

Tax Academy Graduation Event and NextGen Award Ceremony

Opening Speech – 6 February 2026

Curriculum & Examination Development Committee members, Advanced Tax Programme trainers, graduates, merit book prize winners, NextGen award recipients, colleagues and friends

1. Good afternoon. A very warm welcome to today's Tax Academy Graduation Event and NextGen Award Ceremony.
2. We celebrate our graduates from the Advanced Tax Programme (ATP) Intake 1 and 2/2024, Merit Book Prize Winners from Tax Academy's Levels 1- and 2-Income Tax, Property Tax and GST Programmes, and NextGen award recipients.

Celebrating Excellence in Tax Education

3. The Advanced Tax Programme (ATP) is one of our flagship programmes – completing this programme is a major milestone; participants are required to complete 9 core and 2 elective modules, totalling 52 sessions over 150 hours of training. This translates to 2 classes per week over 10 months. All this while juggling a full-time career. Well done to the graduates!
4. I extend my gratitude to all our dedicated ATP trainers including those who are with us today: Mr Yong Jia Hao and Ms Quek Hui Ling.
5. A special mention to the Commissioner's Book Prize winner from Intake 1/2024 - she is Ms Tay Soo Ern from KPMG. Soo Ern said: "This programme enabled her to gain deeper understanding across different tax areas whilst meeting classmates from diverse

backgrounds.” ATP is not only about advancing tax knowledge but also fostering meaningful connections and lasting friendships among professionals in our industry.

Merit Book Prize Winners

6. We have our merit book prize winners in our audience today. Congratulations on being in the top 10% of your cohort in our Level 1 and 2 structured tax programmes. Your hard work has paid off.

Nurturing the Next Generation

7. I am delighted that we have combined our ATP Graduation Event with the NextGen Award Ceremony. The NextGen awards, first introduced in April 2025, represents our commitment to building the next generation of tax professionals through early exposure to tax and professional connections.
8. On top of a \$300 cash prize, award recipients get to attend Tax Academy's events, including conferences and seminars. We create opportunities for students to network with industry experts. For example, students had a chance to attend a fireside chat by Mr Chua Chia-Yi, Honorary Consul-General of Singapore in Toronto, Canada. To the best of our knowledge, Chia-Yi is the only Singapore Honorary Consul-General who is also an international tax expert.
9. Here are some stories of our NextGen awardees.
10. Mr Steven Kho, a Year 3 Nanyang Technological University student, served as Research & Training Director for Nanyang Business School Tax Advisory Club, organised tax study sessions, and achieved 1st runner-up in EY Young Tax Professional of the Year

2024. He said: "*Each obstacle taught me something, and together they built the confidence I carry forward.*" His mindset of turning challenges into stepping stones exemplifies the spirit we hope to nurture in all our NextGen awardees.

11. This year, we have extended the NextGen awards to Polytechnic students.
12. Ms Yee Jia Ying, from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, is a Year 3 Diploma in Accountancy student. She participated in the SMU Tax Challenge 2025 and is interning with BDO as a Corporate Tax intern.
13. Ms Lee Zixuan Jerlyn, a Year 2 Diploma in Accountancy student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, also participated in SMU's tax case challenge and completed a case study with Crowe.
14. Steven, Jia Ying and Jerlyn are just shining examples from our diverse group of 41 NextGen award recipients. They come from Universities - NUS, NTU, SMU, SIT; and from all 5 Polytechnics – Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic and Nanyang Polytechnic.
15. All the students, from various faculties (Accounting, Business, Law) have demonstrated significant interest in taxation. I am glad to see such diverse talents from so many Universities and Polytechnics showing an interest in taxation at a young age.
16. I also thank the IHL Leaders who are here today – thank you for coming to support your students! And I hope you help us inspire even more of your students to consider Tax as a career!

Advancing Tax Research Excellence - STARI

17. Tax Academy and Singapore Management University launched the STARI Programmed in August 2025 – STARI stand for the Singapore Tax Academy Research Initiative. Through STARI, we have brought together top professionals from around the world and created the STARI Research Affiliates Programme, designed to equip tax professionals with essential academic writing and research skills. We have just opened our second intake, starting this March 2026.
18. Ms Chua Jia Ying, Senior Research Associate from STARI, will share more about this shortly.

NETWORK & PEOPLE CONNECTIONS

19. I hope it has not escaped your attention that in this room of about 150 guests, we have a unique and diverse collection tax professionals and aspiring tax professionals. Let me share some names.
20. On top of graduation, prize and award recipients, we have IHL leaders, Tax Academy trainers, SMU researcher Jia Ying (whom incidentally was a former Tax Director with IRAS); from KPMG Tax Partners Wei Hwa, Andy, Jiahao; from Forvis Mazars - Head of Tax Gene and Tax Partner Xue Pei.
21. From IHLs, Germaine Lim (Singapore Polytechnic Course chair), Goh Kia Hong (NTU Assistant Dean), Lam Poh Lian (Senior Associate Director from SMU), William Lim (Ngee Ann Polytechnic Director of School of Business and Accountancy and ISCA Council member), Wong Nee Tat (Temasek Polytechnic Course Chair) and other distinguished guests.

22. From CPA Australia, Nicklaus Country Manager; from IRAS, my HR colleagues including Director Foo Wei Lin, Chief Legal Officer Quek Hui Ling and of course Vikna Rajah – Partner (Head Tax & Private Wealth) from Rajah & Tann; Vikna is also the Chair of the International Fiscal Association (IFA) Singapore Branch.
23. As we all grow in our careers, such professional networks become more invaluable. I hope all of us make some new friends today, and I call on the experienced tax professionals to help us inspire the next generation!

Looking Forward

24. To all our ATP graduates, your achievements today mark not an end, but the beginning of new opportunities in your professional journey. Please remember that you are now part of our expanding alumni network and the broader tax community that Tax Academy serves. Please join our alumni network by scanning this QR code.
25. I encourage all of you to stay connected with us and follow Tax Academy on LinkedIn as we continue to shape the future of taxation excellence together.

Appreciation of Sponsors

26. Finally, Tax Academy would like to thank our sponsor, Acclime Singapore, Deloitte Singapore, e2i and Forvis Mazars, for being with us here today. I encourage you all to visit their booths later and connect with their teams.

27. Thank you, and congratulations once again to all our graduates! I hope you have a wonderful afternoon ahead, connecting and networking with one another.