

# Another school gets in on IR act

ACPE latest to offer masters course in hospitality management

**DERRICK A PAULO**  
derrick@newstoday.com.sg

TWO polytechnics are doing it. So is one university. Now, a private school is entering the fray.

The decision to have two integrated resorts in Singapore is making resort management a hot hand in the education sector. And the latest programme will zoom in on the gaming component.

The Asian Centre for Professional Excellence (ACPE) is introducing a Master in Hospitality Management, which specialises in the casino industry.

The degree – awarded by the Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST) – will be the first in Singapore to focus on casino management, according to the ACPE, a private school registered with the Ministry of Education.

Currently, Temasek Polytechnic offers two hospitality and tourism diplomas which include resort management, while Ngee Ann Polytechnic will roll out such modules in November. The Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management (CNI) also covers these areas in its renowned master's programme.

But Mr Andy Ong – chief executive of business incubator ERC Holdings, which jointly owns ACPE – told TODAY that its degree from Macao emphasises “all aspects” of casino management.

The curriculum includes two to three weeks in Macau spread over two trips and will incorporate attachments to its casinos and sessions with the industry practitioners.

ACPE is even willing to pay for the airfare and accommodation for its first intake of 30 students, who will start the 18-month part-time programme in February.

The course also covers management of hotels, travel agencies, meetings and con-

ventions as well as food and beverage outlets.

MUST – which was founded in 2000 – has been designated to train up to 100,000 people for the jobs needed in the special administrative region's 17 casinos, he said.

The university's master's programme – which is accredited by the Macau Government and China's Education Ministry – can help train people for various managerial and supervisory positions in Singapore's “IR industry”, he added.

It took just two months for ACPE, which offers primarily courses in entrepreneurship and financial services, to seal the deal with MUST.

**We want to give the opportunity for S'poreans to upgrade themselves for the IR industry.**

— Mr Andy Ong, CEO, ERC Holdings, which jointly owns the Asian Centre for Professional Excellence

The school made the decision after initial media reports suggested that Singaporeans may secure only entry-level jobs at the two IRs, said Mr Ong, who is also the managing editor of the *Asian Financial Planning Journal*.

Which is why ACPE's board of directors – that includes Qian Hu executive chairman Kenny Yap and Apex-Pal chief executive officer Douglas Foo – intend to give priority to Singaporeans for the Master's programme, said Mr Ong, who is also on the board.

However, the intake will be kept small to “provide quality education”, he said.

When asked how the degree compared to that of the CNI, Mr Ong said: “Rather than compete with them to produce super premium graduates, we want to give the opportunity for Singaporeans to upgrade themselves for the IR industry.”

When contacted, CNI dean Judy Siguaw told TODAY: “Nowadays, everybody seems to mention casinos in their programmes to pull in the IR link.

“But casinos require training in the fields of HR, revenue management, F&B, marketing and so on. So it is important to know what is being taught,” she added.