human Resource Manager
DRZ Capital
101 Smart Street
#11-00 Smart Building
Singapore 456101

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing in to apply for the position of Research Associate with your organisation, as advertised on the Singapore Management University job portal. I am currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration and will be graduating in January 2022.

DRZ Capital is a well-established organisation in the region and has been flourishing over the past five years. Your recent expansion plans into China has further expedited your growth. I am very excited by this role's potential exposure to a wide spectrum of activities from research, modelling and analysis to client exposure. This role also provides an opportunity to contribute to the team by thinking out of the box and generating contrarian ideas.

This role is complementary to my prior stint with PS Investment Management where I was involved in the investment research and analysis of the China Real Estate Investment Trust. I worked on the detailed modelling and valuation using an in-house model, as well as conducted sensitivity and scenario analysis for the investment projections. Essentially, my key strengths include:

- Good knowledge on various financial instruments like credit derivatives, variance swaps, ETFs, and commodities
- Competent analytical skills on investment and risk analysis for trading desk
- Proficient in modelling and equity research

With these skill sets, I am confident that I will make a valuable contribution to the team. Thank you for reviewing my attached resume. I look forward to an opportunity to meet you for a further discussion.

Yours faithfully

Alvin Lim
+65 1234 5678
alvin.lim@mba.smu.edu.sg

Your address

- Hiring manager's name (if unknown, use designation)
- Company name
- Company address

Dear Mr or Ms XXX (if you know the name). Otherwise, "Dear Sir or Madam" or "Dear" followed by designation.

First paragraph

Open with a brief self-introduction stating your degree programme and the year of expected graduation. Be clear to indicate the purpose for writing, specifying the position you are seeking (e.g. summer internship, or full-time position) and your availability to start.

Second paragraph

Research and understand what the job entails. Demonstrate genuine enthusiasm by articulating your interest in joining the company and motivation for the role. This paragraph should always be customised.

Third paragraph

Showcase and substantiate how your qualifications and career plan match the job, and align your value-add proposition with the employer's needs. Highlight relevant skills, experience and knowledge that would meet the requirements of the role. Give examples from your resume.

Final paragraph

Close by reiterating your interest in the role and your availability for an interview. Finish on a positive note, and thank the employer for their time. Use "Yours faithfully" with "Dear Sir or Madam" and "Yours sincerely" with a personal form of salutation (e.g. "Dear Mrs Cheong"). ■

PERSONAL BRANDING AND NETWORKING

Establishing your own brand and image, along with making new connections in the industry, is important for a fresh graduate's career success. Here are some tips on how you can enhance your personal brand and network with ease.

Your personal brand is what people remember of you. In the early stages of your career, managing first impressions and your professional image is crucial in clinching the role you want.

Networking helps you to get to where you want to be as well, and there are certain strategies to follow to make connections with industry contacts successfully.

Personal branding tips

1. Determine your unique selling proposition

Know what sets you apart from other candidates gunning for similar roles. When speaking to recruiters, or sending in your resume and cover letter to apply for coveted positions, you need to show that you have the requisite competencies needed and are able to contribute to the industry.

Although you are fresh from school, let recruiters know what form of specialised knowledge or relevant experience you have under your belt.

2. Tell your personal brand story

Include a career objective statement or summary of skill sets at the very top of your resume and state why you are meant for the role you applied for very early on in your cover letter.

Having a portfolio which contains your best works helps; when attending job interviews and networking sessions, whether in-person or virtually, you can show your portfolio to interested recruiters.

If you are applying for jobs online, craft your personal bio to show your specialisations and abilities.

Similarly, make sure your LinkedIn profile and social media presence is kept professional, revealing your areas of interest and expertise.

A word of advice

Be yourself

Do not make up selling points at all costs or try too hard to be someone you are not! Concentrate on showcasing your existing skills and experience as a young professional.



Networking strategies

1. Dress well for success

At a networking event, no matter whether it is in-person or virtual, you should be dressed in formal attire, unless the dress code stated is smart casual.

For the gentlemen, prepare your suit and tie for the event as you can always shed layers when the occasion is less formal than expected. Being underdressed is a poor reflection of your professionalism.

As for the ladies, you can remove your formal jacket if the event is not so official. Exercise restraint on accessorising to maintain a professional image.

2. Strategise and be selective

Trying to speak to everyone at a networking event is unrealistic and counterproductive, even if it is virtual. Before attending the event, you should find out about the participating companies, and plan who you want to make an impression on.

Strategise how much time you need to do so, and maximise your time and energy for the single event.

3. Follow up, follow through

After meeting someone new at a networking event, you should establish the point of contact via a business card (if the event is physical), a LinkedIn message, or an email, introducing yourself and thanking them for taking the time to speak to you at the event.

You can make a reference to any memorable point during the conversation in person, and do send them any documents as promised, be it your resume or a link to your portfolio.

4. Keep the conversation going

Prepare an elevator pitch for yourself, focusing on your career background and interests in less than half a minute. It should also be in an interesting and succinct manner.

Avoid sensitive topics such as politics and religion at networking events, and focus on the value you can bring to others with your skills and knowledge.

5. Listen and show interest

Be engaged in the conversation when you are speaking to someone new or listening to another party.

Ask genuine questions when appropriate and be interested in what the other party is saying. Provide input only when it is necessary.



A word of advice

Put your phone away

Even if the networking event is virtual, put your mobile phone on silent mode and keep it away. If you want to take down notes on a device, make sure the other party knows what you are up to, so that you do not come across as rude or uninterested. ■

4 DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

One-on-one Interviews



Otherwise known as personal or face-to-face interviews, this involves your interviewer asking a series of questions to evaluate your suitability for the job. Although present circumstances mean that one-on-one interview sessions usually take place virtually, it is still common.

Some companies prefer using several rounds of one-on-one interviews for different department heads to meet with the potential candidate before deciding on his or her fate with the company.

Interview tips

- Show your interviewer that you are interested in the job by asking relevant questions. Some simple ones include asking about the role's day-to-day tasks, the work culture, or the role's career path.
- You should also talk about how the job role matches your aspirations, career plans and relevant interests. Enthusiasm is key.
- Demonstrate specific examples of the skills required for the role you are applying for and discuss relevant transferable skills you obtained from any school or work experience.
- Also note that body language is just as important as verbal communication. Maintain a decent level of eye contact throughout the interview, sit upright to exude confidence and remember to smile.

Video Interviews



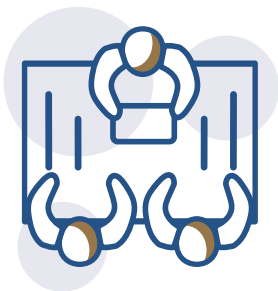
The most common interview type in the new normal, video interviews are conducted by almost all employers. However, due to the potential technical pitfalls and how different they may be depending on the platform used by each employer, they tend to intimidate graduate job seekers.

Video interviews may take place "live" (e.g. through Zoom) or pre-recorded (e.g. video submissions).

Interview tips

- Practise makes perfect. Start by getting used to appearing on-screen. Switch on your computer's webcam and record yourself as though you are running through a practice interview.
- Set the scene by dressing smartly and making sure the area where you will be carrying out the interview looks like a professional workplace.
- If you are using a Wi-Fi connection, make sure you have good signal strength so that the video conference does not drop midway through your interview. A good way to check this is to stream a video over YouTube.
- Lastly, if you are taking the call on a laptop, remember to plug it in to a power source – you may be online longer than you think.

Panel Interviews



Panel interviews typically involve anywhere from three to eight interviewers – usually three for graduate interviews. They will likely consist of a mix of HR personnel, business managers and some departmental specialists.

Do not be lulled into a false sense of security if these interviews are held over video. They tend to be more rigorous and meticulous than individual interviews as you will be juggling questions from multiple sources. Although this may sound intimidating, there is no need to fret. The interviewers are out to find out the same thing as at any other interview: Whether you are a good fit for the company.

Interview tips

- Maintain direct eye contact with the interviewers. If your interview is taking place in-person, answer them while making eye contact. If it is over video, talk to the camera instead of the video feed on-screen.
- Address the interviewers by name when speaking to them. If your interview is taking place face-to-face, one little trick is to get their name cards at the beginning of the session, and then arrange them in front of you according to the interviewers' sitting arrangement.
- Stay calm if one of the interviewers looks bored. Given their different backgrounds, not every member on the panel may be interested in your response to a question asked.
- You will sometimes be asked the same question twice by mistake. Do not second-guess yourself, and always keep to the same version of your story.

Phone Interviews



A phone interview is often used as a screening exercise where employers check some basic information prior to a face-to-face or virtual interview. It is also used to sieve through suitable candidates early in the recruitment process.

The relative anonymity of a phone interview may allow you to speak to your interviewer without the stress of travelling to an unfamiliar place in professional attire, but avoid letting your guard down.

Interview tips

- Much of the impact you make will come through your voice, so sounding attentive and enthusiastic is important.
- Take note of the keywords of the questions asked for reference when responding to your interviewer.
- Do not be distracted by your surroundings or lose track of what you want to say next. Avoid filler words such as “umm” and “uh-huh” or constant requests to repeat the questions.
- Have your resume and completed application form next to you in case you need to refer to them during the phone interview.
- Choose a conducive, quiet environment for the phone appointment to prevent background noise from ruining your session. ■

MASTERING THE JOB INTERVIEW

Securing a job interview is the next step to getting the role you have applied for. It is now up to you to convince the employer about your fit for the role and the company.

The format of the job interview may differ, so you may find yourself sitting in a one-on-one interview or even a panel interview. However, the ways to present the best of your professional self and excel in a job interview are the same for any setting.

Here are some do's and don'ts to help you prepare for the interview.

DO...

✓ ...your homework

Make sure to do your research and visit the employer's website for information of recent work or news that interests you, as well as how you can contribute to the organisation's business.

When researching, make sure your employer research covers the following information:

- What the company does (products made and/or services provided).
- The company's history and defining moments.
- Where it operates and in which markets.
- What it offers that is unique compared to its competitors.
- The company's core values and aims.

✓ ...practise

Approach your career coach for a practice session. They can help you improve your interview skills and may be able to share crucial insights into the particular employer you are interested in and what they usually look for in potential candidates.

✓ ...be in control of yourself during the interview

While being nervous during the interview session is completely natural, do not let your nerves get the better of you.

When you are in the interview, remember that it is fine to pause and gather your thoughts before responding to a question. Also, if you are unsure about a question, you can always seek clarification.

✓ ...plan your day

Remember – first impressions can go a long way. Make sure you know what to wear on the day and how to get to your interview venue. Charge your phone and read through your application again in detail.

You should also bring along a fresh copy of your resume and job application form. Also, organise any supporting documents you need to take with you in advance.

✓ ...reflect about yourself

Recruiters are interested in the unique skills you can bring to the table. Reflect on your work experience, skills, strengths and interests and how these relate to the job and area of work.

Think about your achievements and activities, which can include hobbies, work for university societies, internships or work placements and voluntary work. Make notes on the skills learned from these experiences and how you have applied them.

More importantly, you should also note your contributions to different situations.



DO NOT...

✘ ...fail to communicate

Be polite at all times and avoid any miscommunications by confirming the details of the appointment beforehand. Be certain to state your preferred date and time slot.

In case of any mitigating circumstances, make sure to call the interviewer to reschedule. This shows your sincerity about the job offer and consideration for their time.

✘ ...give overly-practised answers

Seasoned recruiters can tell when you have excessively rehearsed your answers for the interview.

For instance, cliché answers such as, “My biggest weakness is being a perfectionist”, will not impress recruiters.

Find the right balance between prepping ahead of the interview and holding a professional two-way conversation with the employer to increase your chances of having a successful job interview.

✘ ...be afraid to ask questions

Job interviews are not just for employers to assess your suitability for the role, but also an opportunity for you to determine if the job and company match your needs. Asking questions will also show the interviewer your level of interest in the position, and will improve your chances of landing the job.

Ask thoughtful questions about the job's day-to-day responsibilities, professional development and career progression opportunities, the team you will be working with, or even workplace culture to get a clearer idea of the role on offer.

✘ ...forget to showcase your strengths

Recruiters have an idea of the kind of competencies and personality needed to fill the role, and are looking for individuals who are able to add value to the team.

Failing to explain what you can offer to the organisation may decrease your chances of being considered for the position. Remember to emphasise your relevant skills and qualities to show their alignment with the job description.



Quick tip

Before going to your interview, review your resume or job application form. Think of how you can expand any examples and skills, or if there is any noteworthy information that you left out when writing your application.

Ask yourself questions like: “Which examples would be the best ones to highlight for the job on offer?” Talk about these during your interview. ■

GETTING TO KNOW WHAT IS INSIDE YOUR INTERVIEWER'S HEAD

Because interviewers have to find the right person for the role and cannot read your mind, they have to settle for observing you closely instead. Reassure them of your suitability for the role with these tips!



What your interviewer is thinking	How to reassure them
<p>Is the candidate really interested in this job?</p> <p>The last thing recruiters want is to hire someone who does not really want the job and may leave a few months after starting or pull out at the last minute before starting work.</p> <p>They also do not want to employ someone who will be unhappy in their role and add little to the organisation.</p>	<p>Show your interviewers that you have a realistic grasp of what the day-to-day job entails by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asking what would be expected of you day-to-day as an employee. 2. Clarifying anything the interviewer says in response to your questions. 3. Paraphrasing what the interviewer says to you to show you understand what they mean. <p>One of the best ways you can also reassure your interviewers is to show your genuine enthusiasm for the role and what it has to offer. Do not be afraid to be upbeat and talk about how this job role matches your aspirations, career plans and relevant interests.</p> <p>Also, do not forget to make it clear from your reactions that you will be getting a lot out of this job for some time to come!</p>
<p>Does the candidate have the basic skills to get the job done?</p> <p>It costs time and money to market a job opening and assess applicants, and even more resources to train a fresh graduate until he or she can finally start paving their way. So, the greater your skills, the greater the chance that you can hit the ground running.</p> <p>This scenario is no doubt much more appealing to managers and recruiters than the prospect of grooming you from scratch.</p>	<p>Divide your answers into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate specific examples of the skills required for the job role. 2. Discuss good transferable skills, such as commercial awareness and leadership skills, as well as basic knowledge from any previous experiences or vocational exposure you may have had. <p>Interviewers do not expect you to start work as a fully-developed employee, but what they do want to see is potential and a willingness to learn.</p>

Can the candidate bring anything new to my organisation?

Recruiters typically have an overall competency plan that they need to fill. They must consider the skills, interests and knowledge that their current employees possess and decide whether or not you can bring in something that can fill in the gaps.

Make sure you show that you can bring the skills and qualities that the job description states – this is what the interviewer is looking for.

Even if you are not asked straight out about your skills, find some way to bring it up at some point during the interview. A good time for this is near the end of the session, when interviewers will typically offer you a chance to share additional information.

How well will this candidate get along with colleagues and clients?

No recruiter wants to hire someone whom they suspect may disrupt, upset, or ruin relationships between colleagues or clients. As such, interviewees who come across as rude, cynical, difficult, or arrogant will likely be avoided.

Stay polite and positive. And most importantly, listen. Take an interest in what other job roles or people there are in the organisation. Ask questions about the people you might work with, or how your role allows you to support them in their respective tasks.

While your interviewers may not always answer such questions – some of this may be confidential information – this does show initiative and a dedication to maintaining the company's relationships with its clients.

Does the candidate have other interviews of job offers lined up?

Even as you compete with other jobseekers for a position, recruiters are also competing with other companies for talent. Interviewers want to know whether you are being courted by any other organisation so they can timetable their final decision if they like you, and extend an offer before someone else does.

Do not be shy about talking about other jobs that you have applied for. If they are similar to the one you are interviewing for, it will show recruiters that you really thought through your job search – a good thing!

However, if you have already accepted a job offer, do not keep shopping around for more prospects! If recruiters even suspect that you are engaging in this practice, they may just write you off on the spot.

How do I feel about this candidate? Is he or she lying or behaving strangely?

Experienced recruiters often use their instincts, and will raise concerns if something does not feel quite “right” during an interview.

Be honest. Admit it if you do not know an answer to a question instead of trying to ballpark your way through. If you are not sure about what you are being asked, or feel you have not yet developed a particular skill that this job requires, be open with your interviewer.

In addition, if you happen to have any mitigating circumstances on the day itself or suddenly fall ill, it is wise to flag this up to the interviewer right at the start. That way the interviewer will understand and make allowances if you are looking uncomfortable, upset, fidgeting or not appearing as enthusiastic as they might expect.

DEALING WITH LIVE VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Live video interviews over Zoom or other conferencing apps have become the new normal. Learn how to handle them with ease!

It goes without saying that the coronavirus outbreak has changed many of the ways we interact with other people. And one of the major changes is an increase in interviews over live video conferencing as recruiters have to practise social distancing, too.

A regular interview is already nerve-wrecking enough to a graduate jobseeker, doing it over video call is a whole other level. Do not fret for here are some handy tips on how to tackle these “new normal” interviews with ease.



Preparing for your live video interview

Going into a live video interview is not just as easy as signing in, turning on your webcam and talking. You will want to do a bit of prep work beforehand to ensure you set the right tone. Here are a few pointers:

- Spend some time before the interview familiarising yourself with the platform your interview will be conducted on – whether it is Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, or any other video conferencing platform the recruiter prefers.
- Conduct research on the company you are interviewing with. Interviewers will know if you have not done your homework and are reading stuff online even over the call – it is very obvious. They can even hear you Googling questions!
- Get comfortable talking formally in front of the camera. Turn your webcam on and try rehearsing some of your possible responses to interview questions. Do not forget to pay attention to how you come across on camera, too. If you can, run through some practice video interviews with friends or career coaches.
- Dress like how you would for an in-person interview, and that includes the parts of you that are off-camera. Dressing right will help get you into the right headspace, and you also will not be left embarrassed if you have to move around for an unexpected reason.
- Your interviewer would have agreed on a time slot with you for the interview. So block out a quiet spot in your house or room for that time in advance. You do not want roommates or family members walking in or messing around in the background while you are on the call.
- When picking a spot for your interview, try and find somewhere reasonably quiet and well-lit, with a tidy background free of clutter. You will want to project a professional image, so make sure you do not have anything too personal or inappropriate lurking around behind you.

How to nail your live video interview

Once the big day comes, it is time for you to shine. Here are some tips on how to present yourself effectively over that live video call:

- Before you even get down to your interview, check your Wi-Fi, webcam and microphone. An easy way to check how strong or spotty your Wi-Fi connection is for a video call is to stream a HD YouTube video. Observe how the video loads – does it play smoothly, or does it keep buffering?
- Start off by greeting your interviewer as you would in real life. Just because you are talking online does not mean that you can drop social niceties.
- Try and get to know your interviewer before jumping into the interview proper. Make some small talk, or ask them a bit about themselves and how they have been doing. Video conference calls are always slightly awkward for everyone, so your interviewer may appreciate you trying to break the ice.
- When talking, try to speak slightly slower than usual and put extra effort into choosing the right words to get your points across. The biggest difference in a live video interview and a real-life one is that non-verbal communication does not translate as easily. So remember that your words are all you have to rely on.
- If the call glitches, freezes, or lags, do not panic. Keep calm, wait for the call quality to be restored, explain that the call glitched up for a bit and check with your interviewer if they heard everything you said before.
- Try your best to look at the camera rather than the video feed on screen. Even though this feels rather awkward, one of the best things you can do in a video interview is to maintain eye contact.
- Most importantly, just like you would do with an in-person interview, do not forget to follow up with your interviewer afterwards, whether with a thank-you email or by connecting over LinkedIn.

Some tough questions to look out for

Just because your interview is not physical does not mean that you are excused from tricky questions. In fact, you will be getting the exact same questions you would get in-person. Some more timely examples of these questions may include:

- How do you think our business has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic this year?
- Which of your achievements or experiences best demonstrate your key strengths?
- What have this pandemic and ensuing recession taught you about yourself?
- What steps have you been taking to stay informed and relevant amidst all the uncertainties this year?
- How do you see your career developing over the next few years in a post-coronavirus world?

Some of these questions may seem like real head-scratchers, but it is not about getting the “right” answer. Remember that recruiters just want to get a better sense of who you are and how you approach difficult situations that you may not fully understand.

Take time to do your research beforehand on how the recruiter’s industry may have been affected. Make sure you put in the extra effort during the interview to talk through your thought process to explain how you might have derived your conclusions.

And last but not least, remember to come prepared with questions of your own. This is the perfect time to hear recruiters’ insights into where they see things going during this time, and how their companies have responded to the pandemic. It might also give you some fresh talking points if you have other interviews lined up. ■

TACKLING CASE STUDIES

Here are some tips on how to make your case by impressing recruiters during a case study session.

WHAT?

No matter whether it is in-person or over video, case study exercises can be for individuals or groups. You will usually be given some information about a work-related scenario and asked to imagine being part of a group of experts giving advice to a client or superior on the basis of the evidence.

The series of activities will probably be carried out over a period of a few hours and is likely to culminate in a presentation to the assessors. You may also be given additional information to assess at specific intervals throughout the allocated time.

It is also important to note that they are typically based on real-life business developments.

WHEN?

Case studies are particularly popular in assessment centres for graduate jobs in banking, financial services, accountancy and management consulting, but they can also be part of assessments for other business sectors and industries as well.

HOW TO APPROACH THEM

1. You need to be clear about what you are being asked to do. Start by reading through the information pack and assessing the relevant parts.
2. Thoroughly understand the problem, your role and your objectives. If you are unsure, ask for more information or clarification about something from your assessors.
3. If you are working in a group, you could divide up the tasks. For instance, nominate someone to assess any new information passed to the group during the course of the exercise. You will also need someone to manage the time taken for each task, so ensure that your group has a timekeeper.
4. Do not dominate discussions, but contribute to them – you should articulate your thought process so your assessors can see how you approach problems.
5. Remember to allocate time to prepare for your final presentation, and be realistic about how much you can fit into it.
6. Stay focused on your objectives! Your final presentation should be relevant, clear and concise, and should include a summary of your conclusions and recommendations.

What assessors look out for in case studies

- Analysis
- Problem-solving skills
- Time management
- Teamwork
- Commercial awareness
- Presentation abilities



Can I practise for these?

YES, YOU CAN!

Here are some ways you can prepare for case studies:

1. Find out about the kind of business decisions the company you are applying for has to make, or has made recently.
2. You will need a bird's-eye view of the current economic environment. Read the business pages of newspapers or magazines to get a better idea of current business activity.
3. Practise your mental arithmetic, as you may have to demonstrate your quantitative abilities without a calculator.
4. Talk to your relevant industry contacts/mentors to learn more about new developments. You can also bounce various scenarios off them to see if your recommendations are sound.
5. There is often more than one way to solve a problem. Get in the habit of brainstorming multiple approaches to a single case, instead of sticking to a single textbook solution.
6. Check in with the Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre for its suite of workshops or relevant presentations on case studies. Join any practice sessions they host until you become familiar with the format.

Though part of the aim of case studies is to help assessors see how you cope with the unfamiliar, research will still boost your confidence and help you tackle issues in a more informed way.



Case study example

The following example, based on a genuine case study used by a multinational investment bank, should give you an idea of what to expect:

The scenario:

A large publisher of magazines and books is looking to make a significant acquisition. It has identified a target company and approached a number of investment banks for their views on the merits of a potential deal and a target price.

Based on these presentations, the publisher will decide whether to proceed with a bid and, if so, select one bank to act as its advisor.

The task:

Your team is one of the investment banks bidding to win the mandate. You need to analyse the figures provided, to review the marketplace, your potential client (the publisher) and the target company.

You must also prepare a five-minute presentation giving your recommendations.

Note:

You may either be provided with a wealth of raw data alongside the scenario, or you and your group may have to dig up all the necessary information by yourselves somehow.

Either way, you will need to crystallise all this information into a workable action plan that you can present to your assessors. ■

ACING ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Find out why graduate employers design assessment centres, what exercises to expect and how to show you are the right candidate for the job.

Assessment centres are a common feature of the recruitment process, where employers convene a group of candidates to complete a series of exercises, tests and interviews. These are designed to evaluate a candidate's suitability for a certain role in the organisation.

This format also allows you to showcase a broader range of skills and competencies than if you were just given an interview. For this reason, they are a more holistic and effective way to select candidates than interviews alone.

Typical assessment centre activities

Employers design their own assessment centres to test for skills and aptitudes that are required for their own organisations, but they typically contain similar elements and exercises.

As such, you can expect a combination of the following:

- **Information session** – You may be given a presentation about the organisation's business.
- **Group ice-breaker exercise** – This exercise is for you to get to know fellow candidates and also your employers.
- **Aptitude and psychometric tests** – You may have already taken these tests online, but you may be asked to repeat them to confirm your results.
- **In-tray or e-tray exercise** – This allows employers to evaluate your ability to absorb information, prioritise, make decisions and communicate.
- **Group exercise** – This could be a case study discussion, probably involving an issue or project relevant to the business. Alternatively, it could be a group problem-solving exercise. For example, you might be put into teams and asked to construct something.
- **Individual or group presentations** – Some employers may give you a topic prior to the assessment day so you can prepare in advance, but some may decide to surprise you with an impromptu presentation. For the latter, you would typically be allowed to choose your presentation topic from a list of pre-selected ones.

- **Interviews** – You could have one or more of these, and they could be either one-on-one or panel interviews. Your interviewers could be from the HR department or senior employees from the area of the business you are applying to.
- **Social breaks** – Although mealtimes are usually not formally assessed, they are still an opportunity to demonstrate your interpersonal skills and to find out a little more about your prospective colleagues, the business and your fellow candidates in a less formal setting.



What recruiters are looking for

- Evidence of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving.
- The group setting makes it easier to assess your interpersonal and negotiation skills.
- **REMEMBER:** This is not a competition! Recruiters are assessing your ability to work with others, not your performance level.

Preparing for an assessment centre

Turn up with an open mind and be ready to get involved, but remember that some practical preparation before the day will be your biggest help and confidence booster.

- **Reach out to your career centre.** Most career centres run practice sessions for assessment centres. At the very least, you may be able to practise psychometric tests or book sessions to prepare for the individual assessment centre activities, such as group exercises.
- **Read ALL materials sent by the employer carefully.** These include practical information such as the location and time of the assessment centre. Details about how the day will be structured may also be provided.
- **Check whether or not you need to complete any tasks before the day.** You may need to work on parts of a case study or put together a presentation. Plan time for this and do not leave it until the last minute.
- **Brush up on your interview skills.** Interviews will be included in the format so be ready to shine for the bits where you have to go solo.

Tips on how to shine at assessment centres

1. Be professional

Arrive on time and look the part. Be friendly but also polite. You should also aim to initiate conversations with other candidates.

2. Participate

Do not just stand by the sidelines. Show enthusiasm in every task. Group exercises are designed to see how well you work with others, so make sure you take part.

3. Do not lose concentration

The day is likely to be long and tiring, so have a good night's rest beforehand as you will need to stay alert and engaged throughout the day.

4. Be the best version of you

Just be yourself! But be the most positive version of yourself. If you tend not to speak up, make an effort to articulate your thoughts. If you know you can sometimes be overbearing, let others have their say too and be careful not to interrupt. ■



BEING ASSERTIVE DURING JOB INTERVIEWS

Being assertive is a great skill that everyone should learn to apply.

Assertiveness is about finding a happy medium between aggressiveness and passivity. But it is also about striking a balance between your needs and the demands of the roles you are interviewing for.

In the interview room, this translates to staying in control and treating the session as a two-way process, with clear, calm and frank communication. Here are some ways you can accomplish this!

Be an assertive communicator

- **Smile:** Always look directly at your interviewer and smile. If you are being interviewed by a panel, take the time to look at each interviewer in turn.
- **Repeat key facts:** If you want to highlight an important detail, mention it and then summarise it again. If you think you should mention it later, do so, but be careful not to come across as pedantic.
- **Find equal trade-offs:** Do not be intimidated into accepting a one-sided bargain. Your agreement should outline a win-win scenario, where you and the employer both gain.
- **Do not panic:** Instead, buy time by asking the interviewer to clarify the question, or by asking for some time to think it through.
- **Ask questions:** Show your intelligence, maturity, enthusiasm and curiosity by asking questions about the company's role and the industry. Questions about what is it like to work at the organisation are also an indication of your desire to fit in.
- **"I" vs "We":** Use the first person singular, rather than "we" if you want to highlight your contributions.
- **Slow down:** Breathe deeply and pace your speech.

- **Have realistic goals:** Wanting a role where you would be expected to perform and offer excellent service is far more realistic than aiming to run a department in 18 months.

- **Break the ice:** Do not be afraid to start a conversation with your recruiters – it shows courage and can even help you to relax! Just avoid making extremely personal comments and keep things neutral.

Be an active listener

- **Do not interrupt:** Do not interrupt and form your own assumptions of what the recruiter might be asking or saying before finishing. You would not want to spend precious time answering a question, only to find that you have misunderstood the recruiter!
- **Nod and acknowledge:** Every once in a while, nod and acknowledge the recruiters. If necessary, make brief comments to indicate that you are listening.
- **Paraphrase:** Occasionally, paraphrase what the interviewer has told you about their organisation, from their frame of reference – it shows that you are taking things in.

- **Prepare:** Settle into a ready state to listen to the recruiter. Pay attention to the recruiter's words and actions instead of getting distracted by your own thoughts.
- **Echo their language:** Establish a rapport by echoing the language the interviewer used to describe their approach to problems and solutions.

Do not forget about your "Bill of Assertive Rights" too!

You have the right to...

1. Look your interviewer in the eye and feel OK.
2. Praise your own achievements, even if no one else has bothered to.
3. Ask intelligent questions.
4. Say "I do not know" or "Sorry, I do not understand the question".
5. Have made mistakes in the past – and to be honest about them.
6. Change your mind in an interview.
7. Bring your resume into the interview room and refer to it if it helps.
8. Crack intelligent jokes once in a while and get your interviewers laughing.
9. Say "I am capable of doing this job" if that is what you honestly believe.
10. Say "I do not want this job" if you really do not want it.

GRILLING YOUR INTERVIEWER

Not asking any questions or asking bad questions at a job interview will make you seem unprepared or disinterested. Here is a guide on asking your interviewer the right questions in order to come across as a candidate worthy of being hired.

1 Ask more about the tasks you will be involved in

Interviewers usually develop a better idea of your capabilities and background as you answer their questions in a job interview.

After all, it is during the job interview that they can pick out your strengths and expertise, have a clearer idea of how to groom you as a potential hire in the company and possibly even offer you room for growth beyond the job description.

Hence, when your turn comes to ask your interviewer questions, do sound them out on what they would like you to focus on, to meet and exceed expectations for the role they are hiring for.

2 Ask about training and growth opportunities

Employers want graduate hires who are hungry for personal and professional growth, and who will, in turn, contribute resources and expertise to the company.

Beyond the short term, employers will want you to be able to help tackle challenges and key problems the company is facing as well.

Ask about training opportunities and future growth plans to show keen interest and that the role is in line with your personal career objectives.

3 Ask about the company's challenges and key plans

It is crucial for fresh graduates to understand the bigger picture of how their skills fit into the larger goals of the company which they are interviewing for, and possibly becoming a part of.

Ask about key projects in your prospective department and show interest in understanding the company's business and outlook, especially in this uncertain period. Doing so demonstrates that you are keen to help solve problems for your prospective employer, and shows that you have a strong understanding of your own skills as well as knowledge of the industry.

4 Ask about any expectations for the role

Interviewers can give you a better idea of what they are looking for during the job interview itself. Read between the lines and sense the body language of your interviewers as well – even if it is far harder to do so over a live video interview.

You can also ask your interviewers for their honest opinion on your suitability for the role and the company, and listen to their feedback with an open mind.

This can be helpful information when you eventually join the company or when you are pursuing job applications elsewhere. As insiders of the industry, the hiring managers will be able to tell you if you are lacking in certain qualities or qualifications needed for your dream job.

5 Ask about how to follow up with the application

Before leaving a job interview, be sure to thank the interviewers and end it on a good note. Highlight your qualities and skills, as well as any relevant experiences, as a conclusion on why you are suited for the role applied for. Send them a thank-you email as a follow-up courtesy.

At the very end of the interview, whether face-to-face or video, make sure you ask about the next steps which are expected of you and the company, as well as more information about their hiring timeline. A curious candidate is one step to being a successful one! ■



PREPARING FOR THE BIG DAY

Your first interview for your first proper job is here! Breaking down the run-up to the interview into a series of manageable chunks and actions can really help a lot.

Quick grooming tips

For gentlemen:

- The clean-shaven look is always a safe bet. Get rid of stubble or wispy facial hair.
- Keep your hair neat and make sure that your fringe does not spill past your eyebrows.
- Do not be afraid to accessorise! Go for a solid watch or a simple pair of cufflinks to complement your outfit.
- Do overdo the cologne and aftershave.

For ladies:

- Keep your nails in neutral or natural colours – glaring colours or designs may unnecessarily distract interviewers.
- Make sure to style your hair so that it stays in place and out of your face.
- If you plan on wearing jewellery and make-up, keep things subtle and simple. You want your personality – not your accessories – to shine through!

Start by getting the dress code right

Objective: Figure how to look the part of an impressive candidate.



Your interview is a chance to show how you would fit in, and this includes your appearance.

Look on the recruiter's website for clues about what the staff at the organisation consider to be appropriate business wear and copy them. Err on the side of formality unless otherwise advised by your interviewers – it is always better to come overdressed instead of underdressed!

Your clothes should be clean, fitted and pressed. Be sure to cover up any tattoos. If you drink a lot of coffee or smoke, make sure your teeth are stain-free.

One week before

The night before

Prepare everything needed in advance

Objective: Have everything you need ready to go so you will not panic the next day.



- Whether your interview will be in-person or over video call, hang your interview outfit out in the open so you will not have to stress out about what to wear.
- If you will be going for a face-to-face interview, do not forget to pick a handy, compartmentalised document bag or folder to store your stuff in as well! Be sure to organise everything for easy access. Prepare two additional printed copies of your resume on good, solid paper for additional interviewers who might show up unannounced, too.
- When you have completed all that, get a good night's sleep. You will want to be as sharp and alert as possible!



Depart for your destination

Objective: Arrive at the interview venue with plenty of time to spare.

Traffic generally has a strange way of going against you when you need to get somewhere in a hurry.

Leave early to arrive at the location before your appointed time. Remember that when it comes to job interviews, arriving “on time” is tantamount to arriving late.



Introduce yourself to a stranger and break the ice

Objective: Get used to talking in your new surroundings by striking up a conversation with someone who works in the same company, but will not be interviewing you.

The first person you will encounter is likely to be the receptionist expecting your arrival. You may be asked to sign in before entering the visitors' area.

Be friendly and appreciative of anyone you come into contact with, be it the cleaner or the CEO.

2 hours before

30 minutes before

20 minutes before



Arrive at the premises and get comfortable with your surroundings/Log onto the interview platform and get comfortable with the platform to be used

Objective: Decrease your initial stress and get into a positive frame of mind.

For a face-to-face interview, arriving a good 30 minutes before your appointment will afford enough time and space to draw breath and get to where you are supposed to be with the least amount of aggravation.

If your interview is set to take place virtually, get onto the chosen platform and familiarise yourself with it beforehand. After you have had a look at its features, practise how you would connect with your interviewer over the camera, such as making eye contact with the camera and speaking instead of only focusing on the video feed.

Now is not the time to fret about what you have remembered and how you will come across at the interview! Create a mental list of things you like so far about the company – it could be the colour of the carpet in the reception area (if it is a face-to-face interview), or what you have gathered about the company's culture through its website (if your interview is virtual). Focus your mind on that – it will help calm you down.



Meet and greet the interviewers

Objective: From the very start, treat the interview as a meeting between two parties, not a one-way interrogation.

There is usually a short explanation of how the interview will be structured. Commonly, the interviewers will begin with an overview of the company and the role you are being interviewed for.

This preamble is the most “non-judgemental” part of the interview, so enjoy it and take the opportunity to ask some smart questions.

10 minutes before

Crunch time

Demonstrate your skills

Objective: Use your innate skills and experience and put the know-how gained through this magazine and other sources to good effect.



Introductions are usually followed by the most time-consuming part of the interview: Questions to find out whether you can do the job and, just as importantly, whether you would have the motivation to do a good job. Finally, you will get the chance to ask your own questions.

You may also be given a short test to complete before or after the interview. This could be to establish the level of your skills pertinent to the job, or a more general evaluation of your preferred working style. Follow any instructions carefully, work out how much time to allot to each part of the test and focus your whole attention on the task.

If you are applying to a graduate scheme, the testing process might be more extensive and carried out separately, such as in an assessment centre (either in-person or virtually). ■

MANAGING JOB OFFERS

What happens after you have been offered a job? How should you deal with more than one offer? Here is a guide to the proper etiquette of how you should handle your job offers, as well as how to accept or reject them professionally.

Do not get carried away with the excitement of a job offer. Instead, take the time to consider if the offer is right for you. Other than mulling over the terms and conditions presented, make sure that you raise any concerns to the employer and have realistic expectations.

How do you handle more than one job offer?

Give yourself ample time to weigh all the factors before confirming your decision.

Honesty is the best policy

Be open and honest with the employer(s) when you are considering more than one option. Acknowledge the offer and ask how long they are prepared to wait for your response. Do not accept a job verbally or in writing and then renege on the offer, as this is a breach of contract.

Inform the employers concerned only after you have made up your mind.

Be professional

Do not use the situation to play employers against each other to offer a higher starting salary or more benefits. This can backfire if an employer decides to blacklist you as an applicant entirely.

How do you accept a job offer?

You will be expected to sign an employment contract after informing the HR officer that you wish to take on the offer.

Terms to consider in detail

1. Job title
2. Salary and benefits (including travelling, phone and entertainment allowances)
3. Additional incentive compensation
4. Employee education
5. Probation period
6. Notice period (the length of time between resigning and your last day of work)
7. Hours of work per day or week
8. Holiday, sick pay entitlements and insurance
9. Starting date

How can you negotiate your salary?

Salary negotiation is an art that many find difficult to grasp. Always state a range for your salary expectations. This gives you more room for negotiation instead of nailing on a single number. By stating a range, you are giving the employer room for adjustments, and yourself wiggle room.

However, be prepared to accept the lower range which you stated as a baseline.

Research market rates and industry standards

Make sure you are making informed decisions even as a fresh graduate when evaluating job offers and benefits packages.

Here is your chance to do adequate homework based on graduate employment survey findings and market reports.

Consider the package as a whole

Review the entire remuneration package, including benefits such as bonuses, commissions and leave entitlements.

How do you reject a job offer?

Turning down a job offer can present a rather awkward situation. The bottom line is not to burn any bridges.

Maintaining cordial relationships with your contacts in the industry is important – in this case, the prospective employer who you turned down can one day become your client, a networking contact, and definitely, still a prospective employer in the future.

Inform the employer as soon as you have decided

If you are turning down an offer, let the hiring manager and HR personnel know as soon as possible, so that they can make arrangements to fill the post.

Be sincere

Call the employer to decline the offer and do so politely. Follow up with the same in writing, stating your reasons upfront. Being authentic and straightforward helps the employer understand your expectations and circumstances.

Keep in touch

The world is small. Sign off with some pleasantries and offer to keep in touch.

Words of advice

1. Do ask the employer(s) for more time to make up your mind.
2. Make sure that the employer sends you a revised offer in writing, if you are successful in negotiating the terms and conditions of the offer.
3. Do not hesitate to seek the advice of your mentors and career coaches if you have difficulty deciding on the job offer(s). ■



HEAR FROM SMU ALUMNI

Find out what SMU graduates are up to in their career journeys.

Undergraduate Alumni



A Arun Kumar

Bachelor of Business Management and Bachelor of Accountancy, 2018

Senior Analyst, Equity Operations
Goldman Sachs

My job

I am a risk manager, process innovator and exception monitor. In my job, I have the opportunity to evaluate various scenarios, and ensure they meet regulatory, operational and risk limits. If there is a deviation, I investigate and exercise judgement in resolving or escalating an issue.

Another aspect of my role includes tracking changing business environments and technology. These advancements always leave some processes obsolete, so a chunk of my time goes towards addressing any gaps that form in projects – self-initiated or otherwise.

How I got my job

I believe that a career is an intersection of your skills, personality and interests. I enjoy understanding the world of finance and its ripples through society. In personality, my preference leans towards risk mitigation over driving revenue. These considerations translated to a few roles I was suitable for, of which banking operations was one.

The firm mirrored similar views. During the interview process, attributes such as communication skills, a risk mindset, integrity and openness were assessed for both cultural and functional fit. In the end, I was selected for the role.

“Whenever you start something, you should first strive to become irreplaceable.”

The highs and lows

An operational risk mitigation role might feel tedious as your purpose seems contingent on something going wrong. That was a downer until someone helped me completely reframe this perspective.

My job is not needed only when things go awry; it is needed despite that. My role is to keep the machine well-oiled and up to date. And only when absolutely necessary, do my contingencies kick in and I swoop in to fix a problem.

My happiest moment at work

Participating in social events and committees that plan for internships or new hire integration has brought me immense joy, adding colour beyond my daily work and tasks. What I treasure most are the opportunities to continually grow my skills both personally and professionally.

One notable event is my recent transfer from a Middle Office to Settlements function, after only a couple of years in the firm. The transfer was both functional and geographical. Getting a chance to live, work and learn away from home for the first time in my life has me excited and very thankful.

Some advice

Whenever you start something, you should first strive to become irreplaceable. When someone thinks of that task, your name should be the first one that comes to their mind. But as soon as you have become irreplaceable, begin finding someone or something to replace you.

It does sound counterintuitive, but I found that it has been the best way to grow my credibility, get a deep understanding and still always free myself up to learn and do greater things.



Aloysius Ong

Bachelor of Social Science,
2017

Executive, HR Staffing
Changi General Hospital

My job

As a recruiter in Changi General Hospital supporting the Allied Health department, my role is to hire individuals who are not only passionate in joining the sector, but are also equipped with the clinical competencies to support patients seeking treatment or interventions in the hospital.

How I got my job

The relatively long interview was to assess my ability to articulate and connect with the panellists since the role of any recruiter requires the individual to partner and work with various departments and stakeholders.

“The unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, which came in late 2019, has brought about a paradigm shift in the workplace, and we need to react positively.”

The highs and lows

I have always enjoyed engaging with people. Coming from a social service agency, I witnessed the plight of many families struggling to make ends meet while securing a stable job to provide for their dependents.

Now, in the healthcare sector, I always remind myself of the many who might need support from the hospital, and do my best to bring in qualified and passionate individuals who desire to serve the community with the best patient care in whichever capacity possible.

My happiest moment at work

It is always rewarding having recruited people who are very grateful for a job. One particularly memorable episode involved a new hire who came specifically to the HR department to express her gratitude after completing the probation. Her gesture really warmed my heart, affirming the meaningful role that I am performing in the healthcare industry.

Some advice

The importance of being flexible and adaptable is key. The unprecedented coronavirus pandemic has brought about a paradigm shift in the workplace, and we need to react positively.



Bhumika Sharma

Bachelor of Science
(Economics), 2020

Management Consulting Associate,
Financial Services Advisory
KPMG

My job

My role involves solving problems for clients in the financial services industry – these range from banks, insurance companies and government bodies like central banks and ministries. My day-to-day responsibilities include research and analysis to drive solutions, producing client deliverables, project management and communication or coordination with different stakeholders.

How I got my job

The selection process consisted of an online assessment and a face-to-face interview. Prior experience in the industry definitely helped to show that I was passionate about consulting and enabled me to talk about previous relevant projects with ease.

Additionally, I talked about unique experiences to set myself apart – my exchange semester at Wharton, my journey as an Indian classical dancer, my internships and academic results. I was able to show that I was a good fit for the firm.

“In the current climate, it is especially important to know that there is always a bit of luck involved in the job search process – keep trying and be resilient in the face of rejections; they are part and parcel of the hunt.”

The highs and lows

What I love most about consulting is being able to solve some of the most important problems big organisations face. Creating that kind of impact is always challenging, but it is also equally rewarding.

Every project involves different topics and different clients, so you are constantly pushed beyond your comfort zone to master new content. This can be especially intimidating when working remotely, when communication norms are challenged and it is not always possible to seek clarification face-to-face. The key is to never shy away from asking questions and know that your teammates are always there to support you!

My happiest moment at work

Since I started my career with work from home as the norm, it was definitely memorable to finally meet my colleagues in person when regulations were relaxed. At the end of the day, the people and corporate culture make your time there worthwhile. KPMG Fun@Work pilates and yoga classes are also weekly highlights.

Some advice

Early preparation cannot be underestimated. Get an early start on the application process, like refining cover letters and perfecting the resume. Regular career counselling and mock interview sessions with my career coach really helped me gain confidence too.

Besides the application and interview process, a trite yet invaluable piece of advice is to work hard and get your grades up, all while also pursuing activities that you love. Academics and co-curricular activities both help to set you apart from competitors and show that you are a well-rounded individual who can juggle and enjoy different tasks.

In the current climate, it is especially important to know that there is always a bit of luck involved in the job search process – keep trying and be resilient in the face of rejections; they are part and parcel of the hunt.



Eugene Tan

Bachelor of Accountancy
and Bachelor of Business
Management, 2019

Associate Consultant
Bain & Company

My job

As an Associate Consultant, my primary role is to support the team with industry and client-related analyses. On a daily basis, I work closely with the client on understanding their company data and liaise with internal and external experts to obtain an outside-in perspective of the client's financial and business situation.

How I got my job

After passing an online test, I went through two rounds of face-to-face interviews. To stand out, I leveraged my prior experience in entrepreneurship and venture capital to share creative solutions and compelling answers to the problems posed to me.

"I love the vast amount of learning I get from working with clients across different industries – healthcare, agriculture, insurance, e-commerce and more!"

The highs and lows

I love the vast amount of learning I get from working with clients across different industries – healthcare, agriculture, insurance, e-commerce and more!

However, there are occasions when we have to turn around our work in a short period of time due to changes in approach, scope or timeline. That said, the mentoring and guidance I get on-the-job encourages me to press on amidst these challenging times.

Separately, the "new norm" due to the coronavirus pandemic has led to lesser face time with colleagues and clients. This has made the work slightly more complex, but at the same time, we have gradually adapted to a new "online" working rhythm.

My happiest moment at work

The most memorable moments for me are when I get to observe the challenges clients face first-hand. This first happened when I visited an agricultural farm in Vietnam. As I interviewed them and their families, I better understood the financial and social difficulties they faced; and this spurred me on to find a good solution for them and make the case a memorable one.

Some advice

Do not be afraid of learning through networking and meeting new people. When I was in university, I reached out to complete strangers through online channels and coffee chats.

These encounters were all incredibly intimidating at first, but I soon realised how rewarding they were! I learnt a whole lot about entrepreneurship and venture capital through networking and this ultimately led to various internship opportunities as well.



Low Dong Ying

Bachelor of Business
Management, 2018

LNG Portfolio Analyst
Diamond Gas International

My job

As a portfolio analyst in a liquefied natural gas (LNG) trading company, my role involves finding opportunities within the portfolio which can improve overall bottom-line of the company and supporting traders with evaluation of deal economics.

Coordinating and communicating among different teams to ensure feasibility and execution are also part of the day-to-day work when an opportunity arises.

How I got my job

I got a full-time offer while I was interning, so you could say it was a three-month long interview. During the internship, I had the opportunity to work on a few projects – which required me to speak with different people from other departments. I also had the chance to present these projects to the management team after completion.

I believe the key to landing a full-time job during internships lies in the process of talking to different people and learning from them; it has certainly helped me to gain visibility for both my character and work. Also, by articulating clearly what my career goals were, people tended to open up more and give better advice after understanding what you hope to achieve.

“Putting money aside, people and culture are factors that make you want to stay in a company.”

The highs and lows

I enjoy the fast pace, numbers-oriented environment with a clear goal of chasing bottom-line. Aside from that, the best moments are the relationships you gain with your colleagues, and that is a key motivating factor.

Putting money aside, people and culture are factors that make you want to stay in a company. However, in a trading environment, be prepared for longer working hours past the norm as you would have to manage the time zones of different markets.

My happiest moment at work

My happiest moment was my best achievement. I took on a software project and finally signed and integrated a long-term agreement with the company after a year of trial and testing. Being entrusted with the autonomy to manage my own deadlines and objectives made this a challenging yet fulfilling experience.

Some advice

Building trust is most important for fresh graduates, and this can be achieved through paying detailed attention to all the small tasks given to you right from the beginning. Always invest your best for such professionalism will invariably open new doors to bigger responsibilities.



Sharon Yeo

Bachelor of Business
Management, 2016

Co-founder
TalentTribe

My job

TalentTribe is a job search and career discovery platform for millennial jobseekers in Singapore. We help jobseekers get an inside look into different corporate cultures, office space, people and day-to-day work life. We also help jobseekers apply for jobs and internships, and offer actionable tips to level up in their job search and career.

A few of us started TalentTribe after graduating from SMU to solve the job search problem for our generation, and it has been a wild ride. As a co-founder of a start-up, you pretty much do everything – from sales, marketing and human resources (HR) to legal, operations, product development, and more.

How I got my job

I entered SMU with a keen interest in exploring consulting and entrepreneurship as a career. After a summer internship in my penultimate year, I was fortunate to receive a return offer from the consulting firm I was interning with. However, after much deliberation, I decided not to take up the offer and instead pursued the path of an entrepreneur after graduation.

“If you are keen on entrepreneurship as a career, start while you are in school.”

The highs and lows

The most rewarding part of my work is when jobseekers share with us how much they have benefitted from TalentTribe, and when employers share how they have hired the right talent through our platform.

It is also especially rewarding when your employees share that they find the work they are doing meaningful and satisfying. That is one of the joys of running your own company – you can directly see the impact you are creating, and how your efforts translate into outcomes for the customer or user.

But there are many challenges that come along with the job, one of which is constantly having to ensure that the company’s limited resources are being channeled to the most needle-moving areas. As a start-up, there are always more things that need to be done than there are resources. For every idea we pursue, we have to say “no” to 10 other good ideas.

During the coronavirus pandemic, it became even more important to have the discipline to stay focused on the opportunities within the crisis that can move the company forward.

Some advice

If you are keen on entrepreneurship as a career, start while you are in school. Work together with potential co-founders on projects to see if you can work well together, validate and iterate your business ideas with real customers to understand what the market wants. After that, get incubated in SMU’s Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship to get support from experienced founders. These help you develop the skills and networks necessary in running your own company.



Syron Ng

Bachelor of Accountancy, 2020

Consultant
Simon-Kucher & Partners

My job

As a consultant, my main responsibility is to help get a client from their current state to where they would like to be. Some of the work I do includes brainstorming for strategic recommendations, designing slides, sourcing for new clients, pricing models and implementing studies such as expert interviews and surveys.

How I got my job

Simon-Kucher & Partners (SKP) typically hires well-rounded people who can think coherently, communicate ideas effectively and work well in a team. Despite not having any formal experience

in consulting, I would say that my holistic experience in school helped to paint me as an ideal candidate. I had a couple of leadership positions and was also involved in a diverse range of internships and co-curricular activities.

Upon being shortlisted after completing SKP's online assessment, candidates would proceed directly to the super day round. The super day round consists of two individual case interviews with the senior consultants and one group case interview with the partners/directors.

"The best part of being a consultant is gaining exposure in various sectors."

The case interviews were quite typical, such as market sizing and issue tree, among others, of consulting cases which are available online. The group case interview was based on an actual SKP project. One just has to be prepared on how to tackle consulting cases in a structured manner.

The highs and lows

The best part of being a consultant is gaining exposure in various sectors. I am always gaining new knowledge, and this also helps to create my work dynamic. While I have adjusted to working from home due to the coronavirus pandemic, the lack of physical interaction with my team has impeded the forming of stronger bonds.

My happiest moment at work

Having the opportunity to provide pro-bono consulting services to a rising food and beverage start-up in Thailand has been my biggest achievement and happiest moment to date. I had the chance to do up the slide deck all by myself, and presented it fully to the client. Besides, the client's product is very interesting and I am confident that they will become huge in the future!

Some advice

Besides the typical advice of practising consulting cases, also be mindful that actual consulting projects are not as similar to case competitions, consulting cases and school projects.

The projects that I have been working on are way less granular and have a lot to deal with detailed implementations, and not generic strategies such as expanding into an overseas market.

Do also network with seniors who are working, or have worked, in the consulting field to get a better sense of the industry!

Postgraduate Alumni



Bright Hong

Master of Science in
Accounting (Data and
Analytics), 2019

Financial Analyst
Visa

My job

As a financial analyst focusing on internal controls, I aggregate and analyse data to identify risks, unusual trends and anomalies, among others, to ensure financial transactions and activities comply with company policies and procedures. I leverage data analytics, various key risk indicators and metrics to produce reports for business and internal stakeholders. My team monitors Asia Pacific operations.

Apart from that, I also leverage on data programming and develop useful tools that enhance and automate the team's data workflows.

The highs and lows

Visa has a strong collaborative culture and supports career development among employees. I have an understanding and supportive manager and team, which keeps me motivated and wanting to do my best. The work is exciting, allowing me to not only apply my programming and data analytic skills – which I gained through my programme in SMU – but also expand on them with new projects.

As we all have been impacted by the global coronavirus pandemic, limited in-person interactions have been a major challenge, especially being relatively new to the role and company. However, the company gives employees extra support to get through this hard time. The pandemic has also helped the business as there is now increased emphasis on the importance of digitalisation and data, such as contactless payment and e-commerce.

“It is important to be open-minded and open to new opportunities.”

My happiest moment at work

I was lucky enough to join Visa before an unprecedented time and be a part of the change that is sweeping across the industry and society.

The most enjoyable aspect of my work is the people I work with day in and day out. I have been able to learn a lot from them, and at the same time, contribute to the overall success of the team.

Some advice

It is important to be open-minded and open to new opportunities. Even if you may not be in your ideal job or role, stay positive and try to find ways to take advantage of the situation such as learning a new skill or expanding your network.

By doing that, it may open new doors and opportunities. Also, embrace change and disruptions in your job, organisation, or industry, because that is how you stay ahead. I am glad I made the decision to attend the SMU Master of Science in Accounting programme because it has led me to new paths that I never imagined I would be on a few years ago.



Ding Yihan

**Master of Science in Finance,
2017**

**Planning Analyst
Apple Inc.**

My job

Currently, I am mainly in charge of the iPhone reseller execution process. By analysing historical and current shipment attainment data, I assist in tracking gating factors to promote frictionless execution flow. For example, I assist in solving partner escalations by tracking projected supply shortage and prioritising the execution of rollover sales order.

Additionally, I am also responsible for monitoring the shipments of iPhone OEMs and hubs to ensure timeliness, and investigating handover risks.

During the New Product Introduction (NPI), which is the most important focus of our job, I proactively perform iPhone launch activities such as execution for markets of Singapore, Japan, Philippines and Indonesia, among others.

How I got my job

My interview at Apple was a most memorable experience. As I needed companies to help me apply for an Employment Pass, many companies either rejected me immediately without further interview or did not consider me a prioritised applicant.

I applied for positions in different industries on various job-hunting websites, and did not give up despite numerous rejection letters. Fortunately, two days after I had completed a designated project for Apple, they called me for an on-site interview.

This project tested the various qualifications and aptitude of applicants, such as problem-solving and analytical skills. The trickiest part of the face-to-face interview was the presentation of this project, especially during the question-and-answer session as applicants needed to answer questions under pressure and within a short time.

“I recommend all students to seek help from SMU PCGS Career Centre, which supported me and made me believe in myself again.”

The highs and lows

The working environment at Apple is good, and everyone is willing to share their knowledge. When I joined the Reseller Operation Control Tower, a cross-functional team, the managers gave me one-to-one training and answered my questions patiently. They spent several hours every week training me, although they were very busy themselves. Sometimes I felt sorry as they only had time to help me after working hours, but they still encouraged me and were satisfied with my progress.

The most challenging aspect is the fast-paced working life, and people really need to work hard to catch up with the others.

My happiest moment at work

My happiest moment at work, and most memorable project, was the NPI for the 2020 iPhone SE's spring launch. It was the first time that everyone launched the new product at home, and every Apple employee collaborated closely. I felt so honoured to be a part of the team and witnessed the miracle.

Some advice

Postgraduate Career Services is extremely helpful, and I want to express my appreciation for my career coaches. They really cared about my job search progress, and gave me many valuable ideas. Without their help, I would not have been able to get over the difficult time I had when searching for a job for over half a year.

I recommend all students to seek help from Postgraduate Career Services, which supported me and made me believe in myself again.



Jimmy Ong

Master of Human Capital Leadership, 2020

Founder and Director
MTSK Consulting

My job

I provide people with development training, business consulting and coaching. MTSK stands for Mind Transformation, Skill and Knowledge, and I look to enable people as such.

How I got my job

After spending nearly 25 years working for a leading multinational corporation (MNC), I decided to leave the corporate work to pursue my passion for human capital development. To that end, I took up the full-time Master of Human Capital Leadership programme with

SMU to equip myself with the latest knowledge on human resources (HR).

During this time, I partnered with various companies which provided sales and leadership training. I also invested in coaching programmes, and am now a certified business and life coach.

When I completed my studies at SMU, I set up MTSK consulting.

“The new VUCA world that will come after the coronavirus pandemic wraps up needs a lot of empathy.”

The highs and lows

The initial company business results were encouraging as I was able to provide value-added services to my clients, and I could also combine my business know-how and people skills. However, one of the challenges I face is my erratic working hours. At times, I have to deal with demanding customers or difficult sales situations, too.

My happiest moment at work

I like to see things happen. It could be solving a complex business issue, overcoming a personal challenge, or developing a new skill. Because my work allows me to design and execute intervention plans, this gives me a lot of satisfaction, as I can witness life changes and businesses being transformed, all for the better.

I am also often excited by the chance to share my experiences through various mentoring platforms.

Some advice

For people wanting to join this career paths, I would summarise my advice in 3Ps.

Be **Purposeful**, **Passionate**, and **People-centric**.

Be **Purposeful**. Everything must come with intention. You need to know why you are doing what you are doing. Creating purposeful goals and take purposeful steps towards them can help achieve the desired outcome.

Be **Passionate** about the work you are doing. It is the fire you have in your belly that makes things matter and makes things happen.

Be **People-centric**. The new VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world that will come after the coronavirus pandemic is a world of distrust and misunderstanding between people. In people engagement, we need to take a more human-centric approach by understanding the customer journey and his or her pain points. We need to co-create solutions that empower people and enrich their lives.

Also, I stand by an old Chinese proverb, which I also use as my motto in life. It translates to “One loses by pride and gains by modesty”.

Choose humility as a way of life.



Lee Kum Chuen

**Master of Science in
Economics, 2020**

Senior Associate
Ministry of Finance

My job

I am part of a team that does economic analysis of various policies. The types of analyses I do include cost-benefit analysis, effectiveness and eligibility criteria analysis.

Over the course of my job, I have worked on projects involving government revenue analysis and forecast, global trends in taxation, criteria adjustment of current policies and proposals for new policies. My day-to-day tasks involve talking to various stakeholders of the various policies, talking to owners of the data and statistics, requesting, managing and storing the data, running various analyses on the data and presenting findings to higher-ups in the Ministry of Finance (MOF).

How I got my job

I originally applied to another role in another ministry, but did not get through the final interview. Instead, one of the interviewers, who thought my knowledge and skills would be relevant for this role in MOF, bounced my application over.

I did not know that, and there was some confusion when MOF first contacted me about this role which I did not apply for. After that, I went through the normal process of doing an essay assessment and two rounds of interviews before getting an offer.

Because this is a hybrid role that requires technical data handling skills and economic modelling and analysis skills, my previous background in the private sector, skills in the technical IT side and the knowledge I gained from my master's programme made me a good fit.

“It also taught me that there are many angles of looking at an issue, and many of them are not immediately obvious.”

The highs and lows

I like the broad exposure the role gives me. From being closely connected to global economic developments, to understanding deeper reasons behind certain policy design, I feel that I have learnt a lot in my short time here.

It also taught me that there are many angles of looking at an issue, and many of them are not immediately obvious. The downside of that is we will always miss them, and there are consequences. An example is when a policy measure is rolled out, no matter how the eligibility criteria are set, there will always be people who are in our target group, but do not qualify for the benefits.

My happiest moment at work

Every MOF employee will have to be involved in the annual Budget process at some point of their stint. I was appointed leader of one of the Budget teams just two months after joining! At that point, I did not have any idea about what the process entailed, or any other process, for that matter.

All my colleagues were surprised at the decision, but I was the most surprised. I had to quickly pick up the knowledge, learn the ways around the ministry's bureaucracy, scramble to get all the necessary contacts and materials, liaise with external stakeholders and get my team's deliverables done in time for the Finance Minister to speak in Parliament.

It was an extremely steep learning curve and a hectic time – I worked 16 hours a day, even on weekends. But after the Budget was over, there was a sense of accomplishment and recognition when the Minister and Permanent Secretary came around to thank everyone for their hard work and singled out individual people for their specific parts.

Some advice

Be very flexible and willing to learn new things. There is a perception that Government or Civil Service is heavily bureaucratic, slow to change and inefficient. I definitely had this perception before joining MOF. But that is far from reality.

I have had to be extremely flexible and learn new domain knowledge depending on the projects I am working on at the moment. Things can move really quickly when required, such as MOF's unprecedented multiple Budget announcements in 2020.

All the coronavirus support measures were pushed through various policy evaluation and implementation stages at lightning speed, when the usual time frame is many months – internally they like to tout doing “five years' worth of work in less than six months”.



Veronika Radicova

Master of Science in
Management, 2019

Management Consulting Associate
EY-Parthenon

My job

As an associate consultant, my typical day depends very much on the project I am currently working on. Our clients come from a wide range of industries and deal with diverse problems. My role is to support senior members of my team by gathering and analysing data, preparing quality presentations and capturing clients' requirements, among others.

We are also expected to keep up-to-date regarding the latest industry insights and attend regular sessions on enhancing our skills as consultants. This is especially helpful for fresh graduates who might be completely new to the industry and require more guidance.

How I got my job

When I was studying at SMU, I was very interested in case competitions that took place every couple of months – they are a great opportunity for students interested in consulting to get a sense of the work and network with experienced professionals.

One such competition was “EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year” that was introduced to me at an annual career fair. I took part and was selected as one of the participants for the finals, which took place at the EY office in Singapore. I won the third place and was offered a full-time job that I happily accepted.

“Do not look only for job prestige and a high salary; instead, look for something that fulfils you and makes you happy every time you enter your office – or switch on your computer.”

The highs and lows

I really enjoy working with many talented people boasting diverse professional and educational backgrounds from all over the world. I also enjoy the variety of projects I work on, and the continuous learning that one cannot avoid in a world that is constantly changing.

On the other hand, one of the biggest challenges I face is finding a balance between work and free time, especially now, when the pandemic means that working from home means “the new normal”. Another challenge is mingling with colleagues and building meaningful relationships outside the workplace.

My happiest moment at work

I really enjoy the first days of every project I start working on – new team members, a different industry and a different client facing a different problem. I do not have a specific day in mind, but I would say I really feel accomplished every time I learn something new, even if it is a small thing such as an Excel shortcut. Also, every day when I meet someone who is willing to help and teach me feels quite memorable, especially as this industry is very fast-paced and everyone has tight deadlines to meet.

Some advice

Meet up with professionals in industries you are interested in and be open to every opportunity that comes your way, be it a networking event, competition, or career fair. A lot of us start losing motivation when we do not get our “dream job” and end up feeling not good enough.

I would advise every graduate to be flexible and try out different roles, companies and industries, as every bit of experience counts, and this is how you can actually find your dream job. Do not look only for job prestige and a high salary; instead, look for something that fulfils you and makes you happy every time you enter your office – or switch on your computer.

Last but not least, do not be afraid to ask for any advice. It will help you focus on the right things in your career path. Get to know interesting people and a good question can sometimes even get you a job! ■

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LINKEDIN @bdo-singapore

TWITTER @bdoaccountant

YOUTUBE <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBblycqXBZ7YhP8hSauj6Lg>

LOCATIONS

- Singapore – Central
- International – BDO’s global organisation extends across 167 countries and territories, with 91,054 people working out of 1,658 offices – and they’re all working towards one goal: to provide our clients with exceptional service.

BUSINESS FACTS

Established in 1972 and a member firm of BDO International since 1979, we offer a full range of services including audit, corporate finance and risk advisory.

Our clients are from most fields of business in Singapore and include subsidiaries of multi-national corporations, public and private companies operating in diverse industries, including transportation and publishing. Some of our clients are well-known, while many are medium-sized emerging businesses.

Our size is at its optimum, it is large enough to enable us to provide the full range of world-class services and at the same time allows clients to benefit from our breadth and depth of expertise as the world’s fifth largest accounting network.

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DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Finance
- IT & Computer Sciences

CAREER SECTORS

- Accountancy and Financial Management
- Banking and Financial Services
- Consulting
- IT and Technology

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

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CapitaLand Graduate Development Programme

To build real estate of the future, we have to first build our people. Our CapitaLand Graduate Development Programme is designed to bring in the best people, and bring out the best in them. As one of Asia's largest diversified real estate groups, with a presence across more than 200 cities in over 30 countries, CapitaLand provides the global stage to take your career dreams to the next level.

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The CapitaLand Graduate Development Programme nurtures promising young graduates with less than two years of working experience for a rewarding, accelerated career journey. The holistic programme offers prospects for personal growth and development, with a comprehensive learning roadmap.

Gain global exposure through job rotations to various real estate sectors and countries. You will also be actively involved in various aspects of our business, with opportunities to gain insights from CapitaLand's senior management.

Think you have what it takes?
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Leadership qualities

Aptitude to articulate a vision and lead people toward achieving it

Resilience

Tenacity to thrive and perform under pressure

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Enthusiasm to take on varied tasks with a desire to excel

Team player

Ability to communicate effectively and collaborate with others



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LOCATIONS

- Singapore
- Global

BUSINESS FACTS

CapitaLand is one of Asia's largest diversified real estate groups. Headquartered and listed in Singapore, it is an owner and manager of a global portfolio worth about S\$133.3 billion as at 30 September 2020, comprising integrated developments, retail, commercial, business park, industrial and logistics, urban development, lodging, residential, 6 listed real estate investment trusts (REITs) and over 20 private funds. Present across more than 220 cities in over 30 countries, CapitaLand focuses on Singapore and China as core markets, while continuing to expand in markets such as India, Vietnam, Australia, Europe and the USA.

Cultivating a Strong Workforce

As a multi-national company, CapitaLand stands by its credo 'Building People. Building Communities.' Its success is built on its strong infrastructure and its diverse and inclusive workforce – which consists of more than 12,000 employees

from over 80 countries. CapitaLand is always on the look-out for people of high calibre with strong potential to support and grow with the Group.

Talent Management

CapitaLand believes that a company is only as extraordinary as the people who contribute to its culture and success. It focuses on hiring the best people, and have strategic, integrated and quality learning programmes for continual learning and development in all career stages. CapitaLand offers opportunities for challenging and rewarding careers where employees are able to continually learn and develop their personal and professional capabilities, all while working alongside a talented, international and diverse workforce.

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Open to all disciplines

CAREER SECTOR

- Property and Real Estate

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Apply online via capitaland.com/careers and shortlisted candidates will be notified.



CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND BOARD

238A Thomson Road, Novena Square, Singapore 307684

WEB www.cpf.gov.sg/careers

EMAIL hr@cpf.gov.sg

FACEBOOK @CPFBoard / @PantryTalk

INSTAGRAM @cpf_board

LOCATION

- Singapore – Central

BUSINESS FACTS

The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board helps 4 million members save for their retirement, healthcare and housing needs. As the trustee of the nation's retirement savings, we serve CPF members knowing that we make a difference. As long as you have the passion and commitment to serve the public, you will find your niche in our big family that consists of more than 50 departments in the following job families:

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- Information Technology
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- Policy and Corporate Development

Management Associate Programme (MAP)

The CPF Management Associate Programme (MAP) offers you a head start in this meaningful career, equipping you with opportunities to interact with senior management and accelerated growth through structured rotations, mentorship and leadership programmes. If you are driven, innovative, and a team player, join us to make a difference to the lives of CPF members. Application for the MAP opens from August to November 2021.

NextGen Programme

For IT graduates, the NextGen Programme aims to build the Next Generation of Technology Specialists and Future Leaders to drive the next wave of technology that will impact all Singaporeans. Application for the NextGen Programme opens from November 2020.

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Economics
- Engineering
- Finance
- Humanities, Art and Social Sciences
- IT and Computer Sciences
- Law
- Maths
- Property and Built Environment
- Sciences
- Social Work
- Teaching and Education

CAREER SECTOR

- Public Sector

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Apply online at www.cpf.gov.sg/careers. We regret that only shortlisted applicants will be notified.

APPLICATION PERIODS

MAP: August to November 2021

NextGen: From November 2020

Internships: Applications are accepted year-round



CHANGI AIRPORT GROUP (SINGAPORE) PTE LTD

Singapore Changi Airport, PO Box 168, Singapore 918146

WEB careers.changiairport.com

E-MAIL careers@changiairport.com

LOCATION

- Singapore – East

BUSINESS FACTS

As the airport company managing Changi Airport, Changi Airport Group (CAG) undertakes key functions focusing on airport operations and management, air hub development, commercial activities and airport emergency services. We operate Singapore Changi Airport, the world's most awarded airport, and our subsidiary, Changi Airports International, helps develop and manage airports worldwide. Our people are our most important asset in our mission to be the world's leading airport company by nurturing a vibrant air hub in Singapore and enhancing the communities we serve worldwide. We aspire to build a company where ordinary people achieve extraordinary results. Our people have a passion for service and are committed to teamwork, integrity and excellence. Working together with colleagues and partners to achieve the best outcome, we deliver innovative services and create a world-class experience for our customers.

Changi Airport Group offers a unique work environment in a global, vibrant and exciting airport community. With a set-up of multiple businesses, we present challenging work and diverse opportunities for our employees to further their personal and professional growth, providing a platform for them to develop and see through their ideas and contributions, making an impact on our organisation and the communities we serve locally and globally.

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Economics
- Engineering
- Finance
- Humanities, Art and Social Sciences
- IT and Computer Sciences
- Law
- Property and Built Environment

CAREER SECTORS

- Aviation, Transport and Supply Chain
- Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Apply online at careers.changiairport.com.



WORKING AT A HAPPY PLACE

NAME: Tan Wei Hao

DEGREE: Bachelor of Science (Information Systems), Singapore Management University, 2014

ROLE: Assistant Manager, Data Operations Analyst

EMPLOYER: Changi Airport Group

MY JOB

My current role as a Data Operations Analyst mainly involves data governance and improving data accessibility for Changi Airport Group. My team conducts studies to explore the various ways we can improve the management of data quality, security and accessibility, then enact policies to implement such measures. We also look at designing new frameworks to better help our data scientists and analysts in areas such as data ownership and data taxonomy.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

First, we had to complete an online psychometric test and write an essay on a topic related to current affairs, usually about the aviation industry. This was followed by two rounds of interviews. I think the various internship opportunities I had while in SMU really helped me to stand out as nothing beats real-world experience when it comes to learning skills on the job.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

Working at the world's most awarded airport has been a whirlwind journey, and it has been enriching to work alongside people who believe in giving their best. The pace of change here is very fast, so there is always something new to learn. Changi Airport is also a very happy place to work at, because most of your customers are either looking forward to the start of their holidays, or eagerly waiting to meet their loved ones whom are coming back.

Due to the nature of the aviation industry, the impact of any air incident is also far-reaching and long-lasting. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has decimated air travel and crippled airlines. Despite these setbacks, airport staff have adopted a "never-give-up" attitude and continued to strive to keep our spirits up.

MY HAPPIEST MOMENT AT WORK

The opening of Terminal 4 (T4) has been the highlight of my career so far. I was deeply involved in the terminal development then, and it was a learning journey for me to see the progress of the terminal from blueprints to the official opening. I was one of the lucky few whom had to carry out site surveys at the T4 Ramp Tower control room, and it was truly a sight to behold! At the end of the project, the names of all the core project members were engraved into a special art installation within T4, and I think that is something truly priceless which would stay with me for the rest of my career.

SOME ADVICE

The aviation sector has a multitude of job opportunities, from the airport operator to airlines and ground handling agents. Hence, if you are not able to land a job at your desired company, you can try to gain experience elsewhere within the same sector. Most importantly, do not give up! Working in the airport can be a challenging, but also a rewarding and fulfilling journey.



DEFENCE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGENCY (DSTA)

1 Depot Road, Singapore 109679

WEB <https://www.dsta.gov.sg>

FACEBOOK/ INSTAGRAM @SingaporeDSTA

LINKEDIN @DSTA

LOCATION

- Singapore

BUSINESS FACTS

At the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA), we thrive on developing the next breakthrough for the defence and security of Singapore.

We develop and integrate next-generation defence systems and capabilities to safeguard Singapore. We also harness and exploit emerging technologies to create solutions that will boost Singapore's digital strength.

The multidisciplinary nature of our work in engineering, infocomm technology and cybersecurity will give you many opportunities to innovate and push the boundaries of science and technology.

Our diverse portfolio includes artificial intelligence, augmented/virtual reality, cybersecurity, data analytics, Internet of Things, machine learning, military platforms, robotics, sensors and unmanned technologies.

DSTA is committed to provide you with a multitude of opportunities by building your technical expertise and honing your competencies in multidisciplinary domains.

Embark on a meaningful career to pursue your passion and achieve your fullest potential. Be equipped with leadership skills at every stage of your career.

See possibilities through an internship, scholarship and career with us!

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Business Administration
- Economics
- Engineering
- Humanities, Art and Social Sciences
- IT and Computer Sciences

CAREER SECTORS

- Engineering, Design and Manufacturing
- IT and Technology

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications are accepted year round.

Learn more about DSTA Careers, Internships and Scholarships at

<https://www.dsta.gov.sg>



CREATING THE FUTURE OF DEFENCE TECH

NAME: Ryan Loo

DEGREE: Bachelor of Science (Information Systems), Singapore Management University, 2017

ROLE: Senior Engineer (Information)

EMPLOYER: Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA)

MY JOB

As a developer at DSTA's Information Programme Centre, I use data analytics and artificial intelligence, amongst other technologies, to strengthen our armed forces' ability to identify potential threats and piece together insights for better awareness and coordination. I also strive to grow my coding skill set while building a career that capitalises on my technological interests. At DSTA, I am able to achieve that balance while contributing to our nation's defence.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

I prepared for the interview by reading up on DSTA's engineering projects and digital solutions. During the interview, I shared my aspirations while clarifying career development and job scope at DSTA. I saw how passionate my interviewers were about their work, which reassured me that I made the right choice for my career.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

What I love most about my job is getting to work on cutting-edge technology. As a DSTA software engineer, I have the opportunity to test and explore the latest in open-source technology – which steadily improves every day – as well as new third-party software developed by coding experts. With the swift progress of technology, there are always interesting developments and angles for us to approach our work from. It is also a major

plus for me to be able to attend specialised training and courses to learn the latest in areas like natural language processing and computer vision.

MY HAPPIEST MOMENT AT WORK

Seeing a project deployed and becoming an integral part of our defence capabilities is really satisfying. There is no doubt that our efforts go a long way in maintaining Singapore's peace and stability. I also helped organise a student workshop on fake news detection technologies, as part of DSTA's BrainHack learning festival in June 2020. It was fulfilling to be a mentor and inspire the participants to pursue their enthusiasm for technology. Finally, the learning opportunities available and a strong team mentality help make work enjoyable too. I have made many good friends and mentors whom I can unwind and have fun with after work.

SOME ADVICE

Theory alone is no substitute for experience, so get as many hands-on opportunities as possible. Try coding for a project, read up on related technology, or take on an internship to see how the job and culture fits you. DSTA's internship programme is a good place to start and experience defence technologies, as well as getting to know our people and nurturing culture first-hand.

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INSTAGRAM @eysgcareers

LINKEDIN @ErnstandYoung

TWITTER @EY_Singapore

LOCATIONS

- Singapore
- International - More than 700 offices in over 150 countries

BUSINESS FACTS

EY exists to build a better working world, helping create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets. Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate. Working across assurance, consulting, strategy, tax and transactions, EY teams ask better questions to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

In Singapore, we have a history of 132 years, with over 180 partners and more than 3,400 people offering services to a wide-ranging clientele consisting of multinational companies, private companies and public sector organisations.

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Economics
- Engineering

- Finance
- Humanities, Art and Social Sciences
- IT and Computer Sciences
- Law
- Maths
- Medical Sciences and Healthcare
- Property and Built Environment
- Sciences

CAREER SECTORS

- Accountancy and Financial Management
- Consulting

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Candidates may browse the latest positions and apply online at <https://go.ey.com/graduate-careers>.

APPLICATION PERIODS

Graduate jobs: All year-round
Internships: All year-round

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WEB <https://careers.jpmorgan.com/global/en/home>

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INSTAGRAM @JPMorgan

LINKEDIN @JPMorgan

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YOUTUBE @JPMorgan

LOCATIONS

- Singapore – Central
- International – Our presence in over 100 markets around the globe means we can serve millions of consumers, small businesses and many of the world's most prominent corporate, institutional and government clients

BUSINESS FACTS

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Asia is core to J.P. Morgan's global strategy and Singapore is central to this. It is a critical regional hub and one of our key global Centers of Excellence offering various services ranging from investment banking to asset management. As a Center of Excellence, it's also the hub for our regional technology, operations, compliance, cyber security and other services.

DEGREE DISCIPLINES

- Open to all disciplines

CAREER SECTORS

- Banking and Financial Services
- Investment Banking and Investment Management

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Apply for open roles on our careers page.
2. Complete the pre-selection assessment, video interview or coding test as per required for the role you apply for.

APPLICATION PERIODS

Graduate jobs: August – February

Summer internship: July – October

Applications are open one year before the programme commences.



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CPF Board is a place which allows me to achieve my work objectives, while balancing my personal and family life."

Sherline Swee
Senior Manager
MediSave and Healthcare Claims

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FACEBOOK @moesingapore

INSTAGRAM @moesingapore

LOCATION

- Singapore

BUSINESS FACTS

At MOE, we have a strong and dynamic team of educators, as well as executive and administrative staff supporting our education network in Singapore.

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CAREER SECTOR

- Public Sector

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Apply online at **Careers@Gov**. Shortlisted applicants will be notified for interview(s)

APPLICATION PERIOD

Graduate jobs: Please refer to **moe.gov.sg/careers** for application deadlines for the respective positions.



LEARNING DOES NOT STOP, EVEN FOR A TEACHER

NAME: Chia Jin Jun Melinda

DEGREE: Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology and Human Resource), Singapore Management University, 2010; Postgraduate Diploma in Education, NIE, 2011

ROLE: Subject Head, Student Leadership (Covering); English Language Teacher

EMPLOYER: Ministry of Education

MY JOB

Because a teacher teaches students, not subjects, my job encompasses not just the academic aspect but also, character development. As an English Language teacher, it is often challenging to keep the students interested during English lessons as the English Language is a medium used by almost every household in Singapore. With that, we have to constantly keep abreast with times, and engage our students in multi-modal ways to ensure that they still see the relevance of this subject and develop an authentic appreciation of the language.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

The selection process included a write-up and a short lesson presentation, and SMU equipped me with confidence and the skills in writing and speaking with conviction and clarity. I also clearly remember how the module “Finishing Touch” taught me to dress and present myself appropriately in front of others. I believe that I was able to convey my passion for teaching, belief in lifelong learning and ability to engage students to the interview panellists because of this.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

My students are the ones who bring the most joy, but they too, are the ones who can leave me exhausted. Developing teacher-student relationships based on mutual respect and trust takes time and effort, but it is worthwhile

to see students grow and mature into fine young adults. However, as they seek their individuality, they might make mistakes which affect both themselves and others. Working with them brings a mix of emotions.

MY HAPPIEST MOMENT AT WORK

My greatest joy is seeing how my students grow throughout the four years in secondary school. I fondly remember this student of mine who graduated about six years ago. He was notorious for always getting into trouble outside of school. We spent large amounts of time speaking to him and his family, figuring out ways to help him get back on track.

Although he did not get the results he desired, he continued his education journey and I was elated a year later to receive news that he had received a scholarship award from a polytechnic and invited me to attend the award ceremony!

SOME ADVICE

Be open to new learning opportunities every day. Teaching is not a job that can be learnt overnight. What you learn from books may work in theory but in an actual classroom, you need to think on your feet and be flexible. Several years into the job, and I am still learning something new every day! Teaching is a “heart” job. It is a passion, a calling. It is a journey that is meaningful and rewardingly satisfying.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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LOCATIONS

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GAINING A PERSPECTIVE BEYOND SINGAPORE

NAME: Ann-Margaret Mathew

DEGREE: Bachelor of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University, 2013

ROLE: Assistant Director, South-East Asia I

EMPLOYER: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MY JOB

I am an Assistant Director at the Southeast Asia I Directorate. My team oversees Singapore's accounts with our closest regional partners. As part of my day-to-day responsibilities, I track and analyse global and regional trends. I also organise meetings and visits between our Ministers and senior officials and their foreign counterparts, which helps Singapore to build bridges and forge strong partnerships in our region.

Change is a constant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Aside from my work at headquarters, I have been posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and completed a stint with Singapore's Permanent Mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York, the United States (U.S.). Rotations between departments and overseas assignments allowed me to gain a broad understanding of international affairs and also exposed me to different work environments.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

MFA puts all applicants through a rigorous selection process consisting of several rounds. This includes interviews and an interactive Assessment Centre component, which tests applicants' ability to problem-solve and think on their feet. Prior to applying, I completed an internship with MFA. My conversations with MFA staff and having a first-hand taste of the fast pace of work was what convinced me that

the job would be a good fit for me.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

Representing Singapore as a diplomat abroad was an experience like no other. We constantly work to expand Singapore's network of friends and partnerships, which is crucial for our a small and open economy. My overseas assignments also gave me the opportunity to witness interesting events, such as the 2020 U.S. Presidential Elections and Malaysia's 2018 General Elections. These experiences were eye-opening for me and broadened my perspectives about developments beyond Singapore.

MY HAPPIEST MOMENT AT WORK

My short stint at Singapore's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York during the 2020 UN General Assembly was a memorable highlight. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, multilateral negotiations for UN resolutions were conducted virtually for the first time, and we faced many new challenges and had to adapt quickly.

SOME ADVICE

The issues that we deal with often requires officers to evaluate many different factors to reach sound policy recommendations that safeguard Singapore's interests. The critical and valuable thinking and problem-solving skills that I gained from my SMU experience have served me well.



GOING BEYOND A DESK JOB

NAME: Jonathan Tan

DEGREE: Bachelor of Business Management, Singapore Management University, 2012; Master in Public Administration, National University of Singapore, 2021

ROLE: Formerly First Secretary (Admin & Consular), Singapore Embassy in Moscow (March 2016 to March 2020)

EMPLOYER: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MY JOB

I was responsible for the administrative and consular section of the embassy in my previous role, leading a team of 10 local staff. No two days were ever the same as the areas under my purview included finance, consular, protocol, property management, and others. Not many organisations expose younger staff to such a wide range of responsibilities so early on in their career, much less in a foreign environment. I am currently pursuing my postgraduate studies, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for my personal career development.

HOW I GOT MY JOB

MFA has a three-stage selection process. The first stage consists of psychometric and writing tests, and a roundtable discussion. The second stage was an Assessment Centre where candidates were put through various tasks that the Foreign Service Officers face in the course of their work. The final stage was a panel interview. Be prepared for challenging questions during the interview and do not be afraid to speak up during discussions.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

I relish the opportunity to relocate every few years, be it to a foreign country or back to Singapore. The changes in environment, responsibilities and colleagues bring with it both fresh opportunities and challenges,

keeping me on my toes and facilitating career growth. Of course, the work is demanding and officers are held to high standards. The hectic schedule can take its toll, but it is possible to achieve work-life balance with proper planning and discipline.

MY HAPPIEST MOMENT AT WORK

I have been involved in numerous high-level visits in the course of my career. However, I find the greatest satisfaction from assisting Singaporeans in need of consular assistance. I once flew to Siberia to attend to a Singaporean family on holiday there. A gentleman had passed away due to a heart attack and his wife and daughter, who were on vacation with him, were distraught. They deeply appreciated having a fellow Singaporean on-site to assist with the repatriation arrangements, which can be challenging due to the language barrier and cultural differences.

SOME ADVICE

The fast-paced and uncertain nature of our work means that officers can be recalled at short notice to attend to urgent matters. A career in the Foreign Service is also not for everyone as overseas postings may be disruptive to spouses' careers and children's education. Those unfazed by such a lifestyle, however, should take up the challenge. It is far more energising than a regular desk job and a great opportunity to expand one's horizons.

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