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CAAS Clinches Two Pro-Enterprise Awards

ENHANCED TRAINING FOR AVIATION PROFESSIONALS

As Singapore positions itself to become a leading maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) hub, the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) collaborates with training schools to meet high demand for aviation professionals.

Strengthening Singapore's aviation manpower is not just about increasing numbers within its labour force, but more importantly, training suitable candidates and honing their skills to fulfil the specific requirements of the industry. To achieve this, CAAS works closely with eight training institutions to structure and develop aircraft maintenance related programmes to ensure that students studying aerospace engineering possess the relevant knowledge and skills required by the aircraft maintenance industry. Three of these training institutions are headquartered overseas, while five, including the Air Transport Training College (ATTC), Mil-com Aerospace Training Centre (MATC) and the training arm of organisations like the Singapore Airlines Engineering Company (SIAEC), Singapore Technologies Aerospace (ST Aerospace) and Eurocopter South East Asia (ESEA) are located in Singapore.

BEYOND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Aerospace engineering courses offered at tertiary institutions like Singapore Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic provide the foundation for students who intend to join the aerospace

industry, in particular the aircraft maintenance sub-sector. However, there is still a gap in academic knowledge and technical training and expertise between tertiary-level graduates and full-fledged skilled aircraft maintenance professionals. CAAS bridges this divide through the CAAS-approved aircraft maintenance training organisations to ensure that students' capabilities match industry needs. "The polytechnic courses are academic in nature as they provide the necessary basic knowledge for the students to progress into more technical learning. From this foundation, students can then move on to these approved training organisations. They will undergo more in-depth knowledge training in the core aerospace engineering subjects and acquire the necessary hand-skills and experience in aerospace workshops and the aircraft maintenance environment," explained Alan Foo, Division Head (Safety and Policy Licensing), CAAS.

STEPPING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

In order to meet the manpower demand as efficiently as possible, national training institutions constantly update their aerospace training programmes to align to the latest CAAS regulations to provide students with relevant training, thus ensuring a smooth transition from academic studies to a professional career in aviation. In 2008, CAAS and the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) facilitated collaborations between Lufthansa Technical Training (LTT) and Temasek Polytechnic to deliver CAAS-approved aerospace training to polytechnic students for the first time, allowing for a seamless transition from academic studies to technical training.

Located within Temasek Polytechnic, LTT offers the polytechnic's top aerospace engineering students a three- to six-month package of academic classes, workshops and computer-based training in subjects ranging from electronics to maintenance practices to structure repair. It also includes programmes based on the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) and CAAS' aircraft maintenance licensing requirements. "Being CAAS and EASA-approved, our courses are highly regulated as we aim to deliver courses that are recognised by the authorities. We offer a broad-based training regime that is industry specific and arms the student with a broad knowledge and skills portfolio on aircraft maintenance," explained Ralph Kaeding, General Manager, LTT.

Kaeding is confident that aerospace companies here will appreciate that LTT graduates are easy to place due to their holistic education and training and that the absorption rate for these graduates will grow. "What we are offering will enable students to not only obtain a licence in the shortest time provided for by CAAS, but also to enter the aviation industry effectively trained. Due to the inculcation of broad-based knowledge and skills at a younger age, students will be able to move from one company to the next with relative ease as they need not be trained from scratch every time they switch roles within the industry," said Kaeding. He also hoped that as the programmes continue to grow and evolve, CAAS and LTT can work further to provide students with apprenticeships and job attachments to increase their exposure to the industry sooner.

At the Air Transport Training College (ATTC), which is the training arm of the Singapore Institute of Aerospace Engineers, the CAAS-approved courses and programmes are open to all, including students who hold a minimum "O" Level qualification and even mid-career

professionals. This maximises the number of potential candidates who could enter the industry.

Poon Chia Wee, Managing Director, ATTC, said that the courses and programmes at the college also evolve according to the most recent developments in the CAAS AML licensing requirements. “About two to three years ago, the ATTC introduced a host of new courses to mirror the new aircraft maintenance licensing requirements implemented by CAAS,” added Poon.

ATTC now offers full-time courses and programmes, including a foundation degree in aircraft engineering together with the Kingston University of London.

“Our courses are strict as the students taking them need to adhere to CAAS requirements in order to pass. They need at least 85 per cent attendance and clock in 500 hours of training,” said Poon. As a result, about 70 to 80 per cent of ATTC students go on to join the aviation industry as highly sought-after professionals.

SHORING UP RESOURCES

Foo further explains that endeavours to upgrade aerospace training will create a multi-faceted workforce as the capabilities of ground-level staff keep growing. An example of this is how training and skills upgrading has enabled technicians to expand their capabilities and take on more decision-making roles, a responsibility that was traditionally allocated to engineers since the 1970s. “This change in paradigm has strengthened the aviation workforce as manpower resources can now be better deployed and results maximised. The full-fledged licensed aircraft maintenance engineer of today can now be freed from the more straightforward and routine tasks and be deployed to work on the more demanding and complex tasks,” said Foo.

Ensuring that the aviation workforce is staffed by top-notch personnel will place Singapore at an advantage as it gains momentum as a leading global MRO hub. This is especially so with international investors such as Rolls-Royce and Honeywell setting up MRO and engine manufacturing facilities in the newly established Seletar Aerospace Park (SAP). Says Foo of Singapore’s aviation personnel, “There is going to be stronger demand for quality personnel in the future. CAAS will continue to collaborate with schools and other training institutions to ensure that the courses are relevant and capable of meeting the training needs of our future aviation professionals.”

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