

**Embargoed until 27 October 2023, 7pm (GMT +7)**

**Annex B**

**Opening Remarks by SMU President Professor Lily Kong at the media conference for the launch of SMU Overseas Centre Bangkok (OCB)**

**Park Hyatt Bangkok  
Friday, 27 October 2023**

Friends from the media

Good evening. Your presence here marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in the SMU story here in Thailand, and we are truly delighted to have you with us.

We launched our first overseas centre in Jakarta last December. Today, we are delighted to announce the launch of Singapore Management University's (SMU) second overseas centre here in Bangkok.

Let me first situate the establishment of SMU's overseas centres within the context of our strategic plan. Launched in 2020, we identified three strategic priorities to further build our education, research and engagement work, focusing our entire institutional energies and expertise on these areas: Digital Transformation, Sustainable Living, and Growth in Asia.

In line with the "Growth in Asia" strategic priority, we have identified the establishment of a network of overseas centres as an important step towards strengthening collaborations, enabling deeper cross-cultural understanding, and collectively contributing to the growth of the region. The overseas centres will allow SMU to drive deeper engagement with our trusted partners to successfully make meaningful impact on communities in different parts of Asia.

*We chose Thailand for three reasons:*

First, Thailand is a major economy in Southeast Asia and a rising player in shaping the future of Asia as a whole. Our presence here is not merely a geographical expansion; it is testament to our dedication to the growth and development of Thailand and the broader Southeast Asian region. We recognise the immense potential that lies within our dynamic environment, and we are eager to play a pivotal role in shaping our region's future.

Second, Thailand has consistently demonstrated academic excellence in the Southeast Asian region, boasting an impressive track record in education and research. We believe our presence in Thailand will allow us to contribute expertise in vital fields such as sustainability and digital transformation while also learning from our Thai counterparts.

Third, Thailand is Singapore's long-standing bilateral partner, with whom we have excellent relations, underpinned by regular high-level government exchanges, strong

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defence and economic links, and people-to-people ties. Thailand has been a close partner to SMU ever since our establishment in 2000. Throughout the years, our university has played host to talented students and faculty from Thailand, who have contributed to the growth of our university. In turn, SMU students have been sharing and growing their knowledge and skills through community service projects, exchange programmes and internships in Thailand. We remember with gratitude the good partnerships we have had, and we hope to strengthen this relationship and expand opportunities for collaboration with the help of our Overseas Centre Bangkok or OCB.

Fourth, we value greatly our International Advisory Council (IAC) for Thailand, established in 2018, comprising esteemed industry leaders from the country. With the help of the IAC Thailand, SMU has strengthened our relationships in this country. The OCB is a natural extension of our growing ties and a signal of our strong commitment to working with Thai partners. By establishing a local presence, we hope to further enable the cultivation and building of strong partnerships in Thailand.

*What will SMU's OCB actually do?*

At a broad level, it will seek to deepen existing partnerships and collaborations while forming new ones with local academic institutions, businesses, and government agencies. These collaborations will facilitate student mobility, upskill local capabilities, and facilitate knowledge exchange.

First, student mobility is vital for extending the horizon of learning for both Singaporean and Thai students. It enhances cross-cultural understanding, and opens the eyes and hearts of young people to different perspectives, extending new experiences that stay with them for life. OCB will facilitate these student mobility programmes.

Second, OCB will also contribute to efforts to upskill local capabilities in Thailand, by seeking to better understand talent and skills development needs, thereby helping SMU to contribute to upskilling and reskilling efforts in Thailand in targeted and relevant ways. In response to the growing need for skilled workers in technology and sustainability, OCB is dedicated to building a talent pipeline that meets these demands.

Third, OCB will host dialogues and other events to facilitate knowledge sharing and foster greater interaction across public and private sectors and with academia. These could be public events or closed-door events, and will aim to bring cutting-edge research and expertise in areas such as sustainability and digital transformation to support local communities' social and economic development. In these ways, we hope to work with local education and industry partners to support Thailand's aspirations for a sustainable and knowledge-driven future.

*Building on existing relationships*

While we are officially launching SMU's OCB today and look forward to delivering on its goals, we will be building on a number of existing relationships that give us every

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confidence that we are on a positive trajectory.

In terms of collaborations, SMU has close partnerships with four respected institutions in Thailand: Chulalongkorn University, Mahidol University, Thammasat University and the National Institute of Development Administration. Together with these partners, SMU has implemented exchange and study programmes, faculty study missions, joint research, and developed joint SMU-X overseas courses which are experiential courses where students work on solving real world challenges.

I am happy to share that we will be elevating our long-standing partnership with Chulalongkorn University to a strategic level. As strategic partner universities, SMU and Chulalongkorn University will embark on deep and wide collaborations in our common priority focus areas of Digital Transformation, Sustainable Living, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This strategic partnership builds on existing collaborations that span student and academic programmes. It leverages our unique strengths and shared commitment as City Universities to transformative education and impactful research that address societal challenges.

SMU has also been involved in adult continuing education through the SMU Academy and Executive Development. Government officials, executives from Thai State-Owned Enterprises, and multi-level leaders from the private sector are among those who have attended executive and other skills development programmes with SMU. The Senior Leaders' Programme with Bangkok Bank, Hospital Management Programme attended by senior doctors and hospital administrators, and Excel Leadership Programme attended by Thai C-Suite leaders are just a few examples of SMU's commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning.

We have also offered, and will continue to offer, opportunities for Thai citizens to pursue undergraduate studies, as well as postgraduate studies at SMU, with scholarships and grant opportunities for eligible applicants. We do hope to be able to extend SMU's unique brand of holistic and transformative education to a broader base of Thai nationals.

### *Conclusion*

With the launch of our Overseas Centre in Bangkok, we aim to create a hub of knowledge and innovation that not only benefits our students but also contributes to the growth and prosperity of Thailand. To conclude, we believe that SMU, through its OCB and, together with our partners, can make a significant contribution to Thailand's social and economic development, while deepening the understanding, collaboration and trust, between our two countries.

I shall now invite the Centre Director of SMU Overseas Centre Bangkok, Celine Kuok, to give more details about the Centre.

Thank you.