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SINGAPORE, Oct. 7, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- The accountant of the future may spend less time checking documents and more time checking what artificial intelligence has done with them.

AI is already being used in accounting and finance to review documents, analyse financial information, identify anomalies and support audit work. But as more of this work is performed or assisted by AI, professionals still have to decide whether its outputs are accurate, appropriate and reliable enough to inform a business decision.

Singapore Management University's (SMU) School of Accountancy (SOA) is responding to this shift with a new Applied Artificial Intelligence Track in its Master of Science in Accounting (MSA) programme. The track is designed to equip accounting and finance professionals with the skills to apply AI to professional workflows, evaluate its outputs and put appropriate governance and human oversight around its use.

The move comes as AI is reshaping the work of accounting and finance professionals. Budget 2026 identified accountancy as one of the professions where AI can automate routine work and enable professionals to focus on higher-value activities requiring professional judgement and expertise. The Government also announced that it would support workers in building practical AI capabilities, starting with the accountancy and legal professions.

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An accounting-first approach to AI

Unlike AI programmes centred primarily on computer science, data science or general business applications, the new track starts with the professional contexts in which accounting expertise matters.

Students will gain practical exposure to technologies including Generative AI, large language models (LLMs), retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) and Agentic AI. They will learn not only how these technologies can be applied, but also how to assess their reliability and limitations, supervise AI-enabled workflows and establish appropriate controls.

The emergence of Agentic AI extends this shift beyond generating content and analysis towards AI systems capable of coordinating and executing multi-step workflows. For accounting and finance professionals, this raises new questions about how such systems should be supervised, where human review and escalation should occur, and who remains accountable for the resulting decisions.

Professor Zhang Liandong, Dean and Lee Kong Chian Professor of Accounting, SMU School of Accountancy, said:

"We designed the Applied AI Track around how AI is entering accounting and finance work. The question is not simply whether a tool can perform a task, but whether professionals understand its limitations, can evaluate its output and know what controls are needed before relying on it. Students will therefore learn to apply emerging technologies such as Generative and Agentic AI within professional workflows, while retaining the professional judgement, human oversight and accountability that remain central to the profession."

The Applied AI specialisation comprises four Course Units drawn from five specialist offerings, covering Agentic AI for Accounting; AI Governance, Evaluation and Ethics; Modern AI Applications in Business; Blockchain and AI for Decentralised Intelligence; and the Innovation and Technology Capstone (SMU-X).

The curriculum combines these specialist courses with the MSA's accounting core and foundational training in programming, data management, statistics, forecasting, visual analytics and machine learning. Through the SMU-X capstone, students will also apply AI, analytics and digital technologies to real accounting and finance problems with industry partners.

The track is built around the premise that AI should augment rather than replace professional expertise. Its emphasis is on applied use, evaluation and governance of AI in professional contexts, rather than on developing AI models from the ground up. Students will learn to integrate AI into existing workflows, establish review and escalation points, evaluate AI-generated outputs and determine where human intervention remains necessary.

From using AI to governing it

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The capabilities developed through the track extend beyond learning to operate AI tools.

Graduates will be equipped to apply, evaluate, supervise and govern AI in professional contexts, including the ability to:

- apply AI to accounting, audit and assurance, financial analysis, finance transformation and related professional workflows;
- evaluate AI-generated outputs and identify inappropriate assumptions, errors or limitations;
- design and supervise AI-enabled workflows, including human-in-the-loop processes;
- assess risks relating to privacy, cybersecurity, model risk, bias, explainability and regulatory compliance; and
- translate AI-generated insights into decisions that remain subject to professional accountability.

Ms Irene Liu, Managing Director, Risk, Regulatory and Compliance Lead for Southeast Asia, Accenture Southeast Asia said: "Firms are starting to use AI across finance, from reconciliations and detection of potential reporting issues to correcting journals and supporting complex financial valuations. As AI becomes embedded in finance systems and workflows, accountants increasingly need to understand how to interact with these AI tools, validate their outputs, identify exceptions and exercise professional judgement over when and how those outputs should be used."

This shift could affect a wide range of professional work, from audit working-paper and document review to financial analysis, anomaly and risk detection, finance-process redesign and controls over AI-generated outputs.

The track is intended to prepare professionals who can apply, evaluate, supervise and govern AI within their area of expertise, rather than simply use AI tools.

Building on an established accounting and analytics foundation

The Applied AI Track builds on the MSA's existing focus on data and analytics. The MSA comprises 15 Course Units, including eight programme core courses, four track electives, two open electives and one postgraduate professional development course.

Students may also use their open electives for an internship, other SMU master's courses, or overseas immersion and exchange opportunities.

As AI takes on more of the work traditionally performed by professionals, the role of the accountant will continue to evolve. Knowing how to use AI will be one part of that change. Equally important will be knowing when to question it, when not to rely on it, and who remains accountable for the decisions that follow.

About Singapore Management University (SMU)

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Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its high-impact, multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance, and for its interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning. Home to over 13,000 students across six schools and two colleges, SMU offers bachelors, masters and PhD programmes across Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems, Integrative Studies, Law and Social Sciences, as well as executive development and continuing education programmes. SMU graduates are consistently ranked among the most employable in Singapore, and command one of the highest mean starting salaries. Through its city campus, SMU enjoys strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community in Singapore and beyond.
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