



Real Learning, Real Professional Impact: Aventis Graduate School

“An executive education provides more than deep skills and domain knowledge; the value of the learning experience also lies in the intangibles, such as the connections, the networking and the brainstorming of ideas,” asserts Samuel Teo, 47. The lifelong learner would know. Over the past 17 years, he has bettered himself by completing a Postgraduate Diploma from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM UK); Master of Management, MBA from Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM, Australia), and Executive Master of Science in Finance from the City University of New York (EMSc Finance, US). And, it is the “intangibles” that nudged the then-finance executive to found a graduate school and supported the ensuing innovations and initiatives that make it a sustainable business.

That was 15 years ago. Today, Aventis Graduate School has positively impacted over 60,000 learners across 35 nations. “We have an 80-20 mix, featuring 80 percent of learners residing in Singapore while the rest fly in and out for their weekend sessions,” informs the Founder and General Manager of the school.

As Mr Teo recalls it, he and his teammates were discussing their project for an entrepreneurship module in their MBA course. He was interested in exploring executive education and development in Asia because at that time, there was no renowned institute dedicated to executive learners. “Most of the reputable business schools for executive training and development were in the west, like Harvard and Stanford in the US, INSEAD in Europe and IMD in Switzerland. This region has the China Europe International Business School in China.”

Singapore, as a financial and business hub, has a confluence of business leaders from around the world. Asia, which the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has listed as the fastest-growing region in the world till 2030, is home to a burgeoning middle class. Add to the mix Singapore’s excellent connectivity and a sterling reputation and one gets a compelling combination of factors to establish a graduate school in the city-state, to cater to both the resident and overseas executives looking to enhance their skills and expertise.

Working on his MBA project helped Mr Teo crystallise his ideas and, in 2007, the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) was born. The “intangibles” that he describes as the true value of an executive education proved to be the bedrock of his new venture – mentors (faculty professors) provided feedback on his business plan and connected him with the City University of New York, which would become the school’s first education collaborator. Over the years, the business owner would continue to check in with his mentors, particularly his “inner circle of mentors” whom he has come to regard as friends, for advice and to plug his “blind spots”.

“Dominating our niche”

Locating Aventis Graduate School in a hotel in Orchard Road was a deliberate move. “It’s accessible and when we need more space, such as for our graduation ceremonies or other big events, we can tap on the hotel facilities and resources. Also, it’s convenient for overseas learners attending our weekend block classes as they can stay at the hotel,” says Mr Teo. The school has five classrooms occupying 6,000 square feet in Concorde Hotel.

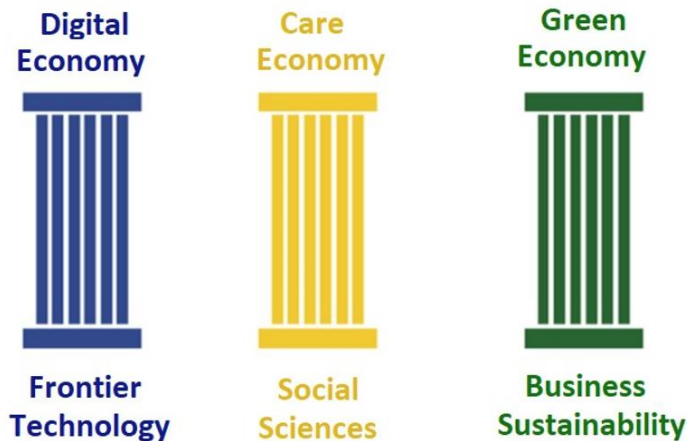
Guided by the philosophy to “dominate our niche”, the team works hard and moves fast to provide the best-in-class graduate education for business leaders and senior executives. This means having to be in tune with impending trends so that Aventis can be a frontrunner in bringing onboard the relevant courses, delivered in a way that best suits the learners’ needs in a rapidly evolving business environment.



Aventis’ unwavering dedication help working professionals fulfil their aspirations and advance their careers.

As a case in point, as executive learners tend to be strapped for time, several of Aventis’ flagship programmes, including the University of Roehampton London MBA, are delivered on a modular basis and focus on coursework instead of the traditional examination. Learners also have a choice to complete a dissertation or a consultancy project. And, when SkillsFuture Singapore identified the three high-growth areas that would fuel the economy in its inaugural “Skills Demand for the Future Economy” report in February 2022, Aventis was quick to roll out a suite of graduate programmes to equip professionals with the skills and capabilities to excel in these in-demand areas.

Alignment of Aventis Graduate School across 3 Pillars



*Aventis offers an extensive suite of graduate programmes designed to equip professionals with the skills and capabilities to excel in the **three high-growth sectors** highlighted by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) in the inaugural “Skills Demand for the Future Economy” report.*

“You don’t know what you don’t know” and, with that declaration, Mr Teo shares that he taps on the insights and expertise of those in the know, including Aventis’ alumni, his mentors, former course mates, faculty members from universities both local and abroad, and the industry. He also leverages the data from the government’s national censuses and other surveys. The insights are carefully considered before taking the “calculated risks” that he has to take as a business owner, to drive Aventis towards becoming a leading graduate school in Asia.

As a private school that counts top-level executives and highfliers as its clients, credibility and recognition are of the utmost importance. To this end, Aventis has successfully gained membership into prestigious professional bodies including AACSB Business Education Alliance – the world’s leading graduate accreditation body that champions competency-based learning and business innovation; and Executive MBA Council – the leading global body that champions the advancement of MBA and executive education internationally. Regarding the latter, Aventis is one of only four business schools in Singapore – and the only private school – to secure a membership; the other three schools are National University of Singapore, Singapore Management University and Nanyang Technological University. Aventis also collaborates with prominent industry partners, professional bodies and government organisations in Singapore to ensure that its qualifications are recognised

by employers; among them are SAFRA, SGInnovate, Institute for Human Resource Professionals, NTUC, Artificial Intelligence Singapore, EC-Council and Singapore e2i Institute, to name a few.

That Aventis has garnered a strong standing among its collaborators is evident. “To partner us, the universities must understand the profile of our learners, and the course delivery must comply with our criteria; modular delivery is a critical criterion, as is applied learning,” Mr Teo states firmly. There is “no impetus” to grow its number of partners as he wants Aventis to “grow organically”. The school currently has five partners in the US and UK.

Tapping on tech

Mr Teo describes technology as a “very important enabler”, and the school is “constantly pioneering initiatives that leverage technology and business automation to enhance the learners’ experience, and improve our business processes”. For example, Aventis has an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered course recommendation system that shortlists courses according to the learners’ requirements. Its learning management system also features natural language understanding, and is hosted on the cloud to facilitate 24/7 access. Significantly, technology supports every aspect of a learner’s needs from communication to course delivery, and allows the alumni to keep in touch with Aventis even after their courses have ended. When COVID-19 interrupted in-person classes, lessons were brought online.

The pandemic presented an opportunity for Aventis even as it sounded the death knell for businesses that were too slow to transform. Mr Teo shares that “we saw a growing proportion of learners from across Asia joining our graduate and executive education programmes”. The school has had to add 20 e-learning and virtual instructor-led training programmes in the high-demand areas of Data Science, AI, Data Analytics, Business Management, Digital Marketing, Social Psychology, Counselling and Organisational Psychology. “Our ability to remain agile and adapt rapidly to changing requirements puts us in good stead to be the forerunner in our business segment, and brings us closer to dominating our niche.”

The new frontier

Aventis’ agility and adaptability were apparent when, within months of Meta Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg’s announcement in October 2021 that his company will be focusing on bringing the metaverse to life, the school had commenced discussions with a multimedia design agency to build the Aventis campus in the metaverse. “The establishment of a digital campus in the metaverse will offer significant potential for Aventis to scale up and make graduate education more accessible to ASEAN and South Asia,” highlights Mr Teo.



Headquartered in Singapore, Aventis Graduate School is the [first metaverse graduate school](http://www.aventismetaverse.com) (www.aventismetaverse.com) to offer a phygital presence across ASEAN. The school aims to offer high-quality graduate education which is affordable and accessible to anyone, anywhere and anytime, improving the lives of professionals and executives in the region.

The way he sees it, the “phygital” approach, a combination of physical and digital, will characterise the future of learning. “This blended approach, with on-campus and virtual interactions, will take the learning experience to the next level.” Keeping true to the creed to “dominate our niche”, he wants Aventis to be well placed to seize the opportunities arising from the innovation.

He envisions moving around in the digital campus to be seamless. “After logging in, people can network or attend classes. There will be spaces for breakout sessions and interactions.”

To make a greater impact in the world of tomorrow, Aventis has plans to organise biannual conferences in the digital campus, with the first one taking place in 2023.

The future of learning looks to be an exciting one, with the latest addition of [Aventis Metaverse – World’s First Decentralised Graduate School](#). But whether it is in a classroom or breakout space, in a physical or virtual campus, in-person or online, Aventis remains steadfast in its brand promise of real learning, with real professional impact.



In recognition of our trainers' support, dedication and contribution to our continuous growth across ASEAN, especially with the disruption caused by COVID-19, the Aventis team (above) organised the Aventis Trainers Appreciation Event 2022.



"Attaining the 'Great Place To Work' certification is a strong recognition of our efforts and commitment to provide a safe, positive and conducive workplace for our colleagues to learn, grow and develop. We will not rest on our laurels, and we will continue to strive towards making Aventis a Great Place To Work!" – Aventis Founder and General Manager Samuel Teo