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Headline: Going back to school allowed this private banker to go from strength to strength

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Jay See had been working for Credit Suisse in Singapore covering the Greater China desk for 5 years when he was given the opportunity to study the Master of Science in Wealth Management (MWM) degree at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

He was already an SMU graduate and jumped at the chance to take the niche finance masters. He explains "The programme not just allows you to deepen your knowledge of the wealth management industry. It also offers strong career development possibilities."

The programme was the first Masters in the world to focus on wealth management. It has a strong academic pedigree and is rated first in Asia and third in the world by the Financial Times in its Masters in Finance Post-experience Ranking 2017.

The programme allows students to enjoy a tri-continental education experience in Singapore, Switzerland and the USA and is delivered via case studies, team activities, market stimulations and site visits, as well as traditional classroom learning.

"I know it sounds a bit clichéd, but every class was really useful," says See. "The courses were well curated and there was a good mix of technical financial skills coupled with complementary classes on topics such as family trusts and business law."

"The modern-day successful private banker must not only be technically grounded to manage risks, but they should also have enough breadth across all these issues to enable them to provide clear and concise advice to their clients in other areas of wealth management," he adds.

Recognised by the CFA Institute and CAIA as a collaborative partner, another part of the programme's appeal is its module structure, with five study blocks of 2.5 weeks each, designed to enable students to study while still working. "The world of finance doesn't stop even though I am studying. My clients would still email and text me because they trust me to handle their accounts," says See.

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He used the breaks between lectures to keep abreast of what was happening in the markets and to respond to questions from his clients. "It helped that the course was very relevant. We discussed about current topics in class, so I was able to apply my newly gained knowledge almost immediately in my communication with clients."

"I could be in class talking about Brexit, and then one of my clients would ask me what I thought about Brexit, and whether they should long or short sterling," adds See.

He also found the programme's overseas study module, for which he spent time in Switzerland, invaluable. "As global citizens with transferable skill sets, it is important to see how other world-class overseas financial and academic institutions are developing."

"I believe that the overseas module was critical because the investment mindset of each region is very different. It was refreshing to exchange professional viewpoints with people in other regions because clearly how you invest as a European is very different to an Asian."

See also enjoyed the programme's strong Asia focus. "I think the Asian economic growth spurt has been tremendous, and being on the ground every day, attending the courses, talking to professors, industry experts, financial professionals and banks, you can really feel the strong vibrant power in the air."

Another benefit of the programme is the strong links SMU has with the wealth management industry. While See already had a job with Credit Suisse, he saw how much his fellow students benefitted from the internships and networking opportunities SMU was able to provide.

"There is a large pool of SMU graduates working in the finance industry, so for anyone who is looking to jump into the field of wealth management, you cannot find a better business school in Asia to attend. The alumni network is very strong here," he says.

Overall, See says the MWM programme has empowered him with the twin benefits of increased financial knowledge and a larger industry network. He now has greater technical understanding, increasing his ability to serve the burgeoning Greater China market.

He would not hesitate to recommend the programme to others who are interested in pursuing a career in wealth management. "If you're considering joining the wealth management industry, instead of taking an MBA which is quite broad, this is the niche Masters for you."