

SAA: AT THE FOREFRONT OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION TRAINING

The SAA ensures that it remains as one of the leading civil aviation training centres in the world through its high quality and relevant programmes.



The **Singapore Aviation Academy** (SAA), is a forerunner in the field of civil aviation training, offering a wide range of operational and management programmes that benchmark the highest international standards and best practices, meeting the training needs of the global aviation community.

As an international platform for the sharing of knowledge and experiences in civil aviation, SAA regularly organises conferences, workshops and seminars, and hosts numerous meetings with regional and international participation.

In order to get a better perspective of the SAA's direction and future growth, *Bridging Skies* spoke to Goh Chin Ee, Director, SAA, who shed light on the future plans of the SAA and what's to be expected in the next few years.

1. How does SAA intend to grow Singapore into a field of aviation training excellence?

Goh Chin Ee (GCE): Through its four schools – School of Aviation Management, School of Aviation Safety & Security, School of Air Traffic Services and School of Airport Emergency Services – SAA offers more than 100 programmes to meet the needs of human capital development in civil aviation. The programmes are constantly reviewed and revised to ensure that they stay relevant in the fast changing aviation environment. Emerging trends and latest developments in civil aviation are monitored closely, so that new programmes on current topics are developed timely to address the ensuing training needs.

SAA also works relentlessly to improve both its hardware and software to ensure that they meet the latest needs. Among the new learning facilities to be added in the near future include a new lecture theatre, a new ATC training simulator and upgrading of the fire rescue

simulators. It is also expanding its pool of expert instructors and introducing new training methodologies to enhance the learning experience and effectiveness at SAA.

2. What are some examples of SAA's collaborations with international players, and how have these collaborations transformed the local aviation manpower landscape?

GCE: SAA collaborates with renowned training institutions and international organisations to add value to its programmes. Such collaborations not only enrich the programme contents, but also provide participants an opportunity to learn from the perspectives of SAA's various partners.

Our collaboration with tertiary institutions allows practitioners to pursue higher qualifications in aviation without leaving the job. Some examples include the Graduate Diploma in Aviation Management, jointly organised with the National University of Singapore (NUS); and the Bachelor of Aviation Management, jointly organised with Massey University, New Zealand. A latest addition is the Masters of Business Administration in Aviation, conducted in collaboration with Embry Riddle University, to be launched later this year. This programme will prepare aviation professionals with management roles to better discharge their managerial and leadership responsibilities.

Collaboration with professional international organisations brings industry perspective and experience. Such programmes as the Airworthiness Training Programme, jointly organised with Joint Aviation Authorities Training Organisation; and Environmental Management in Aviation, jointly organised with International Air Transport Association (IATA), bring both international insights and Singapore's experience, providing participants a holistic learning experience. These joint programmes support the burgeoning aviation industry in Singapore, in line with CAAS' vision of growing the country into a centre of excellence for aviation knowledge.

3. SAA is also known for organising forums, conferences, seminars and workshops for the purpose of generating thought capital and sharing of ideas. How does this work and how successful has it been?

GCE: Over the years, SAA has established itself as an international platform for the sharing of knowledge, views and experiences on aviation issues. For example, SAA organises a triennial World Civil Aviation Chief Executives Forum, where chief executives of the international aviation community gathered at SAA to exchange views and discuss solutions to the latest challenges in civil aviation.

SAA will continue to play this key role through the regular organisation of international conferences, workshops and seminars on topical issues. Two major conferences were conducted in the first half of this year. The Aircraft Accidents Crisis Preparedness and Management Conference held in March 2010 helped raise the overall readiness level of the

aviation sector's emergency preparedness. The International Conference on Air Transport, Air Law and Regulation in May saw a gathering of more than 130 aviation professionals from 35 countries at SAA, deliberating on prevailing aviation issues and their implications in the legal realm. The conference was a successful collaboration effort among McGill University, NUS' Centre of International Law and SAA.

4. How does SAA differentiate itself from other training providers?

GCE: SAA is one of the few international aviation institutions that offer a comprehensive range of training, covering such areas as air traffic services, airport fire rescue services, safety and security, as well as aviation management with disciplines spanning from airport management to air law and aeromedicine. It constantly improves the contents and delivery of its programmes to ensure that they remain relevant and useful.

A unique feature of SAA programmes is its international nature. For example, in its Aircraft Accident Investigator course, experts from US, Europe and Australasia join their Singapore counterparts to share their views on policies, regulations and practices. Participants get to learn the commonalities and differences among regions and make the necessary adaptation for implementation in their countries. Such international coverage and perspective have proven to be a key selling point of SAA's programmes.

Another feature well received by participants is industry site visits incorporated in the programme. As a major aviation hub in the region, Singapore has much to share in the management of airport, the provision of air traffic control services and the operation of the MRO industry. Through such industry visits, participants get to learn first hand the operation and management of these organisations.

5. What are some challenges that the SAA foresees in its bid to create a centre of excellence for aviation knowledge? How does SAA propose to deal with these issues?

GCE: The aviation landscape for human capital development is changing rapidly. One of the greatest challenges faced by the aviation industry today is its ability to attract the next generation to join and remain in the workforce, and to provide effective training to aviation professionals in order to meet the needs of the industry.

SAA works closely with international bodies such as ICAO and IATA to meet these challenges. We participated in ICAO's Next Generation Aviation Professional task force meetings, and support ICAO's initiatives in the harmonisation of training standards. They include developing a training policy for the accreditation of aviation training institutions and establishing a competency-based framework for the licensing of Annex 1 functions.

6. With Singapore developing into a hub of aviation excellence, what are some other key developments in aviation that SAA has identified and intends to grow in the future?

GCE: In line with CAAS' role to be an enabler for the aviation industry, SAA plays an important role in helping to create a vibrant environment for information exchange. Besides anchoring

expertise in various areas to impart knowledge and skills for the growing industry through its various programmes, SAA has taken a few initiatives to facilitate the growth of centre of excellence.

One of them is the introduction of the Aviation Insight Series(AvIS) talks. The regular talks, launched more than a year ago, bring aviation leaders and experts to SAA to share their insights and experiences on topics of interest to the aviation community. A recent talk on the lessons learnt from the Iceland volcanic ash crisis and implications for global aviation was timely and well appreciated by those who participated.

SAA will also be engaging the local aviation industry more to meet their training needs. An area of growing demand is the topical areas of aviation safety and security, which are most relevant to the fast expanding MRO industry. With the setting up of its fourth school, the School of Aviation Safety and Security, SAA is committed to work closely with industry stakeholders to tailor programmes that will equip them to meet the latest regulatory requirements and challenges.

7. Given SAA's expertise in the provision of training for international civil aviation, does SAA intend to bring its training overseas?

GCE: While we encourages participants to come to Singapore to attend SAA's programmes so that they enjoy the full benefits of dedicated resources and the opportunity to interact with participants from other parts of the world, our plan is to gradually provide more training at overseas locations, where resources permit.

This would be particularly useful to organisations which have the need to train a large group of people but are unable to send all of them to SAA at the same time. For a start, the training would likely be in operational areas which do not require multiple instructors. With this latest initiative, we hope to reach out to more countries and regions, helping organisations to meet some of their training needs at their locations.